

ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP

Annual Assurance Report 2024/25



CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----------|
| INTRODUCTION | 3 |
| FOREWORD | 4 |
| WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM | 5 |
| PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE | 10 |
| PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES | 14 |
| THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY | 23 |
| CONCLUSION | 25 |

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the annual assurance report from the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP). The RSCP report for 2024/25 will provide an update on the key partnership activity during the year, based on the strategic priorities. The impact of the work against these priorities will be demonstrated alongside a summary of any activity by the key partner agencies.

It will also cover what the partnership has done as a result of the arrangements, including Child Safeguarding Practice Reviews (CSPR), and how effective these arrangements have been in practice.

In addition, the report will include:

- The contribution of each safeguarding partner to the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements (MASA)
- Any themes identified from scrutiny and audit processes
- Evidence of the impact of the work of the safeguarding partners and relevant agencies
- Analysis of areas where there has been little or no evidence of progress on agreed priorities
- Analysis of learning from serious incidents
- Key decisions and actions taken by the safeguarding partners in the yearly cycle
- How safeguarding partners have sought and utilised feedback from children and families
- Financial arrangements for the period
- How safeguarding partners ensure adequate representation and education at both operational and strategic levels
- How data is being used to encourage learning, and how information sharing has improved practice

- The learning identified from independent scrutiny
- Any updates to the published arrangements
- Evidence that national reforms have been implemented.

The RSCP priorities have been renewed for 2024-2025 and are themed under three key delivery objectives:

- **Child Exploitation**
- **Neglect**
- **Safeguarding in Education**

The above priorities were also informed by the below key principles, which underpinned all activity undertaken by the RSCP to safeguard and promote the welfare of children in Rotherham:

- **Safe at Home**
- **Safe in the Community**
- **Safe Safeguarding Systems**

The Safeguarding Partners for the 2024-2025 were:

Chris Edwards, Chief Officer, NHS Rotherham Integrated Care Board.

Sharon Kemp, Chief Executive, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Hayley Barnett, Deputy Chief Constable, South Yorkshire Police

FOREWORD

from the RSCP Independent Scrutineer – Darren Downs

It is a great pleasure to not only contribute to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) annual report but also to be the independent chair and scrutineer, having taken on the role in early 2023. The partnership has excellent engagement from all the key partners and a culture of challenge, driving what has been a journey of continuous improvement. The partnership has strong foundations, and it continues to grow and improve the services that are delivered and strives to challenge itself to be the best.

The Annual Report for 2024-25 reflects our continued commitment and passion to deliver the best we can for the children and young people of Rotherham. The report evidences the good work that has been delivered and identifies the areas where we are still looking to make improvements. Since becoming the independent chair and scrutineer, I continue to be impressed by the strength and level of engagement across the partnership and the drive to safeguard our children, giving them the best start in life. The partnership has seen some new members arrive and some changes to the executive team, and it is an ideal opportunity to thank those who have left the partnership for their work and tireless efforts in recent years. The partnership is in a strong position as a result of their commitment, and it is testament to the strength of the partnership that changes are seamless and almost unnoticed. Despite these changes, I am confident that the partnership will continue to push forward and see further improvements.

The year has seen more statutory inspections, and excellent performance across organisations, which, given the pressures on finances and resources, is

pleasing and reassuring to see. We look forward to further inspections in the coming year, learning from the processes and continuing to drive to be the best and deliver the best for the children and young people of Rotherham.

The data within the report will evidence that we are delivering excellent S47 conclusions, and that decisions around risk of harm are largely robust. The number of Looked after Children (LAC) has reduced further and well below those of our statistical neighbours. Child in Need (CiN) assessments are lower than the national average, indicating that we are working well at Early Help, but we need to do further work this year to fully understand this. Finally, the areas around education are similar to the national picture, with more children in Elective Home Education (EHE) than previous years, but the work around this is robust and effective, with many children returned to educational settings and work in the Safeguarding in Education group managing the concerns this raises.

