
Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Name of Committee - 22 January 2024
Improving Lives Select Commission

Report Title

Neglect Strategy 2024 – 2026

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

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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

Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected.

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

This report introduces the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026. It is a Partnership Strategy and is governed by the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP). It is owned by the Neglect Delivery Group which reports directly to the RSCP Executive Partnership Group. The strategy is being presented to Cabinet for endorsement.

The Neglect Strategy 2019 – 2023 has concluded, as the strategy was concluding, a Neglect delivery group was established to support the development of the new strategy. This group has brought together key professionals who alongside developing the strategy will be responsible for delivery, and will monitor and analyse data, training offer and attendance, be responsible for awareness raising, and the overarching response across all partners.

The Neglect Strategy 2024 – 2026 has been developed in line with legislation and guidance, the specific legal duties that relate to this Strategy are:

- *Children Act 1989 – Section 17* – places duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found.
- *Children Act 1989 – Section 47* – requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- *Working Together 2018* – states: 'Whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner

organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area’.

It has also considered the NSPCC research and assessment tool, Graded Care Profile 2.

Derived from academic, sector and local research around neglect, the Strategy has three priorities:

1. Recognise
2. Respond
3. Make a Difference

The aim is to use research alongside current data and local case studies and examples to drive the Strategy action plan.

The Strategy provides clarity on neglect type and signs, roles, and responsibilities of key partner agencies, how they work together to deliver the key priorities and how success is measured.

This report provides a brief introduction and requests endorsement of the new Strategy.

Recommendations

1. That Improving Lives Select Commission endorse the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026.
2. That Improving Lives Select Commission approve the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Partnership Strategy Delivery Plan and the oversight of progress by; the Neglect Delivery Group, Rotherham Safeguarding Children’s Partnership (RSCP) and Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC).

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 Neglect Strategy 2024-2026
Appendix 2 Part A Initial Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 3 Part B Equality Screening Assessment
Appendix 4 Carbon Impact report

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Background Papers

No

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

The Neglect Strategy 2024 – 2026

1. Background

- 1.1 The Children Acts of 1989 and 2004 set out specific duties: section 17 of the Children Act 1989 puts a duty on the local authority to provide services to children in need in their area, regardless of where they are found; section 47 of the same Act requires local authorities to undertake enquiries if they believe a child has suffered or is likely to suffer significant harm.
- 1.2 Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 – A guide to inter-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children (2018), states: *“whilst it is parents and carers who have primary care for their children, local authorities, working with partner organisations and agencies, have specific duties to safeguard and promote the welfare of all children in their area.”*
- 1.3 The Children Act 2004 states that safeguarding duties placed on the local authority can only be discharged with the full co-operation of other partners, many of whom have individual duties when carrying out their functions under section 11 of the Act. The Social Work Act 2017 brought about changes to how partners work together, abolishing Local Safeguarding Children Boards, and replacing them with an equal partnership, putting duties on three 'safeguarding partners' - the local authority, Clinical Commissioning Group (now Integrated Care Board) and the Chief Officer of Police - to make safeguarding arrangements that respond to the needs of children in their area.
- 1.4 There is no national strategy for Neglect, however, there are a number of articles produced by the Department for Education and NSPCC on the issue, (publishing.service.gov.uk). Neglect is referred to Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (publishing.service.gov.uk) as part of the wider safeguarding arrangements for children and young people. Neglect is defined in Working Together to Safeguard Children as *“the persistent failure to meet a child's basic physical, emotional and/or psychological needs, likely to result in the serious impairment of the child's health or development. Neglect may occur during pregnancy as a result of maternal substance abuse.”*
- 1.5 Neglect accounts for 40% (151 children) of Rotherham's Child Protection Plans, second to Emotional abuse at 51% (as of 31 October 2023). These statistics are also reflected in the Children in Need cohorts, and Early Help. By tackling neglect at the earliest opportunity, the aim is to prevent the situation deteriorating to requiring statutory intervention. Whilst Neglect can be a one-off incident (home alone for example) it rarely is. It is an ongoing situation that can be subtly getting progressively worse, but often making it difficult to identify.
- 1.6 The Strategy sets out how partners across Rotherham with responsibility for delivering services to children and young people will deliver on their collective responsibilities to keep children safe from neglect through working with their families, communities, and networks over the next three years.
- 1.7 The Strategy demonstrates how key partners will work together, and the key meetings which provide oversight.

