

IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION
Tuesday 29 October 2024

Present:- Councillor Pitchley (in the Chair); Councillors Blackham, Bower, Fisher, Foster, Garnett, Harper, Hughes, Monk, Reynolds, Ryalls and Sutton.

Apologies for Absence:- Apologies were received from Councillors Knight, Baggaley, T. Collingham and Elliott.

The webcast of the Council Meeting can be viewed at:-
<https://rotherham.public-i.tv/core/portal/home>

32. MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

Resolved: - That the Minutes of the meeting of the Improving Lives Select Commission, held on 17 September 2024, be approved as a correct record of proceedings.

33. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

34. EXCLUSION OF THE PRESS AND PUBLIC

There were no items of business on the agenda that required the exclusion of the press and public from the meeting.

35. QUESTIONS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC AND THE PRESS

There were no questions from members of the public or press.

36. THE ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN'S PARTNERSHIP ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

The agenda item considered an update on the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Annual Report for 2023-2024.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Councillor Cusworth, Cabinet Member for Children's and Young Peoples Services, Laura Kosciwicz, District Commander for South Yorkshire Police, Julie Warren-Sykes Deputy Chief Nurse and Designated Nurse for Safeguarding and Looked-after Children, Tony Morrissey, Interim Head of Safeguarding and Darren Downs, Independent Scrutineer for the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership.

The Chair invited the Cabinet Member to introduce the report and the following was noted:

- There was strong partnership working in Rotherham which had transformed over the years.
- The report was easily accessible and contained useful information and assurances.

The Chair invited the Independent Scrutineer for the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership to give the presentation and the following was noted:

Background-

- The Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership was required to publish an annual report.
- The annual report reflected the partnership's commitment and achievements for 2023/2024 and identified areas that required continued improvements, to ensure the overarching priorities would be met, which were being safe at home, safe in the community and having safe safeguarding systems in place.
- The report highlighted the developments that had been made by the partnership throughout the last year, including the progress of the new delivery groups for neglect and safeguarding in education. It also detailed the work of the Child Exploitation Delivery Group and the Performance, Practice and Learning Group, as well as all major milestones that had been achieved. The Performance, Practice and Learning Group was led by the Interim Head of Safeguarding.
- The report provided context on the partnerships plans for future years, and how the partnership would continue to build and strengthen further, with a focus on exploitation, neglect and safeguarding in education.

Key Issues-

- The annual report highlighted and celebrated the work of the partnership throughout 2023-2024. In 2023-2024 the partnership retained its key principles in respect of Rotherham's children, which were as follows:
 - Safe at Home
 - Safe in the Community
 - Safe Safeguarding Systems.
- It was an active year, the partnership aligned with new strategic priorities for neglect and safeguarding in education, this was a first of its kind in England. This was in addition to continuing the well-established Child Exploitation Delivery Group and workplan. The partnership consolidated the quality assurance, training and child safeguarding review process into a new Practice, Performance and Learning Delivery Group. The partnership was also finalising the Safeguarding in Education Strategy.
- The report set out key achievements in priority areas, such as the delivery of training and key data which demonstrated the Rotherham context.

- A new Child Exploitation Strategy was implemented in July 2024.

Key Achievements-

- There was a reduction in children subject to child protection plans and children looked after by the Local Authority.
- 5 audit processes were completed which focused on care leavers, including transitions and exploitation, persistent school absence, Early Help, including joint targeted area inspection preparation and persistent youth violence.
- 975 staff attended training from across the partnership.
- There was a thematic focused visit from Ofsted in May 2024, which evidenced findings such as strong partnership working and was complementary overall.
- A recent SEND Inspection took place in September 2024, with the formal outcome outstanding, however there had been positive feedback provided to the partnership about the strength of partnership working.
- There were several on-going reviews awaiting a conclusion, these would feature in next year's iteration of the annual report.

The Future-

- Appendix One contained a plan on a page which confirmed the governance and structure of the partnership in the future.
- The key future change would be Working Together 2023, the partnership would be required to comply with the guidance set out within Working Together 2023 by December 2024. Minor changes had been implemented as a result of the new legislation, relating to multi-agency safeguarding arrangements, the changes were approved via governance processes within each retrospective partner organisation.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- In relation to training (page 32), the data included the numbers of people who attended the training, Members felt that it would be beneficial for comparison purposes for the data to include the number of how many people were expected, and/or required to attend the training. Reassurance was provided that the training data detailed within the report was solely the partnerships training and every partner organisation held their own training. The level of attendance at partnership training sessions was good in comparison to other partnerships.
- There were 494 children and young people who were electively home educated within Rotherham, this was the lowest figure within the sub-region, there had been an increase in this area nationally. The partnerships Safeguarding and Education Group had a focus on elective home education and were working on understanding the reasons for parents choosing to electively home educate,

however the service reiterated that it was an area of parental choice.

