

APPENDIX 1

ROTHERHAM'S ALL AGE AUTISM STRATEGY

2024 -2027

Annual Review 2024 – 2025



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Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council



Rotherham All Age Autism Strategy 2024 -27

Year One (24/25) Review

Purpose:

In July 2024, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Cabinet approved the refreshed All Age Autism Strategy. As part of the next steps, Rotherham Parent Carers Forum will lead consultation with the local autistic community — including professionals — to co-develop an action plan.

To support this work, it's helpful to reflect on current activities aimed at improving the lives of autistic people living and working in Rotherham. This information will inform an upcoming update for Rotherham's autistic community.

Ask:

The Rotherham Autism Partnership Board invited professionals, community members, and leaders to share updates on any activities they are either (a) aware of or (b) directly involved in that aim to improve the lives of autistic people

Response:

Thank you to everyone who responded. The collected responses are summarised below.

Welcome and Care: *Support young people with care and support needs to prepare for adulthood.*

Assessment and Diagnosis

- All staff in RDaSH involved in the neurodevelopmental pathway are trained in assessing and diagnosing Autism and ADHD using DSM-V and ICD criteria

Professional Development

- RDaSH staff regularly lead learning events on autism and ADHD to educate others across the organisation.
- Educational Psychologists and specialists provide autism-related training to schools, including on masking.

Pathway Coordination and Transition

- Strong coordination exists between children's and adults' neurodevelopmental services in RDaSH, with an embedded transition process.

School and Referral Support

- A new referral form for the children's neuro pathway is being launched, including weekly school consultation slots to support early identification and advice while awaiting assessments.

Organisational Culture

- RDaSH has an active autism steering group and is committed to becoming an autism-friendly organisation for both staff and patients.

Inclusion and Training Initiatives

- The Rotherham Educational Psychology Service and SIT teams are developing modular training for SENDCos, including:
 - Masking in autistic pupils.
 - Gathering and using the voice of neurodivergent young people meaningfully.

Projects and Forums

- **PINS Project:** Supporting 10 primary schools to improve inclusive practice around neurodiversity.
- **Guiding Voices:** A youth-led group (including neurodiverse members) organised a successful "Futures Fayre" for young people with additional needs to explore post-16 options.
- **SEND Employment Forum:** Launched in April 2023 to expand supported internships across Rotherham.
- **TRFT Inclusion Opportunity:** Potential to expand the "Supporting our Workforce" webpage to highlight how autistic and neurodiverse individuals are supported into and within employment.

Welcome and Care (2): *Support young people with care and support needs to prepare for adulthood.*

Training & Development

- RANSS and RPCF completed Anna Freud *Train the Trainer* programme for both adults and children.
- Adult-focused training is currently being delivered internally.
- Ongoing attendance at Anna Freud specialist learning days to share best practice.

Inclusion & Community Engagement

- EDI (Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion) work led by RPCF is strengthening relationships with local communities.
- PINS is actively engaged with all 10 participating schools; a PINS training event is planned for February.

Family Support

- The Family Peer Support team is now delivering *Teen Life* training to families.
- A sensory workshop for families has been developed and is being run in partnership with Sue King.

Participation and coproduction

- The *Futures Fair*, co-produced with the *Guiding Voices* youth group, will take place in January 2025

Transitions

- Working with the Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) Board to develop a **Transitions Booklet** for young people and families

Value and Include: *Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people and Providing more opportunities for care and support closer to home*

Access and Assessment

- **Significantly reduced** waiting times for autism assessments over the past year.
- A trajectory is in place to achieve a **4-week waiting time target by 2026**.
- The “**Waiting Well**” initiative offers consultation and support to those awaiting assessment.
- Service user feedback is central to service development following a recent **service inclusion project**.

Accessibility and Inclusion

- Commitment to **flexible, accessible environments**, including use of community venues and digital assessments.
- Services are being **poverty-proofed** to address financial barriers and children's health inequalities.
- The TRFT was hosting a **Children’s Conference** in February 2025 to further address inequality in children’s services.

