

Rotherham

Area Assessment

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oneplace

for an independent overview
of local public services

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Rotherham at a glance

This independent assessment by six inspectorates sets out how well local public services are tackling the major issues in Rotherham. It says how well they are delivering better results for local people and how likely these are to improve in future. If, and only if, our assessment shows that the following special circumstances are met in relation to a major issue, we use flags to highlight our judgements. We use a green flag to highlight where others can learn from outstanding achievements or improvements or an innovation that has very promising prospects of success. We use a red flag to highlight where we have significant concerns about results and future prospects that are not being tackled adequately. This means that local partners need to do something more or different to improve these prospects.

Green flags - exceptional performance or innovation that others can learn from

No green flags have been identified for Rotherham

Red flags - significant concerns, action needed

No red flags have been identified for Rotherham

The local area

Most of Rotherham's population lives in urban areas though large parts of the borough are rural. Half of the land is used for agriculture. The area has a population of around 253,400 people. The population is ageing in line with the rest of England. The borough's population is growing as more people are coming to live there, most recently from Eastern Europe. There is a small but significant minority ethnic population with the largest group being people of Kashmiri or Pakistani origin.

People in Rotherham are generally not well off but, compared with other areas, poverty has decreased in the past five years. Employment rates are lower in Rotherham than many other parts of the country and jobs often do not pay well. Skill levels are also lower so it is not as easy to attract new jobs and businesses into Rotherham. The greatest deprivation is found around central Rotherham and the eastern ward of Maltby: these are also the areas where there are most people not working. House prices are lower in Rotherham than nationally.

The health of people in Rotherham is worse than for England as a whole. There are also differences between the health of people within Rotherham: men and women in more prosperous areas are likely to live longer than those in more deprived areas.

Rotherham's Council, public services, voluntary organisations and businesses are working together in partnership. They have agreed priorities and targets for improvement.

The next section tells you how Rotherham's public services are doing in each of their local priority areas.

How is Rotherham doing?

Achieving: building an area that is prosperous with a vibrant economy and flourishing town centre

Partners across both public and private sectors face big challenges: to expand and strengthen the local economy, help people back into work and improve skills.

The priority is to make Rotherham's economy more resilient by creating more higher-skilled jobs. To attract and retain new types of employer into the borough the local workforce will need to be better educated and trained.

Rotherham has become a more prosperous place in the past ten years. More people are working and more new businesses are starting up or relocating to the borough. But the actual proportion of the working age population in work in 2009 - at 70.4 per cent - remains lower than the regional and national averages.

Many people have been out of work for a long time. They typically live in the poorer parts of Rotherham. Partners are working together to help these people return to work by linking jobs, skills and training but their situation has not changed much in recent years. The challenge remains of improving prospects for this particular group.

The Council, working with others, has been proactive in reducing the impact of recession, which has hit Rotherham hard. Successes have included working with a local Rotherham company and other employers to help people find other jobs before the factories closed.

Rotherham town centre is being improved to make it more attractive and bring new shops and businesses into the area. Redevelopment projects are carrying on thanks to public money. This should help to take advantage of changes in the economy and enable it to offer a distinctive alternative to shopping centres like Meadowhall.

Learning: people are skilled, informed, creative, innovative and challenging

Children's performance at school is generally worse than similar areas,

although pre-school education and GCSE results are improving. However, more young people need to stay on in education after the age of 16 to improve overall skills levels.

School results are variable. Children start primary school with relatively good speaking, listening and reading skills thanks to early years support. But later primary school results, in particular reading, and for boys, are poor. Schools are actively targeting those who fall behind.

Results in 2008 were still lower than most of England and the gap was not closing. Within Rotherham, poor educational attainment is concentrated to a greater extent on the more deprived neighbourhoods. Asian pupils generally are not doing so well at GCSE.

Early indications are that GCSE results are getting better. In 2009, more than 47.5 per cent of students gained five or more good GCSEs including English and Maths, according to recent figures. They still need to be checked but this would be one of the best improvement rates in the region.

Rotherham's schools have improved in recent times. Half the area's secondary schools are now rated as 'good' or better although this still leaves the other half as only 'adequate'.

Rotherham Council and the Chamber of Commerce are working well to encourage enterprise amongst school children. This has inspired teachers and given confidence to children, particularly in primary schools, who have produced some good quality work.

