

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 18 March 2024

Report Title

Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024 - 2029

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 of Children and Young People's Services

Report Author(s)

Kelly White, Acting Assistant Director Early Help & Family Engagement

Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

The proposed Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024-2029 has been developed in response to revised government guidance, including the Department for Education (DfE) new edition 'Working Together to Safeguard Children December 2023'. The statutory guidance outlines what organisations and agencies must and should do to help, protect and promote the welfare of all children and young people.

This is a partnership document and the Strategy articulates Rotherham Borough's widest vision for Early Help:

All agencies working together to ensure that children, young people, and families have their needs identified early so that they can receive swift access to targeted help and support (co-produced and agreed by partners, stakeholders, children, young people, and families).

The Strategy describes three phases of support for children and families and concludes with how children, families and other key stakeholders will work together to deliver the vision over the next five years.

It is proposed the Delivery Plan will be overseen by the Early Help Partnership Group with scrutiny from the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC).

Recommendations

That Cabinet:-

1. Endorse the Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024-2029.
2. Approves the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Strategy Delivery Plan with the oversight and delivery of progress by the Early Help Partnership Group (EHPG) and the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC).

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1: Early Help Strategy 2024-2029

Appendix 2: Family Help Services and Support

Appendix 3: Glossary of Terms

Appendix 4: Part A - Initial Equality screening Assessment form

Appendix 5: Part B – Equality Analysis Form

Appendix 6: Early Help Strategy Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Working together to safeguard children 2023: statutory guidance \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

[Children Act 2004 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://legislation.gov.uk)

[Graded Care Profile 2 \(GCP2\) | NSPCC Learning](#)

[Guide for children and young people: Stable Homes, Built on Love - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

[Children's social care: national framework - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/family-hubs-and-start-for-life-programme%20>

[Place Partnership – Healthy Rotherham \(yourhealthrotherham.co.uk\)](https://yourhealthrotherham.co.uk)

[Health Wellbeing Strategy 2018 New branding.pdf \(rotherham.gov.uk\)](https://rotherham.gov.uk)

[https://www.rscp.org.uk/downloads/file/158/child-exploitation-priorities-2023-to-2028-council-plan-2022-25 \(rotherham.gov.uk\)](https://www.rscp.org.uk/downloads/file/158/child-exploitation-priorities-2023-to-2028-council-plan-2022-25)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

N/A

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024 – 2029

1. Background

1.1 The previous Early Help Strategy 2016 – 2019 was central to Rotherham’s improvement journey. The Strategy set out the Council’s intentions to work together across the partnership to harness collective expertise and resources and organise these to meet the needs of children and families. The Strategy comprised of three phases which were implemented on time and delivered against the agreed activity.

1.2 As a result, Rotherham now has an effective and mature Early Help system. There have been many achievements since the last strategy was produced. Key achievements over this timeframe include:

- Development of the integrated Early Help Service, with a well-equipped and well-trained workforce.
- Front door integration between Early Help and Children’s Social Care in the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH), including introduction of a ‘rapid response’ function by Early Help enabling swift support to families to prevent escalation into statutory services.
- Strong co-working framework between Early Help and Children’s Social Care with robust step-up, step down and co-working arrangements.
- Embedding the Graded Care Profile 2 tool in Early Help practice with 94.5% completed since April 2023 being carried out by Early Help.
- Delivery of an integrated outreach and engagement offer that spans the 0-19 age range (25 with SEND).
- Multi-disciplinary approach to outreach & engagement activity such as Operation Keepsafe and Partnership Water Safety Plan.
- Robust suite of evidence-based, validated programmes available for families both digitally and face to face, with access to self-serve digital interventions which families can access when they need them.
- Development of the Early Help Midwifery Pathway to ensure robust arrangements for early identification of need between Early Help and Midwifery Services.
- Embedding of shared responsibility for early help across partners, with an increase in the numbers of Early Help Assessments by partners from 0 to 26.9% (as of December 2023).
- Development of the Family Hubs and the Best Start in Life programme, adding value to the existing support that is already available for families in Children’s Centres and Early Help sites.

