A ‘Staying Safe’ consultation was launched by the Government in July 2007, and during that period, parents, children and young people, members of the general public and practitioners were consulted about their concerns in relation to children’s safety. The consultation closed on 31 October 2007.

The resulting government action plan sets out the work which the Government will take forward over the next three years to drive improvements in children and young people’s safety, which will be measured by the new Public Service Agreement to improve children and young people’s safety.

The Staying Safe Action Plan covers three main areas: universal safeguarding, involving work to keep all children and young people safe and to create safe environments for them; targeted safeguarding to reduce the risks of harm for vulnerable groups of children and young people; and responsive safeguarding, involving responding effectively when children are harmed.

Rotherham has already made significant progress in areas of child safety, for example, reducing road traffic accidents involving children and encouraging safe outdoor play and activities for children and young people. However, there is always work still to be done. This report outlines the key areas of the plan and describes work that has begun to map local developments and identify any gaps which require further action.

6. Recommendations:

(1) Members note the detail of the Staying Safe Action Plan 2008 and receives 6 monthly updates on local progress and the implications of planned national initiatives for the safety of children and young people.
7. Proposals and Details:

This Action Plan is a direct result of the Government’s 2007 ‘Staying Safe’ consultation which collated the views of parents, children and practitioners through a variety of means. The ‘headline’ messages from the consultation process were:

- That the consultation and the proposals for the Plan were widely supported.
- That respondents of all ages thought that in general, children and young children are currently safe and well looked after.
- That keeping children and young people safe is the responsibility of everyone.
- That society should aim to strike a balance between keeping children safe and protecting them whilst affording them the freedom to explore and learn about risks for themselves.
- The role of the media and how it portrays young people and the risks they faced.
- Practitioners commented that they felt that there were still barriers to successful multi-agency working.
- That child poverty is an issue that must first be tackled to have a positive impact on child safety.
- The responsibility for raising children is that of the parents and services exist to support parents in creating a happy, safe environment in which children can grow.

The Action Plan considers the safety of children in three ways; Universal Safeguarding which considers the safety of all children; Targeted Safeguarding which identifies strategies for safeguarding groups of children and young people who may be at greater risk of harm and; Responsive Safeguarding which considers responses to those situations where children do suffer harm.

7.1 Universal safeguarding – helping all children and young people to stay safe

The Plan acknowledges that the best way to keep children and young people safe is to prevent harm from occurring in the first place. Relevant initiatives are:

- **Promoting play and positive activities.** A campaign is planned to encourage parents to let their children play outside, alongside an investment in outdoor play spaces and a new ‘Out and About’ framework for teachers’ continuing professional development (CPD) reinforcing the message to schools that risk assessment must be proportionate. A new Child Safety Education coalition will be established.
• **Understanding and managing risks.** A new Child Safety Education Coalition will deliver and evaluate child safety education across the country, and to launch a major communications campaign on children’s safety and risk management. There will be moves to strengthen safety considerations within the PSHE curriculum and its associated professional development for teachers, and a review of the delivery of sex and relationships education in schools.

• New guidance and training on safer recruitment ensure a **safe workforce**, continued work to implement the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA) scheme, enhanced criminal record checks on a wider range of occupations, improved disclosure service arrangements via work with the Criminal Records Bureau, and work with the Centre for Excellence in Leadership and the National College for School Leadership.

• A **new ICT curriculum** for Key Stage 3, being introduced in September 2008, will have an increased emphasis on internet safety.

• Support to **Local Safeguarding Children Boards** (LSCBs), including a range of resources and guidance to improve their performance and effectiveness. Funding to local authorities for child death review processes, one responsibility of LSCBs, has been previously announced. Best practice in joint working between children’s and housing services will be published.

• Ongoing implementation of the 2007 **child road safety strategy** and encouragement to local authorities to create more 20 mph. a consultation on a new driver training and testing system to address the safety of drivers and passengers in this age group.