As we move into the next year and plans are refreshed for the 2025-2026 activities, I look forward to continuing to push the partnership to make positive improvements and give children the best start in life. Much of the current work will continue and strengthen the activities they deliver, such as EVOLVE and MACE. We will also push forward on new work, and a major area of work will be to implement and embed the Families First Programme, ensuring it delivers what is expected and required, and work is actively ongoing in this area.

WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM



Rotherham is a large minster town in South Yorkshire, England which along with its nearby settlements form the Metropolitan Borough of Rotherham, with a population of 268,354 (ONS, 2022). There are 61,636 0–19-year-old children living in the Borough (22.9% of the local population – ONS, 2022).

23% of children living in Rotherham are in low-income families (England 19.8% - 2023). Our Free School Meal (FSM) entitlement rate is above national average, 26.6% compared to 24.3% at Primary phase and 27.9% compared to 24.1% at Secondary phase (DfE 2023/24).

22.8% of our school age population is from BME background (England 38.7%) (DfE 2023/24).

Inspections of Statutory Partners

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council received a focused visit and full SEND inspection in 2024-25, other partners were not inspected during the year but have had recent inspections with details below.

WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

Summary of Inspection Findings

| Organisation | Inspection Body and Date | Overall Rating | Key Strengths | Areas for Improvement |
|---|----------------------------------|--------------------|--|---|
| Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) | Ofsted (2022) | Good | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong safeguarding • Effective multi-agency work (Evolve service) • Good progress for children in care • Child-centred decision-making | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve response to initial contacts • Better identity needs assessment • Raise ambition for care leavers • Improve quality of case audits |
| Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) | Ofsted Focused Visit (July 2024) | N/A (Positive) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effective child protection planning • Strong leadership and corporate support | N/A |
| Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council (RMBC) | Inspection (Oct 2024) | 1 (highest rating) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive outcomes for children with SEND • Active improvement efforts | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve the quality of EHC plans • Reduce wait times for assessment |

WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

Summary of Inspection Findings - continued

| Organisation | Inspection Body and Date | Overall Rating | Key Strengths | Areas for Improvement |
|--|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| South Yorkshire Police | HMICFRS PEEL (2022) | Outstanding (Protecting Vulnerable People) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong governance and strategy • Effective multi-agency collaboration • High-quality assurance and victim feedback • Strong domestic abuse response • Mental health support access • Officer well-being prioritised | None in respect of safeguarding |
| The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT) | CQC (2021) | N/A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved inter-agency collaboration • Clear injury documentation guidance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low safeguarding training compliance • Staff uncertainty in reporting abuse • Uneven safeguarding referral workload • Need to embed safeguarding improvements <p>Progress made in all areas as shared with RSCP</p> |

WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

Rotherham in numbers - Core data by statutory Partner

The vast majority of child-centred data is held by Rotherham Council. The Neglect and Child Exploitation delivery groups have introduced increased multi agency data into the scorecards for 2025-26 and this will be reported on next year.

| Intervention | RMBC 2024-25 | RMBC 2023-24 | Statistical Neighbour Average | National Average |
|---|-----------------|-----------------|-------------------------------------|------------------|
| Referrals | 2964 | 2780 | | |
| Section 47 completions (individual children) | 1572 | 1406 | | |
| S47s per 10k | 221 | 194 | 229 | 187 |
| Child in Need per 10k | 310 | | 398 | 332 |
| Child protection Plans per 10k | 54 | 45 | 54 | 41 |
| Children looked after per 10k | 83 | 88 | 109 | 60 |

All partner data is subject to scrutiny and oversight within the Performance, Practice and Learning (PPL) Delivery Group. These numbers tell us that referrals are fairly consistent in the borough. Over 95% of children subject of a s47 investigation are found to have harm substantiated, which suggests a robust process in the strategy meetings held and that the right children

are taken through this process.

Child Protection numbers are historically higher than the national average and this remains the case, alongside a reduction in the numbers of children looked after. This number is in line with statistical neighbours and does not suggest an issue of concern.

WELCOME TO ROTHERHAM

Early Help

1,266 Early Help Assessments were completed in year, with 32% of these completed by partners, up from 28% in 2023-24. Partners are supported by Integrated Working Leads and this increased engagement gives a positive foundation upon which to support the launch of the Rotherham Neglect pathway in 2025-26. Rotherham's commitment to prevention and community working is evidenced with 98% of children aged under 5 registered with a children's centre and 82% accessing children's centre activities.