- Development and embedding of the School Attendance Matters Pathway (SAMP) which is highlighted nationally by the Department for Education for its innovative and welfare-based approach to poor school attendance.
 - Established a Universal Youth Work offer (of over 900 sessions per year), increasing capacity within the voluntary and community sector to deliver youth provision for young people across the Borough.
 - Delivered the DfE funded Healthy Holidays' Programme.
- 1.3 Work on a new Strategy was delayed in 2019 to allow time for Self-Evaluation work to take place in relation to the national Supporting Families Programme, so that learning could inform the Strategy. Further development was then paused during the pandemic and recommenced at the start of 2022.
- 1.4 During this period, the Early Help Partnership Group has followed an overarching delivery plan and overseen the delivery of key national programmes including the Supporting Families Programme and the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme.
- 1.5 In 2023, the government published a new vision to transform Children's Social Care: 'Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy' in response to the Independent Review of Children's Social Care. This preceded the publication of updated multi-agency statutory guidance 'Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023'.
- 1.6 The new Strategy is therefore required to address the changing environment and recent developments set out in the government's plans to reform children's social care and early help, setting a national direction for change.

2. Key Issues

- 2.1 Learning gained from the delivery of the Supporting Families Programme, and the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme, has identified the need to build upon the good co-operation that is currently in place across the partnership and improve how services share information and work together to provide holistic support for families. This includes improved awareness and access to the universal Start for Life offer, further development of the network of support available to families in their communities, building on children centre delivery in line with the family hubs approach, embedding co-production to ensure the voices of those who use and access services influence the continuous improvement of the Early Help Offer.
- 2.2 'Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy' defines a significant change to children's social care and sets out key ambitions (6 pillars of reform) including the need to provide 'Family Help' to help ensure all children and families can get the right help, at the right time, and in an easy way.

Ambition 1: Family help
Ambition 2: Keeping children safe

Ambition 3: Supporting families to help children
Ambition 4: Make care better for children in care and care leavers
Ambition 5: Children have great social workers
Ambition 6: Improving the whole system for children and families

2.3 Requirements within Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 focus on:

- Strengthening multi-agency working across the whole system of support and protection for children and their families
- Keeping a child-centred approach while bringing a whole-family focus
- Embedding strong, effective and consistent multi-agency child protection practice

2.4 A new chapter on 'shared responsibility' highlights how positive outcomes for children depend on strong multi-agency working. The guidance introduces a set of multi-agency expectations for all practitioners involved in safeguarding and child protection. These expectations aim to ensure that practitioners share the same goals, learn with and from each other, have what they need to help families, acknowledge and appreciate difference and challenge each other.

2.5 Rotherham Together Partnership wants Rotherham to be a great place to grow up, where children and young people have the best chance to reach their full potential. This will mean that children grow up happily, safe, in good health and develop the skills and qualifications they need to be successful. The Strategy articulates Rotherham's vision for children, young people and families:

Best Start - Children get the best start in life.

Safe - Children and young people are safe from harm.

Achieve - Young people feel empowered to succeed and achieve their aspirations.

Have fun - Children and young people have fun things to do and safe places to go.

2.6 The Strategy describes three phases of support for children and families.

2.6.1 **Universal and Community Family Help**

Universal and Community services are available to all children, young people, and families in Rotherham. These services are provided by lots of different agencies such as nurseries, schools, and colleges; GPs, midwives, and health visitors; children centres and family hubs, libraries, youth services, and community organisations. They are the starting point for any family in Rotherham requiring information, advice and support.

Proposals to secure investments of £895,000 into universal services were approved by Council in February 2024 and include:

- A Baby Pack Scheme for all new parents giving birth in Rotherham to give them the best start in life.
- Developing a SEND activity hub in the town centre improving the Council's offer of recreational activities for children and young people with SEND.
- Additional capacity to increase the reach of the offer to under 5s.
- Further enhancing the Voluntary, Community and Faith Services sector's ability to deliver services to more children and young people across the Borough.
- Additional capacity to develop work with partners at the Front Door to improve the effectiveness of initial contact with families.