- A recent audit in this area revealed that the main reasons were major dissatisfaction with school, particularly in respect to special educational needs and disabilities, mental health, increases after the pandemic and a lifestyle choice. The audit also looked at the process in place, the learning from the audit was that the Elective Home Education Team was working well, the enforcement processes were coherent and effective at identifying when children were beginning to be electively home educated and met the threshold for the process to be initiated. The audit also found that the school attendance audit process was robust, support for elective home education was timely, proactive, and when accepted by parents and carers it was effective. There were areas identified that required further strengthening, these were developing the Rotherham elective home education pathway to ensure the sharing of information across partner agencies, increasing consistency of recording the child's voice, which was acknowledged as challenging to capture and the final recommendation related to expanding the governance group to the wider partnership.
- The Elective Home Education Team successfully kept over 200 children in school, this was a result of the team supporting parents to explore all alternative options available to them at the point where they were considering electively home educating, the team worked with parents and schools to find a solution where possible.
- There was a good level of engagement from schools and a good representation across the borough from schools who attended the Safeguarding and Education Group. All schools in the borough were invited to attend wider partnership meetings.
- A partnership performance scorecard was developed, the scorecard showed a breakdown of attendance, absences, exclusions, and suspensions for every school within the borough. The partnership would focus on areas where the greatest impact could be achieved.
- The partnership recognised that education was a central point for safeguarding children, there was national frustration relating to the new Working Together 2023 legislation, as it was felt that the role of education was not strong enough. The partnership engaged on a national level to provide feedback into the next iteration of the Working Together 2023, to encourage the strengthening of the role of education formally within legislation and ensure that more requirements would be in place for schools to engage in partnership arrangements. The partnership was in a strong position and not many other partnerships had a Safeguarding in Education Group.
- All schools were requested to complete a Section 175 Audit which provided the local authority with assurances around what each school was doing in relation to safeguarding children and young people. The Safeguarding in Education Group planned to dip-sample some of the audits and provide challenge where required.

- The website Local Government Inform had publicly accessible information on elective home education, such as how many children with special education needs and disabilities were electively home educated within the borough. There was a slight delay on the data on the website, however it was possible to compare data with statistical neighbours on the site.
- The Cabinet Member attended a question panel with young people, where a young person asked how the Council was helping to prevent children and young people becoming involved in child criminal exploitation. The Cabinet Member explained the work of the Evolve Team within the borough to the young person. A question was asked of how the Council could engage children and young people's voices in this area in particular. The Cabinet Member suggested that the Commission may wish to consider inviting a young person to attend a future Commission meeting, to engage their views. The Cabinet Member extended an invite to all elected members who wished to attend a Childrens and Young Peoples Partnership Board Meeting.
- The partnership had good engagement with schools in the borough, an example was provided of how all eligible primary schools in the borough had visited the Lifewise Centre.
- The partnership tracked data through the Evolve Team and Multi-Agency Child Exploitation Meetings. It was advised that in situations where the partnership had a higher number of referrals from a particular school and had identified an increased risk, schools engaged well with the partnership.
- The partnership had a vulnerability assessment tracker in place, the tracker identified children and young people at risk, scored and tracked the risk throughout the intervention the process.
- There had been a reduction in risk relating to the area of child sexual exploitation, in comparison to neighbouring boroughs within South Yorkshire, Rotherham had very few high-risk cases relating to child sexual exploitation. This was the result of identifying individuals at risk of child sexual exploitation at an earlier stage, via referrals and intelligence captured on locations, individuals, and schools.
- The partnership was using the best practise established in the area of child sexual exploitation to develop the area of child criminal exploitation. It was acknowledged by the partnership that the position was not as strong for child criminal exploitation, this area had seen higher risk referrals and was an area that the partnership needed to invest further in, to identify child criminal exploitation at an earlier stage. This aligned with the national position on child criminal exploitation, as it was complex and newer. The partnership acknowledged that further work was required to understand the cross over and links between child criminal exploitation and child sexual exploitation, to ensure that the risk tracker would be able identify links in future. The Child Exploitation Group met once a week and during meetings intelligence from all partner agencies was shared.