Education

The Safeguarding in Education Group has been overseeing the development of policy to address the potential risks to a minority of children Electively Home Educated (EHE). In the borough at present there are 747 children EHE at 31 March 2025, with a significant increase from 501 in 23/24. Of these 35 arrangements were considered unsuitable.

The links between exclusions and safeguarding are well established and have been supported by RSCP audit activity this year. There have been 6 primary and 56 secondary exclusions in 2024-25 with 6 rescinded. This represents a positive reduction from 13 and 94 respectively in 23/24. Positively, persistent absence is below the national and neighbour average for the year.

Youth Justice Service (YJS)

| Intervention | RMBC | Neighbour | National |
|-------------------|------|-----------|----------|
| 1st time entrants | 171 | 179 | 161 |
| Use of custody | 0.04 | 0.13 | 0.07 |

The above highlights the positive efforts to avoid custody for young people in Rotherham, with roughly a third of children in custody compared to statistical neighbours and also below the national average. This is alongside a 13% reoffending rate compared to 35% for statistical neighbours' average and 20% nationally.

Missing from Home and Return Home Interviews

There were 1,016 missing episodes in 2024-25, with 46 children missing 3 or more times. 43% of these were children in care. Return home interviews were offered on 932 or 91.5% of occasions. 335 of the children missing were known for CCE risks and 39 for CSE – demonstrating the prevalence of CCE for vulnerable children in the borough.

Secure Units

There are no secure children's establishments located within the Rotherham local authority area. As such, there have been no incidents of restraint requiring review under the Youth Justice Board, Youth Custody Service, or His Majesty's Inspectorate of Prisons reporting framework. The RSCP continues to monitor any placements of Rotherham children in secure settings outside the borough and ensures appropriate safeguarding oversight is maintained.

PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE



Governance and Structure of the RSCP

The RSCP was established in September 2019 in accordance with the Children Act 2004 (as amended by the Children and Social Work Act 2017) and Working Together to Safeguard Children 2018 (WT18).

The new legislation enshrined in Working Together 2023 (WT23) has reaffirmed the role of the three statutory safeguarding partners, and has further defined the remit of chief officers, leaders and managers within the governance. The partnership has reviewed and published an updated MASA in line with the WT23 guidance, and the governance structures have remained the same as the previous year.

The Executive Group continues to set the

direction and priorities of the Partnership. The priorities are aligned with those of the other key partnership boards, Health & Wellbeing, Rotherham Safer Partnership and the Safeguarding Adults Board. The three main statutory partners, Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council, South Yorkshire Police and South Yorkshire ICB continue to work collaboratively with the wider partnership and Voluntary Consortium to deliver a safer Rotherham.

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership continues to have Delivery Groups alongside the strategic priorities for 2023-2026. A safeguarding education group (SEDG) was created last year in anticipation of the enhanced role of education services in safeguarding and in response to emerging themes around the importance of education in safeguarding. In addition, a delivery group

PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE

focusing solely on Neglect (NeDG) has made progress in setting the groundwork to deliver in the complex and challenging context that exists around neglect. The Practice Performance and Learning (PPL) delivery group focuses on the areas of quality assurance, training and learning from practice. This includes the oversight and management of all safeguarding practice reviews. Finally, the Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG) has remained and is focused on the exploitation of children and young people and the delivery of the new Child Exploitation Strategy. The partnership has maintained strong links with the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP) throughout 2024/25; this process transferred to the Health and Wellbeing Board for oversight in mid-2024/25, and this arrangement will continue into 2025/26 and beyond.

The delivery groups have a nominated chair and representatives from across the different multi-agencies that make up the partnership, ensuring everyone has accountability in the partnership, and that accountability and challenge are maximised. These groups meet every two months and progress activity, before reporting progress into the bi-monthly Executive Board, providing reassurance on activity to executive members, and having their work scrutinised.