2.6.2 Focused Family Help

This will provide help where families are not managing to effect positive change and they require enhanced, more focused and/or specialist support. This will include children and their families who need additional support to meet their full potential or whose needs are sufficiently complex will receive focused family help. This may be provided by a range of services and practitioners across the partnership, usually supported by an Early Help assessment. Examples include mental health support in schools, targeted prevention work from Youth Justice teams or early help casework in Children and Young People's Services.

2.6.3 Specialist Family Help

Specialist services to children and their families are provided where children and young people need a high level of support or may be experiencing or likely to suffer significant harm in circumstances where improvements have not been achieved through universal and community family help, or focused family help. This can include services for disabled children, special school arrangements or specialist physical or mental health provision, for example. It may also include child protection services, working with those experiencing harms outside the home, care arrangements or youth justice services, including custody. Specialist Family Help is provided to families where the concerns are high and have not improved through enhanced or focused support.

2.7 A five-year Delivery Plan has been developed as a roadmap to achieving the three phases of support for children, young people and families.

2.7.1 **Phase 1 (2024/24) Design** will include consultation with key stakeholders across the wider Council, the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC), Health, Police and children and families to ensure co-design and co-production from the start. New guidance will be considered along with a number of reviews. The first phase will be around establishing and setting out the requirements of the project.

- 2.7.2 **Phase 2 (2025/26)** will focus on the **implementation and delivery** stage ensuring continued engagement with stakeholders. There are plans to engage external evaluation two years into the implementation phase as a measure of progress and success. Key outcome measures will also be developed during this phase.
- 2.7.3 **Phases 3 & 4 (2026-2028) Maintain and Operate** will also incorporate monitoring service quality, measuring outcomes and responding to learning to achieve continuous improvement.
- 2.7.4 **Phase 5 (2029) Evaluate** will include a review and refresh of the strategy.
- 2.8 The Early Help Partnership Group provides the strategic oversight and delivery of the Early Help Strategy, along with the evaluation of the effectiveness of the Early Help Offer in Rotherham.
- 2.9 Reporting to the Early Help Partnership Group, the Family Hub Operational Group brings together colleagues from a range of services to ensure effective partnership, collaboration and strong communication between agencies co-located in Family Hubs in Children's Centres.
- 2.10 The Early Help Partnership Group feeds into the Local Safeguarding Children's Executive and the Place Board.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 Cabinet is asked to endorse the Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024-2029. Endorsement of the Strategy 2024- 2029 will ensure the Council has set out its commitment in line with best practice to ensure that there is an Early Help Strategy in place for all children and young people in the Borough.
- 3.2 Cabinet is asked to approve the Local Authority involvement in the development and implementation of the Strategy Delivery Plan and the oversight and delivery of progress by the Early Help Partnership Group and scrutiny by the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC).
- 3.3 The alternative option is not to endorse the Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024-2029. This would result in non-compliance with the government's legislative requirements and statutory guidance on multi-agency working to help, protect and promote the welfare of children. This would present a significant barrier in achieving the necessary national and cultural shift to continue to reform children's social care and early help in Rotherham. This option is not recommended.

4. Consultation on proposal

- 4.1 In 2020, the Early Help Partnership Group led a series of consultation events with staff, stakeholders, and partners. (See Appendix 5 Equality Impact Assessment).

