

Public Report with Exempt Appendices  
Improving Lives Select Commission

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**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Improving Lives Select Commission – 02 December 2025

**Report Title**

Fostering Transformation Programme

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

No

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

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

**Report Author(s)**

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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

This report addresses the need to review the current Fostering Programme in the light of changing sufficiency needs for children and young people in care in Rotherham. This will incorporate the response of the Council to the tragic death of Marcia Grant, and the formal Prevention of Future Deaths' report following the inquest in July 2025.

**Recommendations**

It is recommended that the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- Note the Preventing Futures Deaths' response sent to the Assistant Coroner
- Endorse the Fostering Transformation Action Plan created in response to the wider issues in relation to fostering sufficiency and actions required from the Preventing Future Deaths' report

**List of Appendices Included**

- Appendix 1 REGULATION 28: REPORT TO PREVENT FUTURE DEATHS  
3<sup>rd</sup> September 2025

- Appendix 2 Regulation 28: Report to Prevent Future Deaths Response by Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council into the Matters of Concern in respect of the death of Marcia Grant
- Appendix 3 Fostering Transformation Board Terms of Reference
- EXEMPT - Appendix 4 Fostering Transformation Board Action Plan

### **Background Papers**

The Looked After Children and Care Leavers Sufficiency Strategy 2023- 2028  
Addendum to the Children in Care Sufficiency Strategy

### **Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel**

None

### **Council Approval Required**

No

### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

Yes or No? If yes, use text below.

Yes

*An exemption is sought for Appendix 4 under Paragraph 6b (Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment) and (Information which reveals that the authority proposes to make an order or direction under any enactment and Paragraph 2 (Information which is likely to reveal the identity of an individual.)) of Part I of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 is requested, as this report contains detailed information which identifies individuals and will inform the development of new strategy and/ or the procurement of new activity.*

*It is considered that the public interest in maintaining the exemption would outweigh the public interest in disclosing the information because a summary of the information is provided in the report, and the public identification of individuals would impact significantly on the workforce. In addition, the disclosure could adversely affect the Council's commercial interests and undermine the Council's ability to negotiate successfully for business in the future.*

## Fostering Transformation Programme

### 1. Background

- 1.1 On 5.4.23., Marcia Grant, an approved RMBC foster carer, was tragically killed. She had been caring for a 12-year-old boy, known as Child X. On the day, he removed the car keys from the home, entered Mrs Grant's car which was parked in the driveway. The vehicle made several erratic movements when Mrs Grant positioned herself behind the vehicle. The vehicle reversed twice, which caused Mrs Grant to fall and sustain life ending injuries.
- 1.2 Child X had been placed with Mrs Grant for 6 days at the time of the incident and had been the responsibility of the Local Authority since 14.3.23. There was limited information available about him, but it was known that he had received a caution for carrying a knife and had run away from one previous foster placement at the time that he was placed with Mrs Grant. Child X was convicted of death by dangerous driving in November 2023 and given a 2 year custodial sentence.

An inquest held in June and July this year made findings that the Council had contributed to the death of Mrs Grant due to a failure *to have "appropriate systems and processes in place when placing foster children, including but not limited to the lack of accurate and complete documentation, failure to communicate risks and concerns appropriately, [and] failure to conduct appropriate risk assessments..."*.

A Preventing Future Deaths report issued on 3.9.25. asked the Council to comment on the following:

- (1) Lack of placements. The lack of foster placements placed significant strain on the Local Authority to consider creative solutions to try and avoid an unauthorised placement. This led to an unsuitable placement being accepted. I was informed the shortage of placements is a both a local and a national issue and therefore both Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council and the Minister for the Department for Education are asked to consider this concern.*
- (2) Documentation and communication. Both the lack of documentation recording all the relevant risks, failure to complete forms and the lack of adequate communication of the risks in this matter led to a child being placed with a family where numerous individuals considered this was an inappropriate placement. Senior decision making was not based on all the appropriate information identifying there are inadequate systems and processes.*
- (3) Risk Assessment. Evidence was heard about the risks posed by the Child but no evidence that the risk to the foster carers or the other child in their care had been considered or assessed. Again, there was lack of documentation and no formal risk assessment document or collated risk profile for all individuals to allow proper consideration of risks.*

### 2. Key Issues

## 2.1 Sufficiency Issues

The Council recognises that there is a significant challenge in securing sufficient provision for our children and young people in care. This is a national issue and has been worsening for last five years. In 2020, Cabinet confirmed Rotherham's strategic intention to ensure more Rotherham children in care are placed within the Borough, close to their family and community networks. There has been significant investment since that time in both the residential and fostering programme, which has shown real success.