RSCP Budget

- The RSCP budget has an underspend of £36,413 for the year 2024/25. This is due to a carry forward from 2023/24 of just over £12k and slippage for the period April to October due to a staffing vacancy. In addition, the £5k Budget for Safeguarding Practice Reviews was not required 2024/25, creating an in-year saving. This underspend will carry forward into 2025/26 to relieve any funding pressures.
- The eCDOP Licence costs for 2024/25 and beyond have been transferred over to Public Health.
- Contributions from partners are at the same rate as 2023/24 since the proposed budget for 2024/25 with partner contributions for 25/26 yet to be agreed. LSPs will meet in September 2025 to agree on new funding arrangements following findings from a report completed by the sub-regional scrutineers.



PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE

| Safeguarding Budget 2024/25 | | | | |
|------------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Course | Budget | Actual | Forecast | Variance |
| RMBC Contribution | -115,352 | -115,352 | -115,352 | 0 |
| RCCG Contribution | -115,352 | -115,352 | -115,352 | 0 |
| SYPCC Contribution | -44,475 | -44,475 | -44,475 | 0 |
| Probation Service | 0 | -2,049 | -2,049 | -2,049 |
| Total for Expenditure | 275,179 | 252,839 | 252,839 | -22,340 |
| Total for Income | -275,179 | -277,228 | -227,228 | -2,049 |
| Total | 0 | -24,389 | -24,389 | -24,389 |
| c/f from 2023/24 | 0 | -12,024 | -12,024 | -12,024 |
| Grand Total | 0 | -36,413 | -36,413 | -36,413 |

The small underspend will also support activity within the delivery groups to generate a direct impact on reducing abuse in our borough through the following activity:

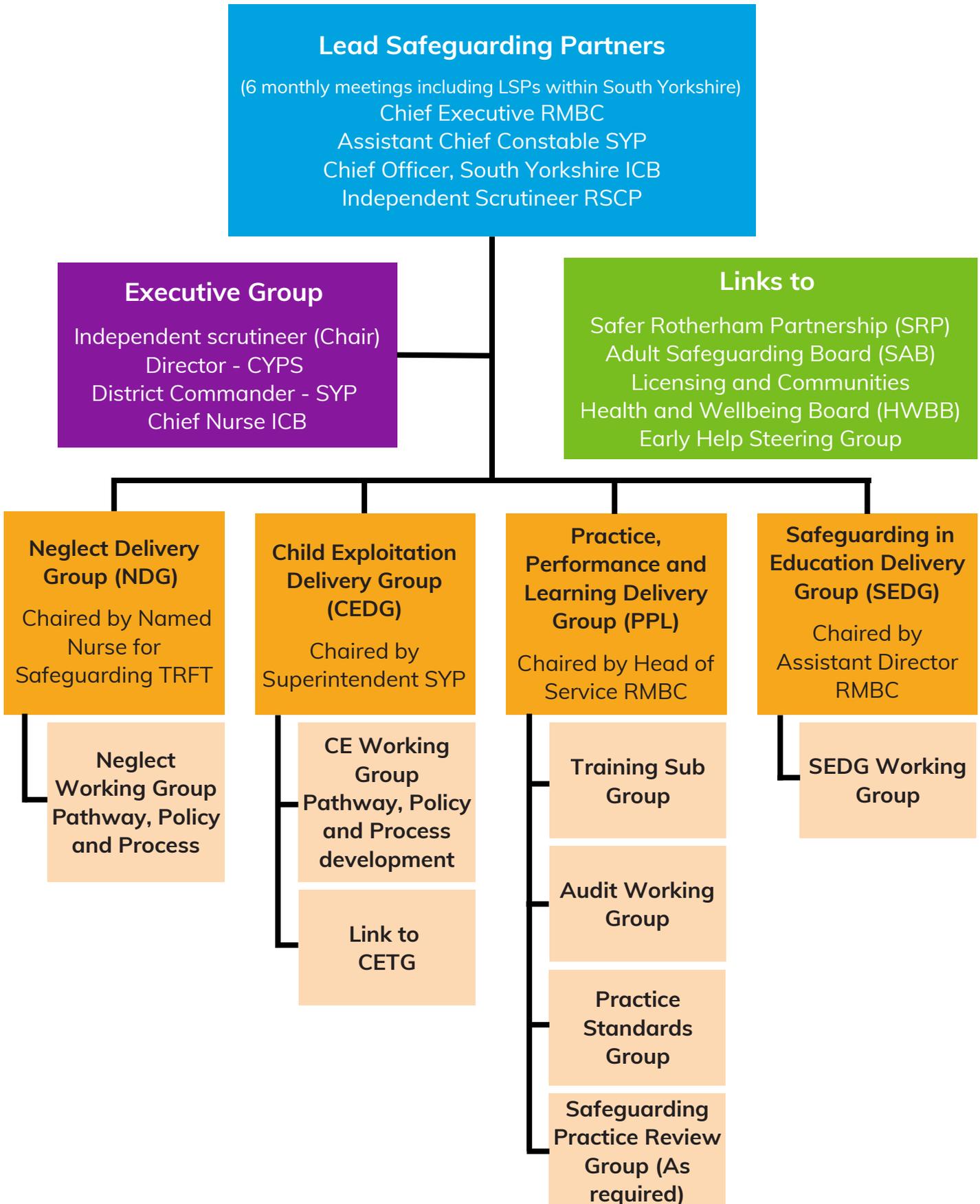
- A Neglect Conference to include representatives from all partners and key third sector partners, the intent would be to raise awareness of neglect across the borough with a supporting media campaign
- Increased provision of neglect training to increase the confidence of all practitioners in addressing neglect at the earliest stages, working alongside families and their networks in line with the Families First Partnership