- Most neglect cases were a combination of more than one type of neglect, this often-included supervision neglect, nutritional neglect, educational neglect and medical neglect. Poverty was not an area of neglect, although partner organisations were aware of the cost-of-living crisis and the consequences resulting from poverty.

Resolved:- That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Consider the Annual Report
- 2) Agree that further information is provided in next year's iteration of the annual report, which includes the number of people who were invited and/or required to attend each training session, to enable better interpretation for the data.

37. THE ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2023 - 2024

The agenda item provided an update on the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board Annual Report for 2023/2024.

The Chair welcomed to the meeting, Moira Wilson, the Independent Chair for the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board, Andrew Wells, Head of Service for Safeguarding and Mental Health and Gemma Cross, Safeguarding Lead at The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust.

The Chair invited the Independent Chair of the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board to give the presentation, during which the following was noted:

- The Report covered the period of April 2023 to March 2024.

Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board Priorities-

- **Back to Basics-**
The Board would continue to work with partners to embed the six principles of safeguarding in practice. Making safeguarding personal was integral to everything the Board did. This was an important priority post-pandemic.
- **Systems, Processes and Performance-**
The Board aimed to ensure that all services had appropriate systems and processes in place to support and safeguard adults effectively.
- **Strengthen Partnership-**
The Board would collaboratively work with partners, organisations and communities, to work together to prevent abuse from happening, as safeguarding effectively was about working together, rather than as one sole organisation. Appendix One within the report highlighted the contributions that all partners made to the board throughout 2023/2024.

2023/2024 Actions-

- In July 2023, the Board hosted a Peer Review by the Local Government Association. This entailed the service preparing a self-assessment to showcase the work of the Board.
- The Board received the completed report, and as a result a partnership development day was held, to develop the recommendations from the report into an achievable action plan with three key themes. The three key themes identified were as follows:
 - Theme 1- Strengthening the user voice.
 - Theme 2- Governance and strengthening Board arrangements.
 - Theme 3- Making the best use of data and information.
- The outcomes of the Peer Review were presented to the Health Select Commission in early 2024.
- The Board had a statutory responsibility to undertake Safeguarding Adults Review's (SAR). SARs were completed in situations where somebody had died or was seriously harmed as a result of abuse or neglect and if the Board felt that lessons could be learned by the different agencies involved, then a SAR would be actioned.
- There was a SAR completed in 2023/2024, known as the SAR Noelle and George. The review was signed off at the Board in March 2024 and work was on-going to ensure the development of the learning and recommendations from the SAR Noelle and George.
- Safeguarding Awareness Week took place in November 2023, during which Rotherham hosted the Regional Launch for South Yorkshire. This was attended by 60 safeguarding professionals and leaders who came together to celebrate the start of a week of training and awareness sessions that related to safeguarding.
- There had been a number of SARs in 2022/2023 which were as a result of self-neglect and several key themes were identified as a result of the SARs, self-neglect was an area that was increasing nationally. Therefore, in 2023/2024, there had been a whole partnership Thematic Review completed which focused on self-neglect and what the partnership could do to support this area. As a result, a pocket-sized guide was created that included a cluster scale to aid reporting.
- There had been 3,963 safeguarding concerns received by the Board in 2023/2024. 588 of those concerns progressed on to a safeguarding enquiry. This was on trend with the previous years and was not an increase. In situations where concerns did not lead to an enquiry, it was often due to the Board finding alternative ways to meet the individual's needs.
- Neglect, physical and psychological abuse continued to be the top three categories of abuse during 2023/2024. Self-neglect continued to be a focus for safeguarding awareness raising.
- The Board delivered a variety of safeguarding awareness sessions and supporting information. The Board had seen an increase in

safeguarding contacts, especially during the last quarter of 2023/2024.

Future Aims of the Board-

- The Board would complete all recommendations that had been made by the Peer Review.
- The Board had completed a joint safeguarding self-assessment with Children's and Young People's Services in September 2024, this provided assurance that statutory partners were in a strong position and were safeguarding the citizens of Rotherham.
- The Board would embed learning across the partnership from Safeguarding Adult Reviews, by holding learning events and completing audits.
- The Board would work with Children's and Young People's Services and the Safer Rotherham Partnership, to deliver Safeguarding Awareness Week between the 18 and 22 November 2024.
- Plans were in place to host a Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board Development Day in January 2025; this would enable preparation of the new strategic plan for 2025/2028.