Alive: people are healthy, feel good, are active and enjoy life

Many people in Rotherham need to make some changes if their health is to improve. Life expectancy - at 80 years for women and 76 for men - is shorter than the English average. This gap is not closing. In the poorest parts of Rotherham, people live, on average, six years less than those in the more prosperous areas.

People have access to good health and community services. This is helping to stop so many people dying early from heart disease and stroke - rates have more than halved since 1991, faster than the English average. Cancer deaths are coming down at the same pace as nationally but the gap is still there.

More mums are breastfeeding, fewer babies are dying young and the number of babies born with low weight is also going down.

About one in five people still smoke in Rotherham - including a relatively high proportion of women and expectant mothers. A high number of young people say they smoke and drink compared with their peers in other parts of the country.

More people are overweight or obese compared with the England average. One in five children are obese and the problem is getting worse. Partners

have good plans for tackling the problem, especially among children. Early signs are promising but it is too soon to claim success.

Too many teenagers are getting pregnant. The numbers have only reduced by 10 per cent since 1998 despite attempts to improve sexual health and change behaviour. The gap with the national average has not closed. Targeted work with at-risk teenagers is having good results in reducing pregnancies and is being extended to two more areas.

The poorest families in Rotherham show low take-up of tax credits. This is worrying because poverty is closely linked with ill health.

Adults and older people can expect excellent care in Rotherham and are helped to stay in their own home when they become less able. Increasing numbers of people have personal budgets so they can organise their own care. Nursing and care homes also provide good care for those that need them.

Safe: neighbourhoods are safe, clean, green and well maintained

Rotherham is a safe place to live. Partners are working together well to improve the quality of life in neighbourhoods across the borough. Overall crime came down by 13 per cent in 2008/09 and Rotherham is roughly comparable to similar towns and cities in England and Wales.

Some poorer areas suffer much more from the effects of crime. Partners have worked closely with local residents in these areas and have achieved significant reductions in crime and anti-social behaviour. This has also had the effect of involving residents more and improving their levels of trust in public services to bring about change.

Police, youth workers and others are working together to help young people stay out of trouble and fewer young people are getting involved with crime and repeat offending.

Some vulnerable children and young people do not always get the help they need to stay safe. Rotherham does not have enough children's social workers to carry out all the tasks they need to do. This means they are not always able to respond quickly and well enough to all referrals. Young people in Rotherham are more likely to experience bullying than in many other places. Partners, including schools, are committed to challenging this problem.

The quality of housing is getting better but there are not enough affordable homes in Rotherham. More people have their names down for a Council house than ten years ago while at the same time Council owned housing has reduced.

The Council is working on plans to bring its own housing stock through a period of financial uncertainty. Inspectors will keep an eye on those plans to make sure that tenants' interests are being looked after and that the investment is protected.

Proud: people, businesses, and pride in the borough are at the heart of the vision

The Rotherham Partnership is committed to making people feel proud to live and work in Rotherham. Civic pride can help people to get on better together and make Rotherham a better, more prosperous place to live. There is more work to do.

Residents' perceptions of how well people get on together are not as good as in other places. Partners need to understand the reasons why people think this so they can effectively address people's real concerns.

Partners want local people to feel proud about where they live. They have invested in large-scale public events, including a popular Diversity Festival - part of the annual Rotherham Show, and new ways of communicating with residents, such as Rotherham News. It is not easy to tell whether these activities are having the desired impact but partners need to find ways of measuring what they do. This is to satisfy themselves they are achieving their aims and giving good value for money.

Rotherham's work on preventing any growth of violent extremism is very good.

People from different cultures and countries continue to settle in the borough. Many people arriving know little about local life. Neighbourhood management projects have provided information and training for new residents on how public services work - and to help ensure people of different backgrounds get on well in their changing neighbourhoods.

About Rotherham

A recent survey shows that in Rotherham 74 per cent of people are satisfied with their immediate local area as a place to live. This is broadly the same as the average for similar areas and lower than the national average of 81 per cent.

Rotherham has a population of around 253,400 people. The population is ageing, much like the rest of the country. There is a small but increasing ethnic minority population due in part to recent arrivals from Eastern Europe. The largest minority groups are people of Kashmiri or Pakistani origin, who make up 2.1 per cent of the population.

Most people live in urban areas but there are also large areas of countryside and smaller communities away from Rotherham centre.

People in Rotherham are not generally well off, but the area has improved from being the 63rd most deprived in 2004, to now being the 68th out of 354 areas. There are still big differences between areas in Rotherham itself with some areas of the borough more deprived than others.