2. Key Issues

2.1 The previous Neglect Strategy 2019 – 2023 was published in 2019.

2.2 Progress against the priorities in the previous Strategy has been reviewed for completion and recognition of achievement, and to support the development of the new strategy. An action plan will be developed to deliver the strategy.

2.3 The key achievements over the last strategy

2.3.1 The Neglect Group, established under the previous 2019 – 2023 Strategy, raised the profile of child neglect as an issue in Rotherham. Whilst Rotherham is not an outlier in comparison to the other regional authorities and comparative neighbours, the Group was able to evidence through data and Early Help, Child in Need and Child Protection Plan analysis that this issue required the attention of the Safer Rotherham Partnership and Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership. Activities included coordinating partners to increase the status of this issue, report of key date and issue, and develop an agreed (Help / Harm) threshold response.

2.3.2 Whilst many children living in poverty are not neglected, there are often links between poverty and deprivation and neglect. 23% of children living in Rotherham are in low-income families (England 20% – 2022). Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement rate is above national average, 25.2% compared to 23.1% at Primary phase and 24.1% compared to 20.9% at Secondary phase (DfE 2021/22). According to the 2019 Indices of Deprivation, deprivation in Rotherham has increased with the Borough now ranked 44th most deprived district on average IMD score, compared to 52nd in 2015. Rotherham's rank means that the Borough is amongst the 14% most deprived local authority areas in England. In 2019, the key drivers of deprivation in Rotherham remained Health & Disability, Education & Skills, and Employment. Of these, Health & Disability deprivation was most severe and widespread whilst Employment and Education deprivation were more concentrated and polarised.

2.3.3 Rotherham is the 52nd most deprived district in England:

2022/23 (2021/22)	Rotherham	Statistical neighbour Av	National Av
No of children subject of CP plans (per 10,000)	70.4 (82.7)	59.2	42.1
No of children looked after (per 10,000)	96.2 (97.8)	102.4	70

2.3.4 In Rotherham 398 children were subject to a Child Protection (CP) Plan at the end of March 2023, which is above statistical and national averages, but there is a downward trend from a high of 505 children in July 2022. There were 396 children subject to a CP plan (as of 31 March 2023), broken into the following categories:

Category of abuse	Children
Emotional	210
Neglect	141
Physical	25
Sexual	18
Multiple	2

2.3.5 In the period of the previous strategy 2019 – 2023, work was undertaken with the child protection conference chairs and wider workforce on the use of categories to identify and then raise awareness for specific children on the greater issue of concern. Previously the Neglect category had been used for children that were exposed to domestic abuse (Neglect through failure to protect). However, this places responsibility on victims of abuse rather than identifying what the actual risk was for the child. These children are now safeguarded through categories of Emotional harm and Physical abuse. Through this work and the work of the Neglect Group collectively and across the partnership, reporting on cases of neglect and understand the size of the issue has improved.

2.4 **Review of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) arrangements**

2.4.1 The Executive Group for the RSCP has undergone a membership change in 2022-23. The new membership includes:

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

Laura Kosciwicz, Chief Superintendent and District Commander for Rotherham

Sue Cassin, Chief Nurse, South Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)