The Chair thanked the relevant officer for the presentation and invited questions, this led to the following points being raised during discussions:

- The Board acknowledged that strengthening the user voice was an area which required further development. Often individuals who had gone through the safeguarding process were reluctant to talk about their experience. The Board collected the user voice via case studies and people's stories.
- When undertaking a safeguarding enquiry, the local authority captured the individual's views and wishes at the start of the process, at the end of the process the individual would be provided with an exit questionnaire which would capture their voice. The local authority had recently developed a user group which focused on capturing the user voice, the four board sub-groups already in place, also had a focus on capturing the user voice.
- At the Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust there was an Expert By Experience Group for patients with learning disabilities and autism, the group was often asked questions on their experience of the safeguarding process. There were also Safeguarding Committee Meetings held by the Board which were attended by all partner agencies, each partner agency would take a story of a safeguarding journey to those meetings to discuss the user voice. The Board was starting to build the user voice across the partnership and remained keen to complete further work on this.
- The Board was in discussions with Healthwatch Rotherham, to arrange joint working to raise the profile of the user voice. During the development day in January, the Board would consider whether an individual with experience should attend future Board meetings.

- In relation to the figure of neglect and acts of omission detailed in the report (page 72), it was advised this was an area which had seen an increase nationally. The Board completed work with partners and the voluntary sector to increase the identification of neglect. A Vulnerable Adults Pathway had been developed and would be launched soon; the Neglect Pathway was included within the Vulnerable Adults Pathway. There were Multi-Agency Risk Assessment Conferences (MARACs) held on a regular basis, MARACs focused on implementing the learning identified from SAR's.
- The Performance and Quality Subgroup had a focus on ensuring that the right data and outcomes were captured by the Board. The group had a joint Chair from South Yorkshire Police. All statutory partners were members of the subgroup. The group had a forward plan and focused on thematic reviews.
- The Safeguarding Adult Review Subgroup met each month, and meetings included all statutory partners. The subgroup developed a time-out session to focus on lessons to be learned and to ensure that the action plans in place would be progressed and completed.
- There was a Policy and Practise Subgroup and a Workforce Subgroup. One individual from each partner organisation sat on every sub-group to ensure they were cross-cutting. All subgroups fed back into the Board on a quarterly basis. Attendance at subgroups was good and had significantly improved over recent years.
- In South Yorkshire, the police used a vulnerability scoring system which issued vulnerable adult alerts, any individual who had two or more referrals in a three-month period would be referred into Community MARAC, to identify any lessons learned. There were occasions where repeat referrals were due to organisational abuse, as a result the Board developed their case management system and the information available to support organisational abuse, a new pathway was also developed for practitioners. The Head of Safeguarding reviewed repeat cases monthly for the local authority and on a quarterly basis for the Board.

Resolved:- That the Improving Lives Select Commission:

- 1) Consider the report.
- 2) Request that further information on the activities planned for Safeguarding Awareness Week 2024, including the information on the launch of the Neglect Strategy, be shared with members of the Commission.

38. WORK PROGRAMME

The Committee considered its Work Programme, and the following was noted:

- The work programme was included in the agenda pack.
- The suggested items for December's meeting were absences from education and the SEND Strategy update.

Resolved: - That the Work Programme for 2024/2025 be approved.

39. IMPROVING LIVES SELECT COMMISSION - SUB AND PROJECT GROUP UPDATES

The Chair provided a progress report on sub and project group activity and the following was noted:

- The Preparation for Adulthood Spotlight Review Recommendations were presented to Cabinet on the 14 October 2024. Cabinet agreed to respond to the recommendations by December 2024, in accordance with the Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rules.
- A consultation session was held with members of the Commission, where they contributed to the consultation relating to the development of the SEND Strategy. The session was well attended and very informative. Members were reminded to provide their feedback to the consultation via the link on the Council website.

Resolved: - That the update be noted.

40. URGENT BUSINESS

The Chair informed the Commission that a Trauma Matters Session had been arranged for all Elected Members and the following was noted:

- The Trauma Matters Session would be held on the 28 January 2025 between 1.00-3.30pm.
- The session would be in person only, at the Town Hall and would be delivered by the Rotherham Trauma and Resilience Service.
- The aim of the session was to understand the impact of trauma across the lifespan.

The Chair advised that more information could be found on the Member Portal.