The four phases of residential development will deliver 20 residential beds and 2 emergency beds across 11 registered settings by March 2027. So far, the programme has delivered 13 residential beds and 1 emergency bed across 7 registered settings.

In relation to fostering, RMBC has successfully sustained a positive recruitment and retention rate with foster carers in the Borough and comparatively with local and national statistics have been very successful in this area. Despite a national reduction of LA approvals of approximately 32% since 2021, Rotherham's performance shows a 54.44% increase from 11 approvals in 22/23 to 17 approvals in 2023/2024. Rotherham performed well above the average approvals according to the Office of National Statistics (ONS) data.

Regionally, Rotherham's approval performance (based on rounded-up numbers) increased from Rotherham having the 3rd highest number of approvals to having the second highest numbers in the region. This reflects a sharp decline across 2 other Local Authorities. Rotherham is the highest performing LA in the region when it comes to approvals as a percentage of population, for both actuals and rounded figures.

Rotherham has maintained a cohort of experienced foster carers in the Borough and continues to recruit new foster carers with a range of skills. The Service seeks continual feedback from foster carers and utilise this to improve services and support for the fostering community. It has also invested in creative marketing strategies to target a range of local prospective foster carers. The assessment and review process for foster carers is stringent, ensuring that foster carers have the necessary knowledge, skills, and experience to undertake the role.

### Need for Review

Following a report to the Children in Care Sufficiency Board in May 2025 reviewing the current fostering recruitment strategy, it was agreed a time limited Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board should be established.

The purpose of the Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board is to provide a forum for enhanced scrutiny around the Sufficiency Strategy, to ensure a continued focus on recruitment and retention of foster carers and

to adopt recommendations from the national agenda, with a specific focus on Fostering. This will now include the response to the recommendations from the Regulation 28 Report. It is anticipated that this bespoke Board will have completed its work by May 2026.

### Response to the Preventing Future Deaths Report

In relation to the three Matters of Concern outlined in the report, the Council has responded to them as follows:

#### Lack of Placements

- detailing its sufficiency activity as set out in 2.1. to 2.7 above.

#### Documentation and Communication

- Creating a specific Fostering Duty post and ensuring much closer joint working with the Placements Team. The Scheme of delegation in relation to authorisation of placements has been updated and is authorised at a senior manager level. Our policy in terms of Placement Referral Forms for children has changed and they are now saved on files in a different way. There are also clear expectations around the completion of risk analysis sections on those forms and other documents in relation to children being placed with carers. This was all put in place in 2023 and reviewed again after the Inquest.

#### Risk Assessment

- Since the inquest, the Service has also put in place a review of standalone risk assessment forms and the threshold for using these and in which circumstances; there is also ongoing updating of other forms. The Rotherham Children and Young People's Learning Academy is also reviewing the training offer around risk assessment and management (including recording) for all staff and will roll out training in the New Year.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Improving Lives Select Commission endorse the progress of the Fostering Transformation Board and await the outcome of the development work undertaken.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

- 4.1 Foster carers have been consulted in response to the inquest findings and asked for feedback about what improvements could be made. This was constructive and proposed: a structure chart of the organisation; graduated information sharing about children at the stage foster carers have expressed an interest in offering a placement; and a contribution to the structure of placement referral forms.

Rotherham foster carers will continue be consulted as the new proposals develop and have been asked to co-produce practice guidance on matching and information sharing.

- 4.2 If significant change is recommended at the conclusion of the Review, appropriate reports will be provided for Cabinet and Scrutiny.