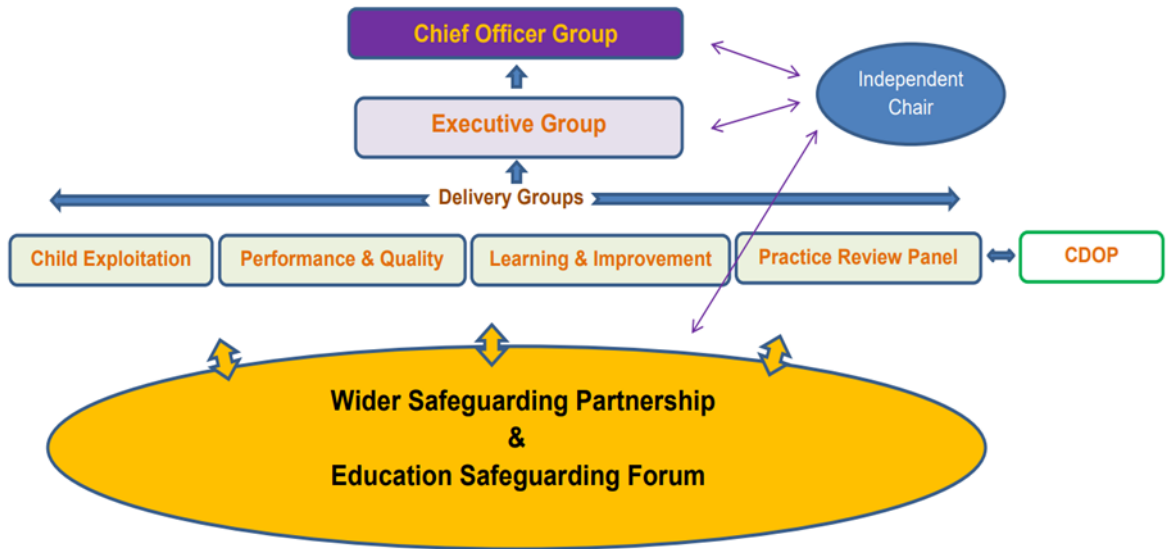
Darren Downs, Independent Scrutineer

In addition, the new partnership business manager Lee Durrant, was appointed in February 2023.

2.4.2 A review of the partnership arrangements and delivery groups was undertaken in 2023. This was following the recruitment of an independent scrutineer to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Executive group. Darren Downs joined the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership in spring 2023. This role was similar to the previous chair role, however, added a greater emphasis on scrutineer, of the partnership arrangements and safeguarding arrangements.

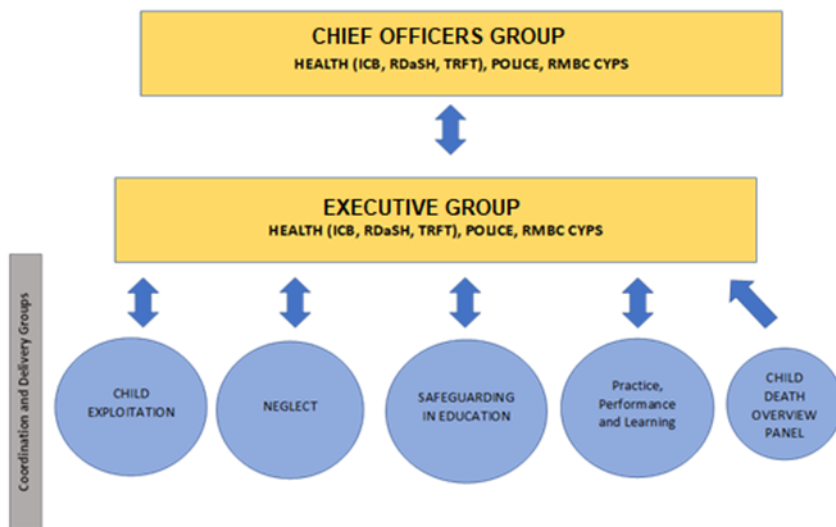
2.4.3 The new arrangements came into play followed by a consultation with the RSCP Executive group and the wider partnership, and a review of the priorities and Terms of reference by the Executive group and wider partnership.

2.4.4 Previous arrangements.



The previous arrangements met the requirements at specific time and place in Rotherham’s journey and priorities.

2.4.5 New Arrangements 2023



2.4.6 The changes are mostly seen in the Delivery Group structure. The governance arrangements and oversight by the Independent Scrutineer and the Executive Group reporting to the Chief Officers Group remains unchanged.

2.4.7 The Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG) was retained, and appointment of a new Chair, Superintendent Andy Wright, SYP followed the retirement of the previous Chair.

- 2.4.8 The Neglect Subgroup was elevated to a Delivery Group which reports to the RSCP Executive. This was in recognition of how important the issue and need is in Rotherham, regional and nationally. This Neglect delivery Group is Chaired by Gemma Cross, Head of Safeguarding, NHS.
- 2.4.9 A new Safeguarding in Education Delivery Group (SEDG) was created, and a Chair is to be appointed by the new Assistant Director for Education and Inclusion. This was created in recognition of the important role that schools, early years and education plays in safeguarding children. Whilst Education is not a partner in Working Together 2028, it is believed that in Rotherham, they have a significant role to play in keeping children safe from harm and neglect. Working Together is under review and it is expected the role of Education will have a greater emphasis.
- 2.4.10 The Learning and Performance Delivery Groups have been combined into one Practice, Performance and Learning Delivery Group (PPL) Chaired by Head of Safeguarding Laura Gough. Bringing these groups together ensures that learning is cross cutting from practice to performance data, local, regional, and national learning, and all learning opportunities in-between. This group will be responsible for learning action plans from local reviews and consider learning from regional and national reviews.

