Public Report
Cabinet

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Cabinet – 16 November 2026

Report Title
Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025 to 2026

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?
No, but it has been included on the Forward Plan

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report
Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)
Vicky Chew, Head of Safeguarding, CYPS

Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary

Each Local Safeguarding Children Partnership is required to publish an annual assurance report. The report for 2025 to 2026 sets out the effectiveness of Rotherham's multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, progress against partnership priorities, areas requiring further assurance and the priorities for 2026 to 2027.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Notes the contents of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025 to 2026; and

2. Notes the partnership priorities and areas requiring continued assurance for 2026 to 2027.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership: Annual Assurance Report, 2025-26
Appendix 2 Initial Equality Impact Assessment
Appendix 3 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers
Working together to safeguard children 2026: statutory guidance
Cabinet Report - Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements Nov 2024
South Yorkshire Multi Agency Safeguarding Arrangements

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
No

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Assurance Report 2025 to 2026

1. Background

1.1 Working Together to Safeguard Children is the statutory guidance governing how agencies work together to help, support and protect children. The Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) brings together Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB) and South Yorkshire Police (SYP), alongside education and other relevant agencies.

1.2 The Lead Safeguarding Partners are the Chief Executive of Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, the Chief Executive of NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board and the Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police. Their responsibilities are exercised locally through the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the RSCP Executive, comprising: the Executive Director, CYPS; Chief Nurse and Director of Nursing, ICB; Rotherham District Commander, SYP; and Head of Safeguarding, CYPS).

1.3 The statutory guidance requires the Partnership to publish an annual report setting out what partners have done, how effective the arrangements have been, what difference the work has made for children and families, the contribution of partner agencies, learning from reviews and scrutiny, and how partnership resources have been used.

1.4 The appended report covers activity from 1 April 2025 to 31 March 2026. It draws on inspection findings, performance information, multi-agency audits, case review activity, training evaluation, independent scrutiny and the work of the Partnership's delivery and working groups.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The report provides overall assurance that Rotherham's safeguarding arrangements are effective and supported by strong multi-agency leadership, engagement and accountability. The Partnership has stable governance, good attendance at strategic and operational groups and an established culture of professional challenge. The report is also clear that stronger evidence is still needed to show how strategic activity changes children's day-to-day experiences and outcomes.

2.2 External inspection provides significant assurance. Ofsted rated Rotherham children's services Outstanding in 2025, identifying stable leadership, compassionate and high-quality social work, thorough child-focused assessments and effective partnership working. The local area SEND inspection found that arrangements typically lead to positive experiences and outcomes, while identifying the need to reduce waits for neurodevelopmental assessment and improve occupational therapy and speech and language therapy provision.

2.3 Safeguarding activity shows a generally positive position over the four-year period, with reductions in Child Protection Plans and Section 47 enquiries followed by a more stable picture. During 2025 to 2026, around 620 children were supported on a Child Protection Plan, and 914 children were in need at year end. The number of children in care increased slightly from 471 to 477 and will remain under review.

2.4 Elective Home Education has increased from approximately 450 to around 1,000 children. This is a national trend but represents a material local shift in demand and is assessed as a red area in the report. Six-monthly reporting to the Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group will strengthen oversight of children who are also open to Children's Services or where there are educational concerns. The report notes increases in both children missing education and Elective Home Education. The Elective Home Education data show a rise from around 450 children in 2023–24 Term 1 to 900 in 2025–26 Term 2. The Partnership identifies Children Out of Sight as a priority for 2026–27. Specific oversight for Elective Home Education includes six-monthly reporting to the Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group for children open to Children's Services or where there are educational concerns. Wider work includes the Safeguarding Education Risk Assessment and an Educational Neglect Policy.

2.5 The Partnership has established a Neglect Pathway, expanded Graded Care Profile 2 training, introduced the RESHHAPED screening tool (a professional multi-agency safeguarding tool used by the RSCP) and strengthened links with education, health, substance misuse and probation services. Completion of Graded Care Profile 2 assessments remains inconsistent, with approximately 27% of children on a Child Protection Plan having a completed assessment. The report gives reasonable assurance that neglect is being identified earlier, and identifies the need for management escalation, audit and clearer evidence of impact on children.