## **5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision**

- 5.1 The Fostering Transformation Board is planned to conclude in May 2026. Any substantive proposals will be outlined by the end of the 2026/2027 financial year.

## **6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications**

- 6.1 There are no financial and procurement implications relating to the contents of this report.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 Under section 22G of the Children Act 1989, the Local Authority is under a duty to take steps to ensure that they are able to provide sufficient accommodation for children in care. This is supplemented by the statutory guidance on securing sufficient accommodation which aims to improve the outcomes of children in care, that so far as reasonably practicable, the council secures sufficient accommodation within its area, meeting the needs of the child, consistent with their welfare. Such duty is referred to as, “the sufficient duty.” The council’s approach to that duty is set out in its strategy referred to above, which is published and has been reviewed, which is in accordance with statutory guidance.

- 7.2 The council is also required to adhere to the Care Planning, Placement and Case Review (England) Regulations 2010 when carrying out the full range of responsibilities towards children in care in relation to care planning, placement and reviews for looked after children. In addition, the National Minimum Standards for fostering services, underpinned by the Fostering Services (England) Regulation 2011 also form the basis of the legal framework that upholds a set of values in relation to the “child’s welfare, safety and needs” including “the foster carers right to have full information about the child”. The values also include having a “genuine partnership between all those involved in foster children.” The council’s approach to the recruitment, training and retention of foster cares is captured in this paper. Details of the consultation with foster cares at paragraph 4 is noted and the enhanced scrutiny provided by the Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board reaffirms that these values are addressed.

- 7.3 Following the Inquest concerning the tragic death of Mrs Grant that considered the circumstances around the placement of child X in her care, the Assistant Coroner made findings that “*Mrs Grant’s decision that she could provide child X with a short-term placement was made without her full knowledge of child X’s risks including the Youth Justice Caution and recent*

*absconsion.*” Furthermore, by the Assistant Coroner finding that, “*This was not an informed decision because of the failings of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council to have in place systems and processes to ensure full details are included and up to date forms were used.*”, meant that the statutory duty to make a report to those who can take action to prevent future deaths arose. This duty arises from Regulation 28 and 29 of the coroners (Investigation) Regulations 2009, hence the reference to the Regulation 28 report which sets out the matters of concerns quoted above. In response to these findings and matters of concern raised, the council has fulfilled its duty to reply to this report. Such duty to respond arises under paragraph 7 of Schedule 5 of Coroners and Justice Act 2009.

- 7.4 Under Regulation 29 (3) of 2009 Regulations, the response must contain “(a) details of any action that has been taken or which it is proposed will be taken by the person giving the response or any other person whether in response to the report or otherwise and set out a timetable of the action taken or proposed to be taken; or (b) an explanation as to why no action is proposed”. This legal criterion has been met within the council’s response and therefore in following the progress of the actions set out and by having the scrutiny of newly established Placements (Fostering) Transformation Board, there are no legal implications arising from this report.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

- 8.1 There are no HR implications relating to the contents of this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

- 9.1 The implications for children and young people, and the adults who care for them are included within the report.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

- 10.1 Children and young people in care are disproportionately represented across a range of health and education measures. The Fostering Transformation plan aims to increase the number of children in care who can access high quality, family based homes with opportunities and support in order that all children and young people have the strongest possible preparation for Adulthood.

## **11. Implications for CO<sub>2</sub> Emissions and Climate Change**

- 11.1 This report will not impact on the Council’s or area-wide emissions, or otherwise effect progress towards these goals.

## **12. Implications for Partners**

- 12.1 There are no implications for partners in this report.

### 13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The risk register and associated mitigation is overseen by the Fostering Transformation Board.
- 13.2 Regular updates are provided to the Fostering Transformation Board to ensure that potential barriers to the delivery of these objectives are identified and addressed in advance. This will ensure that resources are directed to areas of most need, including areas of innovation and efficiency.

#### **Accountable Officer(s)**

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

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	<b>Name</b>	<b>Date</b>
The Strategic Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley, Strategic Director, Children & Young Peoples Service	13/11/25
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader & Cabinet Member for Children & Young Peoples Service, Cllr Cusworth	14/11/25

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