Pockets of deprivation and worklessness are located around central

Rotherham and the eastern ward of Maltby. In these places there are still a lot of people without jobs and those who are not as well qualified as elsewhere.

The health of people in Rotherham is worse than for England as a whole. There are also differences between the health of people within Rotherham, as both men and women living in more prosperous areas are likely to live longer than those living in more deprived areas.

House prices are lower in Rotherham than in Yorkshire and Humber and the country as a whole. There are areas where the demand for housing is low and others where the demand is greater than supply, such as in rural areas.

Rotherham Partnership is the area's local strategic partnership, responsible for making sure the ambitions in the Sustainable Community Strategy happen. Membership includes a wide range of representatives from the public, private, community and voluntary organisations.

How well do priorities for Rotherham express community needs and aspirations?

The greatest challenge for Rotherham is to improve the local economy and create more jobs. Unemployment is closely linked to deprivation and ill health. Rotherham is affected by all three and by inequalities, with some areas suffering more than others. If the economy is going to get stronger the local workforce needs to be skilled to a higher level.

Rotherham's local public services have forged a strong and effective partnership which understands these big issues and has plans to make life better for the population. The partnership has identified its priorities and knows that there is a long way to go before people in deprived areas have similar opportunities to those in better off areas, whether in education, health or employment.

Public services work well in partnership and with local people to make a difference for local communities. They work well with community and neighbourhood groups to understand what people want and need. Service user forums in many sectors give people the chance to get involved in decision making. For example, the Voluntary Sector Provider Forum and the Pensioners Action Group have been active in changing the way services are run. However, most people in Rotherham do not feel they can influence local decisions and partners need to find out why.

The population of Rotherham is growing and its makeup is changing. There are more older people and an increasing number of people who have settled from Eastern Europe, adding to the ethnic mix. Partners have shown they can respond to these changes by taking specific needs into account when planning services for the future.

Partners have said they want their plans for the area to be sustainable, not limiting choices or storing up problems for future generations. They have

made some progress on the environment by improving recycling and making use of previously developed land for new building. The partnership is at the very early stages of looking at its carbon footprint. Carbon emissions for the area fell by 16 per cent between 2005 and 2007, according to government estimates. This was one of the largest decreases in the country.

By working together, and with voluntary organisations, public services are giving good value for money for people in Rotherham. They are striving to make real improvements in people's lives and also to reduce costs. Partners could be even more effective if they clearly understood what money is committed by different organisations to specific problem areas and what is being achieved. They have begun to do this; such understanding is the first step in a truly combined approach to planning and funding a prosperous future for Rotherham.

Achieving: building an area that is prosperous with a vibrant economy and flourishing town centre

Three major challenges face partners across both public and private sectors: to expand the local economy; help people back into work; and improve skills. Partners are ambitious for the future of Rotherham. They have workable plans and a good track record but, due to the credit crunch, progress in the short-term will be difficult.

Rotherham's economy has moved away from reliance on heavy engineering and coal and now is based on light engineering, financial and business services, and jobs in the public sector. The next stage is to make Rotherham more resilient in times of economic change by creating more high-skill jobs. Rotherham needs a better educated and trained workforce to attract this type of employment.

Rotherham has become a more prosperous place in the past ten years with more people working and new businesses attracted to or starting up in the borough. Business incubation centres have provided space for new businesses to start. Lots of these are now successful and have expanded.

The total number of people in jobs in Rotherham rose much faster than in similar areas up to 2007. However, the proportion of the working age population in work in 2009 - 70.4 per cent - is still below regional and national averages.

Many people have been out of work for a long time. They typically live in the poorer parts of Rotherham. Partners are working together with other regional agencies to help these people return to work by linking jobs, skills and training but their situation has not changed much in recent years.

Partners are seeking to attract new employers who can offer higher value jobs which depend on a more highly skilled workforce. The Council, schools, colleges and employers have made a difference by creating opportunities for young people. More young people are gaining level 3 qualifications by the age

of 19. Train to Gain - a government programme supporting local business to work with colleges and training providers - enabled 5896 Rotherham people to improve their skills in 08/09, twice as many as 07/08.

Partners have had some success with more vulnerable youngsters. The overall number of 16 to 19 year olds who are not in education, training or employment (NEETs) has improved and is lower in Rotherham than the rest of the region. It is now in line with the national average but numbers tend to be concentrated in the poorer areas of the borough.

