

Children and Young People Partnership Board

On Monday 27th January 2025, we met in the Council Chamber of the Town Hall, and Ashaz from the Rotherham Youth Cabinet chaired our partnership board with Cllr Cusworth. We introduced ourselves and told the group our name, where we go to school or work and what we think is the best snack. We had lots of favourite snacks, like crisps, chocolate, fruit and cake, and even raspberry ripple ice cream.



We moved downstairs to the John Smith's room so we could all give our presentations on what our priorities are from the Rotherham Together Plan.



We heard presentations from:



Young Inspectors told us that their top priorities were building stronger communities, A place to be proud of and Inclusive Economy.

They told us that if communities are supported to become stronger and support each other, Climate and Health and Wellbeing will be supported as a consequence. They thought that it was important that people talk to other people, as not everyone wants to access information by an app or QR codes and felt that there should be more information in schools and community groups about Hate Crime and other Anti-Social Behaviour. Communities should also be supported to have more celebratory events that make their communities proud to showcase what is being achieved locally.



The Young Inspectors said that they want to say, 'we are from Rotherham', because sometimes it feels embarrassing to say this. They don't feel that we celebrate what we have, and we do have some wonderful places in Rotherham, like Country Parks, Gulliver's and one of the oldest buildings in South Yorkshire, the Minster. They felt to improve Rotherham, we need to improve the town centre and persuade some of the shops to re-open. They want to make the town centre vibrant again and be a place where people want to come.

The Young Inspectors told us why they'd picked Inclusive Economy. They feel that if young people can stay and learn in Rotherham it would help them have their needs met. Colleges and universities could offer better courses, so young people don't have to choose Sheffield or other cities and have to make choices outside of Rotherham. They also felt that there

should be more opportunities for apprenticeships and traineeships for those that don't want to stay in education, as well as more part time jobs being available for young people. Young people may then want to stay in Rotherham and contribute to making Rotherham a place to be proud of.



Smiles for Miles told us about their priorities from the Rotherham Together Plan. They had picked Building Stronger Communities, Health and Wellbeing and Climate and Environment.

They told us that youth clubs were really important to making the community stronger, as it means there's somewhere fun for young people to go that's safe and comfortable. This can help to keep young people off the streets where things can end up being dangerous, providing them with a trusted adult to talk to. It's good because young people can talk to these adults about subjects that matter to them without judgement, and it also helps young people mix with different people and learn about other cultures and religions. If they are local and available across Rotherham, young people don't have to rely on travel which is often a barrier.

They told us about Health and Wellbeing, and how there should be a mixture of support in and outside of school so that there's choice of who to speak to. It is important that the support is young person focused, and it could perhaps use other methods to help young people open up, like music, games and drawing. Parents should also get help, so they know how to support young people. Another thing is that young people feel the transition between mental health support for children to adults needs to be longer, as it moves at a time that is really difficult when everything else is changing too.

For Climate and Environment, Smiles for Miles told us that we should plant more trees. We need air to live, and trees give us air. If places are dirty, young people might not want to spend time out in nature, which doesn't help young people, as spending time in nature and going for walks makes young people feel better. There isn't anyone else that is going to help nature, so we need to stand up to protect it and be careful of destroying animal habitats.

Guiding Voices were next to present. As a group, Guiding Voices shared their thoughts on all areas of the Rotherham Together Plan.

For Inclusive Economy, it was felt that SEND young people need more opportunities for work and employment because it is hard to find a job, and even harder when you have an additional need. Employers may need help to understand how to make environments for SEND young people and the resources that they might need. The SEND Futures Fair is a way to help young people find support and the pathway that they need and will help to build an inclusive economy.



The Climate and Environment is also important and SEND young people thought it important to focus on developing renewable energy, as well as planting and rewilding areas to help the environment. Young people's wellbeing may be improved by creating green spaces to go. We need to have campaigns to help people understand the problems of climate change and how they can help.

Young people with SEND should have readily available support for their health and wellbeing, and they explained how Guiding Voices had discussed this and spoke about how accessing support can be difficult because you have to explain yourself over and over again to different people. It's the same with filling out lots of forms. They said that work needs to happen to prevent people from reaching crisis point as sometimes support is only available when a young person has reached crisis which is too late. A good idea would be to host walking and talking events to help young people talk about their feelings and make connections with other people, at the same time as experiencing nature which is good for mental health.