2.5 Further activities undertaken by the Neglect Subgroup

- 2.5.1 The Neglect Subgroup are promoting safeguarding training, specifically the Neglect Graded Care Profile 2 across the partnership. There is an extensive training prospectus available to the workforce, and a pool of trainers in partner organisations has been developed to deliver the Graded Care Profile 2 training across the Childrens Workforce.
- 2.5.2 The Neglect Subgroup have developed a data and performance analysis process which they use to identify key themes and areas for development and focus.

2.6 The main priorities for the coming three years:

- 2.6.1 The main priority is to embed the elevation of the Neglect Subgroup to a Delivery Group reporting to the RSCP Executive group.

The Neglect Delivery Group will focus on early identification of neglect and multi-agency coordination is key in reducing harm. The elevation of the Neglect Group to a Delivery Group reporting directly to the RSCP Executive Group raises the profile of this issue in Rotherham and brings it in line with its status in other Authority partnership arrangements.

- 2.6.2 The Neglect Delivery Group will develop an action plan to deliver the Strategy and monitor the impact. The group are further developing the scorecard in line with other delivery groups for a more sophisticated yet simpler way of observing the issue and scale, themes, and impact of intervention. The training package will receive a greater focus to ensure staff are skilled in identification, assessment and activity required to address the concerns.

- 2.6.3 The Strategy is reflective of the partnership arrangements in Rotherham and demonstrates the continued commitment to listening to the voice and lived experience of children and young people. The Strategy and Neglect Group will use the feedback to focus and develop services. There remains a focus on community engagement and partnerships with families, parents and carers and children and young people in the Strategy that will be a key priority for its duration.
- 2.6.4 It is proposed the delivery plan for the Strategy will be developed with key milestones for each of the objectives, and outcome measures identified. Progress against this will be owned by the Neglect Delivery Group and reported to the RSCP.
- 2.6.5 Annual review of the delivery plan will be undertaken, and the plan updated each year as a result, to reflect progress and focus. This will also feature in the RSCP annual report.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Improving Lives Select Commission is asked to endorse the Neglect Strategy 2024-2026. Endorsement of the Strategy 2024- 2026 will ensure the Council has set out its commitment in line with its duty to ensure that there is safeguarding arrangements in place for all children and specifically those at risk of Neglect.
- 3.2 Improving Lives Select Commission is asked to approve the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Strategy Delivery Plan and the oversight of progress by; the Neglect Delivery Group, Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP) and the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC).
- 3.3 The alternative option is not to endorse the Strategy. This is not recommended as the Strategy is a co-produced multi-agency document that incorporates the delivery and governance for a range of key national and local programmes designed to improve outcomes and the quality of life for children, young people, and families in the Borough.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 The development of the revised Strategy has involved collaborative working across Rotherham, including Neglect Delivery Group, Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership, Wider Partnership Group, children and young people and their families, Commissioning, Performance, Legal Services and Finance.
- 4.2 At a development day in June 2023 the Neglect Group considered the progress of the previous Strategy, this then laid the foundations for the 2024- 2026 Strategy.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The current Strategy came to an end in 2023.
- 5.2 The new strategy will cover the period 2024 – 2026.

5.3 Progress against the delivery plan and review of objectives will be undertaken annually by Rotherham Safeguarding Children’s Partnership.

5.4 An Annual Report will be presented to RSCP Executive Group and to Improving Lives Select Commission via the RSCP annual report for scrutiny.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications arising from the strategy.

6.2 Where there is a need for the Council to commission services from third party organisations to deliver the Strategy, this must be done in compliance with the Council’s own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Public Contracts Regulations 2015. Early consideration needs to be given in the development of any commissioned services to ensure the chosen delivery vehicle includes the flexibility to meet the requirements of the Strategy.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications arising from the review of the Strategy.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 No direct HR implications within this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Implications to vulnerable children and young people are covered within the Report and Strategy and appendices.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 Equality and human rights are considered within the strategy.

11. Implications for CO₂ Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 N/A

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Implications for partners are reflected in the Strategy.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 These are referred to in the strategy and associated delivery plan.

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	

Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	03/01/2024
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	03/01/2024

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