• A **new guide on the Child Health Promotion Programme (CHPP)** published in spring 2008, and an expansion of the **Family Nurse Partnership Programme** over the next three years.

• A new National Safeguarding Unit for the **Third Sector** to provide advice and assistance to all third sector organisations on safer recruitment procedures, risk management in activity provision and anti-bullying policies, to help reassure parents about their children taking part in activities run by the third sector and how to choose a club or society; and also help ensure that details of the ISA scheme are properly communicated to third sector providers.

### 7.2 Targeted safeguarding – protecting vulnerable children and young people

Some groups of children and young people are more vulnerable to harm than others. The action plan therefore includes proposals which target at risk groups including looked after children, children from families facing multiple disadvantage, disabled children, young offenders and children growing up in deprived areas.

• **To improve practice in children’s social care**, the new Children’s Workforce Action Plan will include proposals to tackle recruitment and retention and to accelerate the pace of workforce re-modelling in social
care. There will be National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence guidelines for health professionals in 2009 on the identification of children with suspected abuse... There are also proposals to establish awards for safeguarding and showcase good practice through the local authority beacon scheme.

- There will be a priority review of local area accident prevention, considering a small number of areas in detail as the basis of recommendations to improve work in this field. This will include new home safety equipment scheme, and guidance for professionals on common risks in the home and effective intervention to prevent accidents and injuries.

- Measures address parental problems, especially domestic abuse and substance abuse, which impact on children’s welfare. the implementation of existing strategies (for example, on support services for parents, domestic violence, young carers and the Family Nurse Partnerships and Family Intervention Projects) or publication of new ones, such as that on drugs. There will be some new publications - research findings on the impact of parental mental illness, alcohol and drug misuse and domestic violence on children’s development; NICE/SCIE (Social Care Institute for Excellence) guidelines on practice in five areas to test alternative approaches to improving the life chances of people with chaotic lives and multiple needs; a resource manual for Nominated Health Professionals (NHPs), working with Family Intervention Projects; and NICE/SCIE guidelines on parenting.

- Improving safety on the streets through existing or contemporary initiatives: integrating neighbourhood policing with wider local authority work such as neighbourhood management; the forthcoming Youth Crime Action Plan; peer mentoring in schools; work of the police, local authorities and transport operators to tackle crime and anti-social behaviour on public transport; and additional investment for positive activities programmes in 2008-2009 in 15 local authorities particularly affected by gang culture.

- Guidance is to be published on several issues relating to disabled children: on safeguarding disabled children; helping schools tackle the bullying of children with special educational needs (SEN) and disabilities; and for health professionals on transition which includes a reference to personal safety in a self-assessment tool for young people.

- New guidance will be published on child employment to help employers and young people more easily and effectively follow the legal requirements.

- Two new youth justice strategies are forthcoming – on safeguarding for children and young people in the secure estate; and to improve health and social care services for young people subject to the criminal justice system. Also the findings of an independent review of restraint in juvenile secure settings, and the Government’s response to a consultation on the treatment of young witnesses are anticipated.
• A DCSF action plan on young runaways and missing children was published in summer 2008. There will also be an early review of emergency accommodation provision, to consider how local authorities can best provide safe places and ‘breathing spaces’ for young runaways, and revised guidance on children missing from home, with explicit reference to services for particularly vulnerable groups such as children from abroad who may be trafficked.

• Measures previously noted in the Children’s Plan on alcohol and drugs.

• Improved listening services for children and adults (via a £30 million grant to NSPCC Childline announced in July 2007), and the broader communications campaign on safety to highlight the role of the public and the message that children’s safety is everyone’s responsibility.

7.3 Responsive safeguarding – responding when children and young people have been harmed

There are specific proposals in respect of three areas:

• Children entering or leaving the country - new guidelines on cross-border issues for children’s services professionals; implementation of reforms and guidance concerning unaccompanied asylum seeking children and trafficked children; and a code of practice on keeping children safe from harm, following placing the Border and Immigration Agency’s duties towards children on a statutory footing.