To build stronger communities, it's important to improve the local area CCTV and make it visible so that people feel safe. It would also help to co-produce with SEND young people. We know that things do happen in Rotherham, but young people don't always seem to know about them so this could be worked on. It's important to keep reaching out to SEND young people in accessible ways and websites should be checked for accessibility. We need to work together to not leave SEND young people feeling isolated and lonely.



Rotherham Youth Cabinet were next to present. They told us that their priorities were A Place to be proud of, Climate and Environment and Health and Wellbeing.

One of the manifesto aims of Rotherham Youth Cabinet is to help young people be proud of Rotherham. The town centre can sometimes feel lifeless and since there is a lot of time and money being invested in Rotherham, young people should play a key part in the decision-making

process of how these resources should be used. Young people carry out lots of positive work around Rotherham and this should be promoted. It would be good to celebrate all the amazing events the town brings.

The climate and environment is key because it affects young people's future and health. It is really important that we act now to make a change. They told us that we could encourage renewable energy use and the installation of solar panels and more green spaces would be advantageous.

The Rotherham Youth Cabinet wanted to prioritise Health and Wellbeing because it is felt that there is a mental health crisis around school stress, which isn't helped by the long waiting lists for support. Exercise and other positive activities should be promoted, and it would be good if there was more information to stop people smoking and vaping.



The final presentation was from Gemma who helps support the With Me in Mind Ambassadors. Their top priorities were Mental Health and Wellbeing, Safety in the Community (Building Stronger Communities) and Equal Access to resources (Inclusive Economy).

Gemma told us that With Me in Mind feel it's important to feel safe and supported mentally to achieve things in other areas of our lives and said there should be a focus on supporting people with school and college stress, especially managing homework and schoolwork. It would be good if teaching staff also had a better understanding of this.

For safety in the community, With Me in Mind told us it was important to mention bullying and anti-social behaviour. It would be helpful if there was better street lighting and CCTV as well as more organised activities for people to do like going to Youth Clubs. Green spaces like parks should be clean and tidy and Safety Spots could be made available throughout Rotherham, where there is a trusted adult so young people can go to one if they feel unsafe

when they are out. Perhaps more education on how bullying and anti-social behaviour effects the victim would help too.

Their last key priority was equal access to resources, as not everyone has lots of digital equipment and the other resources young people need to complete their work at home. It would be good if libraries could be modernised and made into nicer environments for young people to access so that they get equal opportunities. These could have books, digital equipment and stationery as well as information on services available for young people. It was thought that these could be called digital hubs, as it may help how young people perceive libraries. It was also mentioned that the adults that work there also need to understand who might come to use the space and stop judging groups of young people. Drop ins could also be held so young people don't need to travel to lots of different places for different things and they could also be used to host clubs and taster sessions for young people to get involved in.



We then had a networking tea and had chance to talk to other children and young people at the meeting, as well as some of the adults.

Whilst we were networking and having some food, Laura and Helen collated what we had said and put lists of the main points onto our tables for us to discuss. We then worked together to make a decision on the top three priorities on our table ready to feedback.



We all thought that there needed to be more support before crisis, and that mental health support should be easier to access, as support was often offered too late. If self-referral forms were taken more seriously, that might help.

We also spoke about some of the gaps we think there are, like for boys under 18 and when we transition from a young person to an adult, because we find the gap tough. We think it's really important that schools are more aware of health and wellbeing, and that more councillors might help.

It would be good if there were safe spaces around the community with trusted adults, or within school, which is particularly hard now that schools lock the toilets. Sometimes it's important for us as young people to leave the room when things are getting a little bit too much, and this should be facilitated.

Our actions:

- 1) Have easier access to support, for physical health like stopping smoking and fitness opportunities, as well as Mental Health.
- 2) Have a diagnostic centre for Mental Health.
- 3) Understand the pathway of how we transition from young people to adults within the service.
- 4) Encourage schools and parents to be more aware of Mental Health and the struggles we are facing as young people.
- 5) Ensure there are safe spaces for young people to go when they need help.
- 6) Walking and talking events to help us understand our feelings and improve our connections.

We all know that the environment and climate are important, as things that happen now will impact us in our later life.