- 4.2 Further consultation took place at the Rotherham Show in September 2022 and in a workshop, facilitated by the Improving Lives Select Commission (ILSC), in September 2022. The following premises emerged from the ILSC workshop;
- Early help is “everyone’s business”.
 - The Early Help Offer needs to be clear and link to basic needs.
- 4.3 In 2023 a further engagement activity involved internal stakeholders and key partners. There were many positive responses shared as well as many suggestions to improve the current early help offer. All stakeholders recognised the commitment of Early Help members and shared aspects of the service of which they were most proud. This has informed the development of the delivery model and plan.
- 4.4 Local learning indicates the importance of embedding co-production to ensure the voices of those who use and access services influence the continuous improvement of the Early Help Offer. Working Together 2023 sets out new expectations for ‘shared responsibility’ and introduces a set of multi-agency expectations to ensure that practitioners share the same goals, learn with and from each other, have what they need to help families, acknowledge and appreciate difference and challenge each other. Genuine Partnerships and the Four Cornerstones (also known as the Rotherham Charter) evolved from a unique partnership involving the Rotherham Parent Carers Forum and Rotherham Council. The Rotherham Four Cornerstones (developed from research involving Rotherham children and young people with special educational needs, and their parents and carers) defines how the partnership works together and with children and families, acknowledging that the development of shared goals requires co-production rather than consultation. Consequently, whilst the Early Help vision and principles are defined in this strategy, the delivery plan includes an initial year of engagement, consultation and co-production.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The new Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham will cover the period 2024 to 2029.
- 5.2 Progress against the delivery plan and review of objectives will be monitored by the Early Help Partnership Group.
- 5.3 A further update will be brought to Cabinet following the Year 1 consultation and design work with partners, children, young people and families.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. However, it is important to note that where third party organisations are engaged to deliver against the strategy,

they must be procured via the relevant procurement legislation at the time (Public Contracts Regulations 2015, Procurement Act 2023 or The Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023) as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

- 6.2 Finances will need to be maintained within existing budgeted cash limits. There are a number of grant funded projects across Early Help with set funding end dates, which provide additional funding sources and are subject to specific resource and delivery requirements.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The wide variety of services, support and resources available to babies, children, young people and their families, as described on offer in this report falls within the requirements of section 17 of the Children Act 1989 whereby every local authority has a general duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children within their area who are in need. In addition, there is a renewed focus highlighted in the recent "Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023" on how organisation and agencies provide early help to strengthen the role of education and childcare settings in keeping children safe; clarifying a broader range of practitioners to be the lead practitioners for families in receiving support under s17 of CA 1989 and improved multi-agency child protection standards has been taken into consideration above. As such, no legal implications arise from the recommendations in this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 HR will provide support to ensure that the workforce is skilled and experienced to deliver the strategy.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024 – 2029 aligns with the key local partnership priorities and plans including Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council Plan 2022/25, Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership plan and associated strategies, Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Plan and Rotherham Health and Social Care Place Plan.
- 9.2 The Strategy describes how partners will work together to ensure that all children and young people receive the right help at the right time so that Rotherham is a great place to grow up, where children and young people have the best chance to reach their full potential. This will mean that children grow up happily, safe, in good health and develop the skills and qualifications they need to be successful.
- 9.3 The Adult Social Care Strategy for Rotherham 2024 – 2027 sets out a vision to enable every resident with care and support needs to live their best lives, with the people they value, close to home and with access to the right support at the right time. To achieve this vision, a number of strategic priorities are identified to support young people preparing for adulthood. These priorities will

complement the Early Help Strategy to enable young people to receive the right help at the right time.

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 Actions proposed in the *Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham 2024-2029* may have a carbon impact in Rotherham. Commitments to develop a SEND hub in Rotherham Town Centre and to increase the Council's Universal Youth offer may affect emissions from non-domestic buildings; whereas strengthening local provision may decrease emissions from transport, if families do not have to travel so far, to access the support they need. These and other impacts, mitigation and monitoring actions are summarised in a carbon impact assessment, Appendix 6.

12. Implications for Partners

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

13. Risks and Mitigation

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

14. Accountable Officers

14.1 Kelly White, Acting Director Early Help and Family Engagement
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Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	04/03/24
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	23/02/24
Assistant Director or Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	23/02/24

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