Programme guidance.

- An enhanced website and digital offer, which will enable greater public access to key information and support.
- Targeted specialist training in respect of Intra Familial Child Sexual Abuse, following the recommendations from the National Panel.

PROGRESS AGAINST STATUTORY GUIDANCE

RSCP Structure



PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES



Neglect

What is working well at present, and what are the success stories for the group?

The Neglect Delivery Group has positive and consistent engagement from all partners. Our focus for 2024-25 has been on developing a clear pathway to assist with the recognition and prevention of neglect. Key achievements this year have been in delivering training in the completion of the Graded Care Profile 2, with an increase in colleagues completing the training from social work and health. Increased trainer capacity will enable the training offer to be upscale across Rotherham in 2025-26 and beyond.

To achieve consistency, a pathway for children in need and children on child protection plans has been launched, with guidance on the timely completion of the GCP2 in order to scale the level of neglect and to target intervention.

Alongside this a screening tool (RESHHAPED) for neglect has been approved for use by the NSPCC and a pilot is underway in a selection of schools. This will then be evaluated and launched across all schools over the summer of 2025. South Yorkshire Police continue to use the SHARED tool to identify factors of neglect when attending homes, supporting the recognition of neglect across the partnership.

PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

The Neglect Strategy was formally launched this year as part of Safeguarding Awareness week, supported by facilitated sessions from the Chair of the Neglect Delivery Group and the LSCP Business Manager.

What needs to improve, and what areas of work are we concentrating on at present?

The data in relation to neglect in Rotherham has been developed this year and is being refined currently with the aim of understanding the impact of the Neglect Strategy and workplan. The impending launch of the Neglect screening tool will support early identification of neglect in universal services and should enable greater targeted support as part of the Team around the Family Approach.

A further focus will be to increase community engagement and awareness of neglect, working alongside partners across the Rotherham Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB), RSCP and Safer Rotherham Partnership (SRP) to identify opportunities where messages can be shared that will help the community to identify neglect. This will be supported by the Rotherham Family Hubs and the Rotherham Family Approach – which emphasises the key role that wider families can play in keeping their network safe.

What is the current performance picture and how does this fit with this priority?

Rotherham has high levels of dental caries in children. Due to the way data is collated, it is difficult to understand the true picture of this. We are working with colleagues at The Rotherham Foundation Trust (TRFT), the Integrated Care Board (ICB), and public health to develop this work further,

particularly in relation to under 5s and communities in Rotherham that may struggle to access dental care.

What are the priorities for 2025-26?