Listening to Voices and training

- **Care Opinion** has been introduced to capture and act on service user feedback.
- **Oliver McGowan Level 2 training** is now mandatory for all staff to improve understanding of autism and learning disabilities.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

- A task group has been formed to adapt the “**Be the One**” **suicide prevention campaign** for autistic and neurodivergent adults, involving partners such as Speak Up, RANSS, RMBC, and RDaSH.
- The **Zero Suicide Alliance autism and suicide training** continues to be promoted to staff and volunteers.
[Zero Suicide Alliance: Autism and Suicide Training](#)
- **Public Health** worked with Speak Up to run focus groups on loneliness; insights are informing:
 - **Making Every Contact Count** (MECC) training.
 - Public campaigns on loneliness and mental health.
 - Inclusion of data on Rotherham’s **JSNA (Data Hub)**.

Systems and Infrastructure

- Development of a **Reasonable Adjustments flag** in electronic medical records is underway.
- An **Autism Indicator** is also being developed (status to be confirmed).
- **Resource folders** on autism and learning disability have been ordered for staff use.
- Expansion of the **UECC** (Urgent and Emergency Care Centre) and relocation of other departments presents a chance to redesign services in partnership with autistic people.

Value and Include (2): *Tackling health and care inequalities for autistic people and Providing more opportunities for care and support closer to home*

Oliver McGowan Training:

- All Rotherham Parent Carers Forum (RPCF) staff have completed Part 1 of the Oliver McGowan training; some senior staff have completed Part 2.

Anna Freud Programme:

- RPCF has completed the Anna Freud ‘Train the Trainer’ programme as part of the work to support autistic and neurodivergent individuals (see also W&C section).

Voice and Feedback:

- RPCF is working with RAADS to collect feedback on the self-referral process for neurodevelopmental assessment.
- The Peer Support Coordinator meets monthly with CAMHS managers to provide family feedback and receive service updates to share with families.

Community Relationships:

- Ongoing work by RPCF includes building trusted relationships in the community.
- Efforts are being made to link Voice and Influence work into these community relationships to amplify the voices of autistic people and families.

PINS Project:

- The Promoting Inclusion and Neurodiversity in Schools (PINS) project continues across all 10 participating schools, supporting inclusive practice and staff development.

Communication: Provide accessible information and advice to support making informed choices

Improving Access to Information

- RDaSH has enhanced its website to provide clear, accessible information about services, including:
- Virtual tours, photographs, and social stories to help service users understand what to expect.
- Regular review of materials based on user feedback.

Communication with Families

- Service users are contacted via email, SMS, letter, or phone, depending on peoples stated preference
- Flexibility is embedded within the assessment pathway to accommodate individual needs and ensure families feel supported.

Inclusion and Co-Production

- Additional service inclusion projects and research activities are planned to further improve access and representation.
- Ongoing collaboration with the Local Offer to share updates and resources.

Accessible Appointments and Communication

- TRFT is expanding the use of digital appointment notifications.
- A project is underway to trial Easy Read appointment letters, starting with Paediatrics

Supporting Families and Young People

- **RANSS** provides families with clear information about their service, including **room photos, staff introductions**, and directions.
- Continued partnerships and meetings with:
 - **Educational Psychologist, (CAMHS)** for communication advice.
 - **CYP ADHD Team** to improve family communication.
 - **With Me In Mind** to enhance support for young people’s mental health.
 - **Voice & Influence (V&I)** team to ensure ongoing representation and collaboration across agencies.

SEND Connect Meet-ups

Do you have a young person who may have additional needs and/or disabilities? with or without a diagnosis. If so, SEND Connect may be helpful for you. We offer opportunities to share experiences and support for parent/carers. The sessions are run by parent carers for parent carers. No need to book, please just drop in.



"It's so lovely coming to group each week, not only have I made friends but so so as my daughter, I no longer feel alone!"