• Sexual exploitation and abuse – implementation of a number of existing strategies (on prostitution; sexual violence and abuse; protection of children from sex offenders), national service guidelines through the Victims of Violence and Abuse Prevention Programme (VVAPP), to be published by Summer 2008; and a pilot of a stepped-care approach to mental health treatment and care for individuals affected by domestic and sexual violence and abuse.

• Forced marriage – implementing the Forced Marriage (Civil Protection) Act 2007 by Autumn 2008; placing guidelines from the Forced Marriage Unit, including for social workers, police, education and health professionals, on a statutory footing; and developing national policy in this area (including building the capacity of schools to recognise and handle the issue).

7.4 A local gap analysis

Progress has been made in beginning to track progress nationally and to map local activity against the national work streams in the Staying Safe Action Plan. This will be beneficial for the work of the Children Board and the Safeguarding Children Board as there is an overlap with the national Children Plan. A first draft is attached as an appendix. The document will continue to be populated and developed.
8. Finance:

There are few references to specific funding proposals, and all these have been previously announced. It is not yet clear how much new funding will be available directly to local authorities for the work streams outlined in the Staying Safe Action Plan.

9. Risks and Uncertainties:

The Children and Young People’s Board and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board have to balance attention to new areas of safeguarding activity whilst maintaining traditional a focus on traditional child protection work.

The Staying Safe Action Plan is ambitious and already a number of the government’s initiatives are behind schedule.

Child safety is a priority in Rotherham and the Council and partner members have already achieved a number of successes. The gap analysis exercise has been valuable in raising awareness of planned initiatives and agencies will be ready to respond to them.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications:

Staying safe is a fundamental part of the Children's Plan (2007) and follows the publication of Every Child Matters (2005). The ‘Staying Safe’ action plan is based on the underlying principle that children cannot enjoy their childhoods or achieve their full potential unless they are safe (p.5). The action plan contains relatively little that is new but collates many related policies and initiatives which have a bearing on ‘staying safe’. Around 20 sets of guidance and similar materials will be forthcoming.

Thirty Public Service Agreements (PSAs) for the Comprehensive Spending Review period 2008-11 were announced by the Government last year. These include PSA 13: Improve children and young people’s safety, which will be monitored using four indicators:

- percentage of children who have experienced bullying
- percentage of children referred to children’s social care who received an initial assessment within seven working days
- hospital admissions caused by unintentional and deliberate injuries
- Preventable child deaths, as recorded through child death review panel processes.
A new Child Safety PSA Board (with representatives from 12 government departments and units) will monitor delivery of the PSA, and LSCBs will have a crucial role to play at local level in delivering improvements against the PSA.

Other PSAs will also have a positive impact on children and young people’s safety, for example those concerning child poverty; health and well-being; community cohesion; and alcohol and drugs.

Within the new National Indicator Set for Local Government, 16 indicators, listed in the action plan, relate to children and young people’s safety, and these will be part of each local area’s discussions, with regional Government Offices, about Local Area Agreement (LAA) priorities. Given the role of the police in child protection, there is a specific focus on safeguarding children within their own performance framework.

New strategic and key performance indicators on child abuse cases are being developed by the Home Office, the Association of Chief Police Officers and HMIC, to be included in the new Assessments of Policing and Community Safety framework being introduced by the Home Office in 2008 and due to be in place by 2010.

The implementation and effectiveness of specific projects identified in the action plan are to be evaluated, and a series of research projects on safeguarding has been commissioned.

The action plan sets out new commitments on children’s safety, including a new £18m home safety equipment scheme targeted at vulnerable areas, a Child Safety Education Coalition and a new National Safeguarding Unit for the Third Sector.

11. **Background Papers and Consultation:**
   Staying Safe Action Plan (2008)

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