

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 15 September 2025

Report Title

No Family Left Behind Strategy

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

Nicola Curley, Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Helen Sweaton, Joint Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-wide

Report Summary

A Council motion was passed in September 2024 calling for Cabinet to coordinate the development of a new strategy to reduce the impact of child poverty in Rotherham.

Rotherham Council is committed to putting families at the heart of decision making and the Council's family friendly budget demonstrates this commitment. This Strategy represents Rotherham's commitment to addressing the causes of poverty and reducing its impact, bringing together the activity across the Borough to ensure no family is left behind.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Approves the strategy No Family Left Behind, addressing child poverty.
2. Notes the ongoing work to reduce the impact of poverty and improve family prosperity across the Borough.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – No Family Left Behind, addressing Child Poverty Strategy

Appendix 2 – Map of Family Hub and Family Hub Network Sites

Appendix 3 – Part A - Initial Equality Screening
Appendix 4 – Part B – Equality Assessment
Appendix 5 – Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Agenda item - Notice of Motion - Child Poverty \(Abolish Two-Child Benefit Cap\) - Rotherham Council](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
N/A

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

No Family Left Behind Strategy

1. Background

- 1.1 To prevent children from experiencing poverty and increase family prosperity the systemic drivers of poverty must be addressed - increasing incomes (tackling low pay and insecure work, debt, unemployment), reducing essential costs (such as housing, energy, food, childcare and transport) to prevent barriers to education and employment, and improving physical and mental health and educational attainment.
- 1.2 A Council motion was passed in September 2024 calling for Cabinet to co-ordinate the development of a new strategy to reduce the impact of child poverty in Rotherham. The development of the Strategy has involved collaborative working across all Rotherham Council directorates and a survey of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board to create a shared understanding of poverty. All directorates have reviewed the activity that they deliver to address the causes of poverty and reduce the impact of child poverty.
- 1.3 Rotherham Council is committed to putting families at the heart of its decision making, as demonstrated by the family friendly budget for 2024/25 and 2025/26, which included investments in baby packs, youth work and early help services, and children's play areas. Children and young people achieving their potential is a key priority at the heart of our refreshed Council Plan that was agreed in May 2025.
- 1.4 This Strategy represents Rotherham's commitment to, where possible, addressing the causes of poverty, supporting families to reduce the impact of poverty and bringing together activity across the Borough to ensure no family is left behind.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Rotherham Together Partnership wants Rotherham to be a great place to grow up, where children and young people have the best chance to reach their full potential. This will mean that children grow up happily, safe, in good health and develop the skills and qualifications they need to be successful. The Strategy articulates the ambition to address the poverty-related barriers to achieving Rotherham's vision for children, young people, and families:
 - **Best Start** - Children get the best start in life.
 - **Safe** - Children and young people are safe from harm.
 - **Achieve** - Young people feel empowered to succeed and achieve their aspirations.
 - **Have fun** - Children and young people have fun things to do and safe places to go.
- 2.2 Poverty can mean different things to different people. Poverty is not having enough of the things you need, such as money, food, housing, heating, etc, to live and participate in society in the way that other people around you do.

Poverty can affect every aspect of a child's life and may be experienced in a range of ways by children. Poverty is measured based on money, with the standard way to measure child poverty being relative household income. A child is said to be living in poverty if they live in a household with income below 60 per cent of the national average (median) income. Absolute poverty is when the household income is below a certain level. The Josphe Rowntree Foundation identify groups with unacceptably high rates of poverty, these include Families with children, Minority ethnic groups, Disabled people, Informal carers, People in workless households, People claiming income-related benefits and Social and private renters.