We would like to reduce pollution and make sure that we are re-wilding in Rotherham.



It would be nice if there was a bigger focus on keeping areas clean, so perhaps more bins could help, and we could plant more trees to make our green spaces nicer, as we know having spaces to go also helps our mental health.

Perhaps having smoke/vape free outdoor zones would also make being outside more pleasant.

Our actions:

- 1) Learn more about what's being done to tackle pollution, what forms of renewable energy are used in the borough and how we can help.
- 2) Create safe outdoor spaces to help improve our mental health.
- 3) Have more bins in areas that could be cleaner.
- 4) Implement smoke/vape free outdoor zones.



We spoke about our communities and thought about what we would like to see within them to make them stronger. We thought it sounded better to think of this as 'bringing local people together', as this felt more accessible to us.

We want to make sure there are places young people can go to share experiences and have fun and thought Youth Clubs were extremely important for this and that it would be good to see more of them, they might also stop trouble and help to lower crime rates. It would also help us learn more about other cultures and religions and would help us celebrate different occasions together, like Eid and Diwali. It would be good if we could come together to improve our connections and friendships.

We want to feel safe in our communities to the introduction of safety spots in the borough could help where young people know there will be a trusted adult that they can talk to if they feel unsafe.

Our actions:

- 1) Learn about the existing youth clubs available in the borough and consider where we might need more youth clubs.
- 2) Look to understand different cultures, religions and celebrations so that we can come together and share experiences.
- 3) Have safety spots available within the borough with trusted adults.
- 4) Improve safety within the borough, making sure there's enough CCTV and street lighting.
- 5) Learn about the impact of the victim when bullying takes place through social media.

We've been told that there's lots going on in Rotherham, like the Children's Capital of Culture, and lots of events like music festivals, parades and film festivals.

There should be more promotion of these so we know what's happening and can feel proud of the place that we live in. The socialisation will bring people together.



Our actions:

- 1) Rejuvenate abandoned buildings like Argos.
- 2) Celebrate the things we have in Rotherham more, like the green spaces and Clifton Park Museum.
- 3) Communicate ongoing events and opportunities more so that young people know what is happening in Rotherham.



We know that it's important for Rotherham to be inclusive and think that a lot of things we discussed interlink into other areas.

We want to bring people together and ensure there's opportunity for everyone in Rotherham. There should be more work experience and better links to career paths which should create more jobs in the area, especially part time jobs. This would help people have a purpose and a role in the community and bring people together.

We spoke about how not all people have access to the same things, and how community spaces should be available, so everyone has the choice to use computers, Wi-Fi, stationery and books.

Our actions:

- 1) Expand courses at colleges and develop apprenticeships to help provide opportunity for young people and encourage them to stay in Rotherham.
- 2) Introduce Digital Hubs to provide a safe and accessible space for young people to use without judgement.
- 3) There should be more support in y10 and y11 to help young people figure out what they can do and help them see their pathway.
- 4) There should be more work experience opportunities available to young people.
- 5) Clearer information on access to work for SEND young people.
- 6) The Futures Fair should continue.

After we fed back our opinions, we voted to decide our collective three top priorities.

These are:

- 1) Building Stronger Communities
- 2) Health and Wellbeing
- 3) Climate and Environment



We ran out of time for Helen to tell us what we did after the last meeting, but we received a presentation afterwards which told us about the updates on our actions.

The presentation told us that colleagues in Public Health were feeding the information we provided about tackling vaping in school toilets into the next headteachers meeting where they were planning to see what responses the headteachers had to our concerns.

We also found out that the vandalised metal chairs at the bus station had been replaced with foam chairs, and new posters had been developed for information sharing and new processes put in place for improved support from South Yorkshire Police with a Mobile Anti-Social Behaviour Team being employed.

In terms of the Council Plan, Tanya has told the board that she will keep us informed about ~~what decisions have been made and the impact that we've had on the council plan, and~~ that both safety and children and young people having fun things to do are being considered as part of this process.

CAMHS are working on their Thrive Service Improvement work and will facilitate a launch. This will help us understand what CAMHS do. CAMHS have also launched a new referral form, ensuring there is an element of child's voice, and CAMHS are engaging with the Young People's Advisory Group around what a drop-in service could look like.