The recession of the past year has hit Rotherham hard with unemployment rising more steeply than similar places. Job Seekers Allowance claimants doubled in 2009 on the previous year. Some large businesses such as Corus have closed major sites. Partners have been very active - wherever possible working with employers and other agencies such as Jobcentre Plus - before redundancies occur. Major successes include half the staff made redundant at a local Rotherham company finding other jobs before the closure.

Rotherham town centre is being developed both for leisure and to attract new shops and other businesses. Redevelopment projects are carrying on thanks to public money. This should help to take advantage of changes in the economy and enable it to offer a distinctive alternative to shopping centres like Meadowhall.

Learning: people are skilled, informed, creative, innovative and challenging

Children's performance at school is generally worse than similar areas, although pre-school education and GCSE results are improving. However, more young people need to stay on in education post-16 to improve overall skills levels.

School results are variable. Children start primary school with relatively good speaking, listening and reading skills thanks to early years support. These are vital for a good start in learning at school.

The Imagination Library is a major initiative designed to prepare young children for learning. Children under the age of five who are registered receive a free book every month to encourage families to read together. Registrations in 2008, the first year, exceeded their initial target by 332 per cent. This represents over 8,000 families - more than half of Rotherham's under-five population.

Research in the United States, where the scheme was developed, has shown that children who took part consistently exceeded their peers on a range of scores. The greatest impact was with low income families and those who were less well educated themselves. Partners are hopeful that this should soon begin to show through in improved results at primary stage in Rotherham. Currently, these results, in particular reading, and for boys, are poor. Schools are actively targeting those who fall behind.

In 2008 GCSE results were still lower than most of England and the gap was

not closing. Within Rotherham, poor educational attainment is concentrated to a greater extent on the more deprived neighbourhoods. Asian pupils generally are not doing so well at GCSE.

Early indications suggest that GCSE results are getting better. In 2009, more than 47.5 per cent of students gained five or more good GCSEs including English and Maths according to recent figures. If validated, this would be one of the best improvement rates in the region.

Rotherham's schools are improving but not as quickly as partners had planned. Half at secondary level are now judged to be 'good' or 'better' but this means the rest are only 'adequate'. One school failed to reach the government target of 30 per cent of students gaining five good GCSE passes including English and Maths in 2008.

Not enough young people stay in education after the age of 16. The three institutions that provide for 16 to 19 year olds have work to do with schools and other agencies to make sure young people continue their education and gain skills which will improve their employment opportunities.

Rotherham Council and the local Chamber of Commerce encourage enterprise amongst school children by setting up small businesses. This has inspired teachers and given confidence to children, particularly in primary schools, who have produced some good quality work.

Alive: people are healthy, feel good, are active and enjoy life

Many people in Rotherham need to make some changes if their health is to improve. Life expectancy - at 80 years for women and 76 for men - is shorter than the English average. In the poorest parts of Rotherham, people live, on average, six years less than those in the more prosperous areas.

People have access to good health and community services. This is helping to stop so many people dying early from heart disease and stroke - rates have more than halved since 1991, faster than the English average. Cancer deaths are coming down at the same pace as nationally but the gap is still there.

More mums are breastfeeding - up 3.2 per cent in 08/09 to 57.8 per cent. Fewer babies are dying young and the number of babies born with low weight is also going down.

About 1 in 5 people smoke, including a relatively high proportion of women and expectant mothers. Schemes to help people give up smoking are very successful for those who take them up, but need to reach more people.

Too many people are overweight - 27.7 per cent compared to the England average of 23.6 per cent. One in three children is overweight and the problem is getting worse. Partners have good plans for tackling the problem, especially among children. Early signs, from programmes like child obesity camps and money being invested in leisure centres and parks, are promising. It is too soon to claim success.

A high number of young people say they smoke or misuse alcohol, according to a locally conducted survey, and fewer children than elsewhere say they are taking part in activities which promote a healthy lifestyle such as sports, arts or youth activities. This underlines the importance of working with young people to promote healthy behaviour.

The poorest families in Rotherham show low take-up of tax credits. This is important as poverty is closely linked with ill health.

Rotherham has historically had many teenage mothers. This is in common with similar areas. Teen pregnancy is often associated with poor health and limited life chances for both mother and child. Teenage conceptions, including those which end in termination, have only reduced by 10 per cent since 1998 despite attempts to improve sexual health and change behaviour. The gap with the national average has not closed. Recent innovative work in Maltby with teenagers at high risk of early unplanned pregnancy has shown good results and is being extended to two more areas. Significantly fewer girls than expected became pregnant as a result of this targeted approach.