2.6 The Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group has strengthened multi-agency oversight of children missing education, children who are electively home educated and young people who are not in education, employment or training. Work during 2026 to 2027 will include the Safeguarding Education Risk Assessment, an Educational Neglect Policy, implementation of learning from Operation Lemur Alpha, online safety activity and support for schools responding to harmful sexual behaviour.

2.7 The first phase of the Harm Outside the Home Pathway has been launched, using multi-agency meetings with children and parents to develop safety plans for young people at risk of exploitation. Approximately 12 young people had entered the pathway at the time of reporting, and the EVOLVE team worked with 119 young people during the year. Priorities include reducing repeat missing episodes, strengthening disruption activity, responding to online harm, improving investigation outcomes and maintaining a focus on children facing both sexual and criminal exploitation.

2.8 Practice, Performance and Learning arrangements completed four thematic multi-agency audits and a targeted review of the Child Sexual Abuse Risk

Assessment Panel. Five referrals for local child safeguarding practice reviews were considered; none progressed to a rapid review or national notification. The learning highlights the importance of understanding family history, improving cross-border information sharing, involving fathers and male carers, maintaining professional curiosity and recording children's lived experience. There were 773 attendances at partnership training and approximately 4,400 successful e-learning completions.

2.9 Children and families contributed to individual safety planning and wider survey activity, but the Partnership recognises that their influence on strategic assurance and decision-making must be stronger. Planned work includes presenting the annual report to Young Inspectors, involving children and families in Families First and Child Sexual Abuse planning and implementation activity, and exploring a child safeguarding reference and scrutiny group.

2.10 The priorities for 2026 to 2027 are Children Out of Sight; Exploitation and Harm Outside the Home; Vulnerable Babies and Family Help; and Child Sexual Abuse. Neglect will continue to be embedded and monitored as it moves from a time-limited strategic priority. Across all priorities, the Partnership will strengthen children's voice, multi-agency information sharing and evidence of impact. Neglect will move into a monitoring and assurance phase, with continued oversight through Practice, Performance and Learning, as Child Sexual Abuse is introduced as a strategic priority. Across all priorities, the Partnership will strengthen children’s voice, multi-agency information sharing and evidence of impact.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 The option of not publishing the annual assurance report is not available because publication is a statutory requirement. Cabinet is not being asked to approve the operational activity of individual partner agencies.

3.2 The recommended proposal is that Cabinet notes the annual assurance report, including the overall assurance position, and the Partnership's priorities for 2026 to 2027.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 No separate formal consultation was undertaken for this retrospective assurance report. The report draws on feedback obtained through safeguarding activity, audits, practitioner engagement, surveys and the involvement of children and parents in Harm Outside the Home safety planning.

4.2 A child-friendly and family-friendly summary has been produced. During 2026 to 2027, the Partnership will strengthen the direct involvement of children and families in scrutiny, strategy development and assessment of impact.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 The annual report was published by 30 September 2026 and shared with the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the Department for Education in accordance with statutory guidance.

5.2 The Lead Safeguarding Partners and Delegated Safeguarding Partners are collectively accountable for the multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The RSCP Executive will oversee delivery, with independent scrutiny provided by the Independent Chair and Scrutineer.

5.3 Progress against the 2026 to 2027 priorities will be monitored through delivery group reports, the partnership scorecard, audit and review activity, and exception reporting to the RSCP Executive. The next annual report will provide public accountability for progress and impact.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no direct additional financial implications arising from Cabinet noting the annual assurance report. Partnership activity is funded through contributions from Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, NHS South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board, the South Yorkshire Mayoral Combined Authority (policing and crime function) and the Probation Service, together with resources carried forward from the previous year.

6.2 Total expenditure for 2025/26 was £278k against total available resources (including resources carried forward from the previous year) of £313k resulting in an underspend of £35k. The year end underspend has been carried forward into 2026/27.