- 2.3 Based on research from End Child Poverty, 31% of Rotherham children were living in poverty in 2023/24. This is the same as the national average, and a slight increase on the 2022/23 figure of 30.3%.
- 2.4 On the Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (IMD 2019) Rotherham ranks as the 35th most deprived upper tier local authority in England out of a total of 151 authorities. 35% of Rotherham's neighbourhoods are in the 20% most deprived in England, and 22% live in the 10% most deprived. No neighbourhoods in Rotherham are in the least deprived 10%.
- 2.5 In 2024, 26% of children lived in absolute low-income families (England 19%). Rotherham's free school meals entitlement rate is above the English national average (27.2% compared to 24.7% at Primary, 30.2% compared to 25.9% at Secondary – DfE 2024/25). 25.9% of Rotherham's school age population is from an ethnic minority background (England 36%) (DfE 2024/25).
- 2.6 In Rotherham, by working in partnership, the Four Cornerstones have been developed, which are believed to be essential for ensuring that good practice in working with children, young people, parents, and carers is achieved. These are:
 - Welcome and Care
 - Value and Include
 - Work in Partnership
 - Communicate
- 2.7 When these cornerstones are integrated into practice, trust is developed and progress in achieving outcomes for children and young people is made. Without trust, systems, partnerships, organisations and families cannot work together effectively, and meaningful partnership work cannot be achieved.
- 2.8 It is acknowledged that the impact of poverty can make it even more difficult for children and young people to feel welcomed and cared for, valued and included. Children living in poverty are more likely to have poor mental health, are at higher risk of psychological distress and do less well in education. They can be more at risk of being targeted by bullies if they do not have things other children do e.g. clothes/toys/phones. Living in poverty can make children more vulnerable to exploitation by unscrupulous adults if they are then offered the things others have that they do not. Poverty affects all

aspects of childhood. It affects friendships and opportunities, creating isolation, stigma, and sadness.

2.9 Although anyone can experience poverty, research indicates there are underlying inequalities which make certain groups more vulnerable. Inequalities can mean it is more likely people will experience poverty; it can also mean they are less able to mitigate the impact of poverty.

2.10 All stakeholders have an essential role to play in preventing and reducing poverty in Rotherham. The Council and its partners, including the NHS, education, the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, businesses, and communities are already working together to address the causes of poverty and support families to reduce the impact of poverty to ensure no family is left behind.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Cabinet is asked to approve the Strategy - "No family left behind, Rotherham's commitment to addressing child poverty" - and note the ongoing work to improve family prosperity and reduce the impact of poverty across the borough.

3.2 This will enable a shared understanding of the work across the borough to improve family prosperity, reduce the impact for children in poverty now and prevent poverty in the future.

3.3 The alternative option is not to approve the Strategy. This would result in non-compliance with the Council motion which called for Cabinet to create a strategy to reduce the impact of child poverty. It would also mean that the work to improve family prosperity and reduce the impact of poverty was not visible in a single place.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 The development of the Strategy has involved collaborative working across all Rotherham Council directorates, including Public Health, Housing, Adult Social Care, Children and Young People's Services, Regeneration and Environment and Assistant Chief Executive's.

4.2 A survey collated responses from representatives of the Children and Young People's Partnership Board which have informed the development of the Strategy. Children and young people involved in voice and participation activities across are invited to nominate representatives to attend Rotherham Children and Young People's Partnership Board. The Board is co-chaired by the Chair of Rotherham Youth Cabinet and the Lead Member for Children and Young People.

4.3 The survey asked two key questions: What is poverty? and, What is the impact of poverty on children? The survey also provided the opportunity for participants to offer suggestions of how best to support children in poverty.

16 responses were received for the first question and 26 responses were received for the second question.