Adults and older people can expect excellent social care in Rotherham and if at all possible will be able stay in their own home. More older people with ill health or disability are receiving the help they need to stay living at home independently.

Growing numbers of people have personal budgets so they can organise their own care - 456 more people received these payments in 2008-9, double the number in 2007-8. People like these arrangements, feel more in control and have more flexibility in the services they use. Nursing and care homes also provide good care for those that need them

Safe: neighbourhoods are safe, clean, green and well maintained

Rotherham is a safe place to live. Partners are working together well to improve the quality of life in neighbourhoods across the borough. Overall crime came down by 13 per cent in 2008/09 and Rotherham is roughly comparable to similar towns and cities in England and Wales.

Partners understand the needs and priorities in different neighbourhoods and are making good progress. Deprived areas suffer most from crime. Partners are responding to what residents have said about lacking confidence in public services' ability to improve things. They are targeting these areas, starting with pilot schemes which have reduced crime and halved levels of anti-social behaviour. Residents in Chesterhill, one of the target areas, once ranked crime as their top concern. They now rate it as only fifth. Residents in these areas are now more involved in devising local solutions and trust in the public services has increased. Similar schemes have now been launched in three further areas.

Police, youth workers and others are working together to help young people stay out of trouble and fewer young people are getting involved with crime and repeat offending. Partners realise they still need to do more to address

this problem.

Some vulnerable children and young people do not always get the help they need to stay safe. Rotherham Council does not have enough children's social workers to carry out all the tasks they need to do. This means that sometimes they are unable to respond quickly and well enough to all referrals.

Young people in Rotherham are more likely to experience bullying than in many other places; the partnership is committed to reducing this and most schools are signed up to take action.

Road safety is a high priority for residents and specific targets have been set to reduce accidents. Fewer children are now seriously injured or killed on the roads than in other similar boroughs. However, the figures for adults are not so good and compare badly with national averages

The quality of housing in Rotherham is getting better. The Council has replaced older, poor quality accommodation with new housing. A high proportion of new housing has been built on brownfield sites. The Council has supported landlords to improve the private rented housing, much of which was in poor condition, and properties are being made more energy efficient.

There are not enough affordable homes in Rotherham. The number of people who have their names down for a Council house has passed 20,000 and there is less Council housing available. The number of new houses being built has increased in recent years, but the Council is now predicting a drop in 2009 and local demand will not be met. The Council is working with the private sector to try and maintain new developments, but the economic climate means that targets are unlikely to be achieved.

The Council's housing stock is managed by Rotherham 2010, an arm's length organisation (ALMO). Residents are generally happy with the service they receive. However, Rotherham 2010's financial future is uncertain. The Council is working on plans to ensure this housing and its finances are managed properly, maintaining quality and customer service.

Attractive public spaces are important to achieving the vision for Rotherham - both in improving community safety, and in helping make residents proud of where they live. Success has been mixed in ensuring that public spaces are well kept. The Council has reduced graffiti and fly tipping but needs to do more to reduce littering.

Proud: people, businesses, and pride in the borough are at the heart of the vision

The Rotherham Partnership is committed to making people feel proud to live and work in Rotherham. Civic pride can help people to get on better together and make Rotherham a better, more prosperous place to live. There is much work to be done.

Results from the recent Place Survey show that perceptions of how well people get on together are not as good as elsewhere, although the ethnic

minority communities say that they feel more part of their community than others. Partners need to understand the reasons behind these perceptions so they can address people's real concerns and what they see as threats or aspects of change that worry them.

Partners want local people to feel proud about where they live. They have invested in large-scale public events, including a popular Diversity Festival, part of the annual Rotherham Show, and new ways of communicating with residents, such as Rotherham News. However, partners need to find ways of measuring whether these activities are having a positive impact.

Rotherham's work on preventing any growth of violent extremism is very good. The Council and police work closely together and share intelligence. In April 2009, 'One Town One Community' was launched, bringing together people to unite against hate and extremism.

People from different cultures and countries continue to settle in the borough. Many people arriving know little about local life. Neighbourhood management projects have provided information and training for new residents on how public services work - and to help ensure people of different backgrounds get on well in their changing neighbourhoods.

CAA looks at how well local public services, working together, are meeting the needs of the people they serve. It's a joint assessment made by a group of independent watchdogs about the performance of local public services, and how likely they are to meet local priorities. From 9 December you will find the results of Comprehensive Area Assessment on the Oneplace website - <http://oneplace.direct.gov.uk/>

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