"I definitely found my people at SEND connect, we have such a laugh!... I have also learned loads from other parents"



For more information or to check dates please scan the QR code, contact our office (01709 286282) or email ADMIN@RPCF.CO.UK

**MONDAY COFFEE MORNING** 09:30-11:30
EVERY WEEK - TERM TIME ONLY
Free refreshments available
Social Prescribing Hub, Rawmarsh, Barbers avenue, S62 6AE

**CHAT & CRAFT GROUP - WEDNESDAYS**
TERM TIME ONLY - 9:30-11:00
Free refreshments available
LODGE - RPCF, 131 GREEN LN, RAWMARSH,S62 6JY

**THURSDAY COFFEE EVENING** 17:30-19:00
EVERY WEEK
Young People Welcome
Refreshments available to Purchase from the Café
Corklow meadows, 3, W Bawtry Rd, Roth, S60 2XL

**KIVETON GROUP - MONTHLY (1ST FRIDAY)**
-TERM TIME ONLY 9:30 -11:30
Children Welcome
Free refreshments available
KPWCOT The Old Colliery Rd, Kiveton, S26 6LR

**BRAMPTON GROUP- MONTHLY (2ND FRIDAY)**
TERM TIME ONLY 09:30-11:30
Children Welcome
Free refreshments available
BRAMPTON PARISH HALL, 1 KNOLLBECK LN, BRAMPTON, S73 0TX

**MALTBY GROUP - MONTHLY (4TH FRIDAY) -**
TERM TIME ONLY 09:30-11:30
Children Welcome
Free refreshments available
MALTBY STEPPING STONES CHILDREN'S CENTRE, MALTBY, S667NQ



We look forward to welcoming you to one of our meet-ups !



Work In Partnership:

Pre- and Post-Diagnostic Support

- RDaSH introduced a Neurodiversity Support Worker role following feedback from a service inclusion project.
- The role supports smoother transitions and better-connected care.
- Plans are in place to expand this role into the **Rotherham team**.

Volunteer Involvement

- RDaSH is exploring how to bring more volunteers into services in line with Trust strategy.
- RPCF has created volunteer opportunities through RANSS and RPCF-led workshops and activities.

Reasonable Adjustments & Accessibility

- RPCF established formal channels for requesting Reasonable Adjustments, shared across staff teams.
- Access to Work scheme is actively encouraged to support individuals with additional needs.
- RANSS has improved its interview process to ensure better accessibility for neurodivergent applicants.

Collaboration and Voice

- RPCF Peer Support Coordinator continues monthly engagement with CAMHS, providing and receiving feedback to improve services.
- The RPCF website is regularly updated with information on how to access CAMHS.
- The Voice & Influence (V&I) team continues working with partners to ensure the autistic community's voice is heard and reflected in service development.

Schools and Inclusion

- The PINS Project continues to support all 10 participating schools, strengthening inclusive practice for neurodivergent pupils.

Partnership Commitment

- RDaSH remains open and committed to expanding partnership working to better serve autistic and neurodivergent people across Rotherham.

Coproduction/ Codesign (Foundation):

Strategic Inclusion and Voice

- An Inclusion Project is running until March, focused on building relationships and gathering lived experience to feed into the Autism Strategy.
- The Autism Strategy Project is structured around five key priorities, with active efforts to gather and reflect the community voice.

• Hospital Support and Passports

- RPCF, Preparing for Adulthood (PFA) partners, and the Autism and Learning Disability Board at TRFT are reviewing:
- The use of hospital passports
- How autistic people are supported during hospital stays

• Education and Engagement

- The Voice & Influence (V&I) team is working on issues affecting electively home educated (EHE) children, ensuring their needs and experiences are captured.
- The Children's Disability Register project has started to better identify and support children with disabilities in Rotherham.
- The PINS Project remains active across 10 schools, promoting inclusion for neurodiverse learners.