- 4.4 The survey responses described poverty as a lack of basic needs such as food, shelter, and clothing, or the financial inability to afford essentials, leading to significant challenges in daily life. Responses emphasised how children growing up in poverty face adverse impacts, including poor health, limited education, low self-esteem, vulnerability to bullying, and exclusion from experiences others take for granted. Respondents suggest solutions such as expanding youth clubs, providing free school meals, and offering support systems for education and career guidance as being important to address the effects of poverty on children and families.
- 4.5 Following agreement at Overview and Scrutiny Management Board, the No Family Left Behind Strategy was provided to members of Improving Lives Select Commission for pre-decision scrutiny.
- 4.6 It was noted that the Strategy successfully highlighted the activity in Rotherham to address child poverty and support children and families experiencing poverty. Members were particularly interested in Gulliver's Skills Street, the available community mental health support for children and adults, activities for families in school holidays, and the impact of family hubs.
- 4.7 It was recommended that further information be included in the Strategy about how support for children and families experiencing poverty can be accessed. To address this, section 7 of the Strategy has been reviewed and additional information included about available support under the acronym HOPE (Help, Opportunities, Prevention and Engagement) as seen in Appendix 1. A map of the Family Hub and Family Hub network sites is also included at Appendix 2.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The Strategy will cover the period 2025-2030.
- 5.2 Progress will be measured by tracking a range of indicators, which will be embedded within the council plan reporting framework. Future strategy development and actions will be underpinned by this approach. In addition, update reports will be taken through the Rotherham Together Partnership structures via the Health and Wellbeing Board.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct financial implications to the Council arising from approving the Strategy, "No family left behind, Rotherham's commitment to addressing child poverty".
- 6.2 Through the work with partners and by aligning the Strategy to key partnership priorities and plans, the Council is committed to using its resources to address the causes of child poverty and provide support and assistance to those in need, ensuring no families are left behind.

- 6.3 There are no procurement implications arising from the recommendations within this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Children Act 1989 outlines the responsibilities of Local Authorities to safeguard and promote the welfare of children by supporting a child in need and their families with the provision of services to help the family under s17 of Children Act 1989. This includes the provision of a range of services to support families to ensure children's health, development and well-being are not significantly impaired by virtue of s17 (10) of Children Act 1989.
- 7.2 Section 11 of the Children Act 2004 places duties on local authorities including children's and adult social care, public health, housing, sport, culture and leisure services having regard to the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and therefore the collaboration about this proposal across all RMBC Directorates is in line with this.
- 7.3 The legal framework around tackling child poverty specifically is the Child Poverty Act 2010 which required central government to develop a national strategy and included targets the government wanted to achieve to end child poverty. However, the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016 made changes to statutory targets around how child poverty is measured, with an emphasis on improving social mobility and under (c.7) ss & (12), 36 (2) it was deemed that the Child Poverty Act 2010 may be cited as the Life Chances Act 2010.
- 7.4 To improve life chances, the theme "No Family Left Behind" is in line with the governments mission to drive down child poverty with measures which includes expanding access to childcare, make housing more affordable and bringing down the cost of energy as referred to in its policy paper, Tackling Child Poverty: Developing Our Strategy, June 2025 with a publication due in Autumn 2025.
- 7.5 In view of the legal position, there are no legal implications by following the recommendations in this paper.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 As part of the employer of choice, HR continue to work with directorates across RMBC to identify opportunities for apprenticeships and work experience.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The Strategy aligns with key local partnership priorities and plans, including the Council Plan 2025-30, Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership plan and associated strategies, Rotherham's current and emerging Health and Wellbeing Strategies and Rotherham Health and Social Care Place Plan.

- 9.2 The Strategy describes how partners will work together to improve family prosperity and prevent and reduce the impact of poverty so that Rotherham is a great place to grow up, where children and young people have the best chance to reach their full potential. This will mean that children grow up happily, safe, in good health and develop the skills and qualifications they need to be successful.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 Equality and human rights are considered within the Strategy. Part A equalities screening is attached as Appendix 3 and the equalities assessment is attached as Appendix 4.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 Implications are included in the carbon impact assessment (Appendix 5).

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 These are referred to in the Strategy.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 These are referred to in the Strategy.

14. Accountable Officers

Helen Sweaton – Joint Assistant Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers:

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	26/08/25
Assistant Director, Financial Services	Rob Mahon	26/08/25
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	18/8/2025

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