6.3 The RSCP Executive has scrutinised the underspend. The carried-forward resources will support additional training associated with the Child Sexual Abuse Strategy, the Families First Partnership Programme and learning from Operation Lemur Alpha. Any further expenditure will remain subject to partnership and Council financial governance.

6.4 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 Sections 16E and 16G of the Children Act 2004, as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017, establish the statutory multi-agency safeguarding arrangements. The safeguarding partners for a local authority area are the Local Authority, the relevant Integrated Care Board and the Chief Constable for the relevant police area. The safeguarding partners are required to make arrangements to work together, and with relevant agencies, to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the area.

7.2 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2026 requires the safeguarding partners to publish a yearly report on the impact and effectiveness of the multi-

agency safeguarding arrangements. The report must address the activity undertaken during the preceding 12-month period and provide evidence of the effectiveness and impact of the arrangements, including learning and improvement, partner contributions, independent scrutiny, the use of resources, information sharing and the involvement and experience of children and families. Annual reports should be published by the end of September each year, reflecting activity undertaken during the previous financial year, and provided to the Child Safeguarding Practice Review Panel and the Department for Education within seven days of publication.

7.3 Cabinet is being asked to note the Annual Assurance Report and the Partnership's priorities and areas requiring continued assurance. Cabinet's consideration of the report does not transfer, replace or otherwise alter the statutory functions, operational responsibilities or accountability of the individual safeguarding partners, which remain responsible for discharging their respective statutory duties. There are no legal implications by following the recommended proposal at 3.2.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no direct staffing changes arising from the recommendations. Delivery of the Partnership's priorities will continue to require agencies to release staff for training, audit, review, governance and multi-agency practice development. Any workforce changes will be managed through the relevant organisation's established processes.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The annual report describes how partners work together to identify risk, protect children and improve safeguarding practice. Developments in neglect, education safeguarding, exploitation, professional challenge and partnership learning are intended to support earlier help, clearer assessment and better coordinated protection.

9.2 The report also identifies where children are not yet experiencing a consistently strong response. These areas include variable use of Graded Care Profile 2, increasing numbers of children outside mainstream education, online harm, cumulative vulnerability, access to some specialist services and the need for children’s lived experience to have greater influence on strategic decisions.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 The Partnership's work contributes to the Council's commitment to reduce inequality and uphold children's rights. Assurance activity must continue to consider how poverty, disability, ethnicity, sex, care status and education arrangements affect children's visibility, experience of services and exposure to harm.

10.2 An Initial Equality Impact Assessment is attached at Appendix 2. The Cabinet recommendation is to note a retrospective assurance report rather than

approve a new service or policy. Strategies and policies referred to within the annual report remain subject to their own equality analysis where required.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are minimal direct implications for carbon emissions. Most partnership meetings are held online or through existing venues. Any future commissioned activity with a material carbon impact will be considered through the relevant decision-making and procurement process.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Publication of the annual report supports the joint accountability of the three statutory safeguarding partners and recognises the contribution of education, probation, health providers, community and voluntary organisations and other relevant agencies.

12.2 Each partner remains responsible for its own statutory compliance, operational practice, workforce development and resource decisions. The RSCP Executive and delivery groups provide collective oversight, challenge and assurance, supported by independent scrutiny.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Failure to publish a compliant annual report within the required timescale could result in escalation to the Secretary of State and reduce public and partner confidence. This risk is mitigated through oversight by the Business Unit, the RSCP Executive, the Delegated Safeguarding Partners and the Independent Chair and Scrutineer.

13.2 The principal safeguarding risks identified in the report are inconsistent implementation of agreed practice, limited evidence of impact, the increase in children who are less visible to universal services, online harm and gaps in the strategic influence of children and families. These risks are being addressed through delivery plans, performance reporting, audit, training, case learning and independent scrutiny.

14. Accountable Officers

Nicola Curley, Executive Director, CYPS

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	**Date**
Chief Executive	John Edwards	27/10/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	16/10/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	20/10/26

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This report is published on the Council's website.