To further enhance and embed the data scorecard with detail on children not brought to medical appointments, dental extractions, and to further audit to better understand the ‘issues/themes’ behind neglect, enabling more focused interventions to take place.

Child Exploitation

What is working well at present and what are the success stories for the group?

Prevention, education and training continues to be a focus for the group. There is good work ongoing around licensing, and a new Fearless campaign will be launched early in 2025-2026.

The use of digital and online technology, including the sharing of images, continues to pose significant risk to young children and people. Education and training have been provided, including a video, to reach more children and parents/ carers. Social media is one aspect that has been used to support this expansion.

Child Exploitation Task Group (CETG) currently brings together partners from South Yorkshire Police, Youth Justice, Housing, Health, Education, Licensing and Social Care. The forum meets weekly and highlights intelligence linked to child exploitation that has been compiled by the local intelligence teams. The range of this intelligence is incredibly broad, encompassing reports ranging from locations known for child drug use, all the

PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

way to children being routinely exploited or targeted by specific individuals. The most important aspect of this forum is the eclectic nature of the discussions surrounding the intelligence; in many cases, the intelligence comes readily developed by our intelligence teams but is lacking in enough corroboration to be acted upon. In the meeting this corroboration is supported by partner agencies who can add extra intelligence or highlight certain risks which were not immediately apparent to police. This enables the group to eliminate blind spots and hold each other to account around our plans to tackle exploitation.

Successes within the CETG forum are numerous. A recent example involves a nightclub in Rotherham, where intelligence suggested it was being attended by young females who were being served alcohol and potentially exploited. Within one meeting licensing staff were tasked with attending alongside SYP Exploitation teams to investigate the venue, consequently, the venue's license was revoked. SYP were able to retrieve CCTV footage within the venue and this is now being reviewed to support victims and apprehend suspects.

Another example demonstrates positive information sharing across the partnership which has supported the serving of child abduction warning notices (CAWN) and subsequent victim testimony. Without the CETG forum, it is clear that this offending would not have been highlighted as quickly, and the information held by partners would not have been available to act upon.

What needs to improve, and what areas of work are we concentrating on at present?

Joint working across the partnership around disruptions of organised crime groups is important, especially those who are linked to CSE/CCE. We are focused on improving intelligence submissions, which will help us to disrupt the behaviour of exploitative adults as a partnership. We are refreshing the intelligence drive across the partnership, including delivering presentations to partners. We will continue to monitor this to ensure that no matter how small, we are sharing the information and intelligence. We are introducing a monthly disruption document across the partnerships to capture this work.

Appreciative case studies allow us to understand what went well, identify any gaps and look to address them as partnership. This brings good discussions from the group.

We are looking to introduce a children's panel to help understand the voice of the child and engage young people, gaining their perspectives on how we can offer any further support for people who may be at risk of CSE/CCE.

We have also introduced input from the Child Exploitation Tactical Group into the agenda of the meeting. This provides us with reassurance around the work ongoing, intelligence development across the partnership, and also to support this group to ensure they have the relevant support and attendance.

The RSCP recognises the national issue of taxis being licenced to other local authorities. This was raised as a concern in the recent report to government by Dame

PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Louise Casey. Alongside further clarity from central government the RSCP is working to ensure that Uber drivers and Taxi drivers from other authorities are aware of relevant safeguarding issues and practices, and that they deliver their services to Rotherham residents in a safe manner.

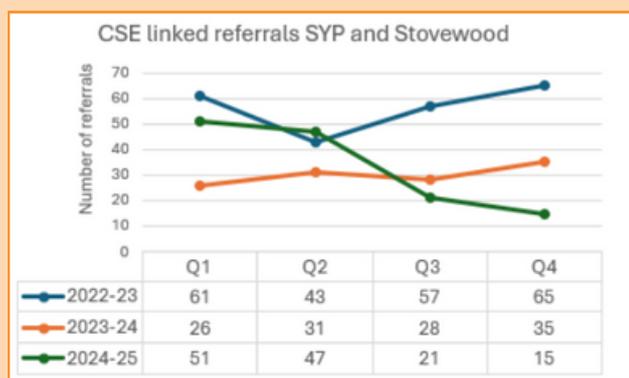
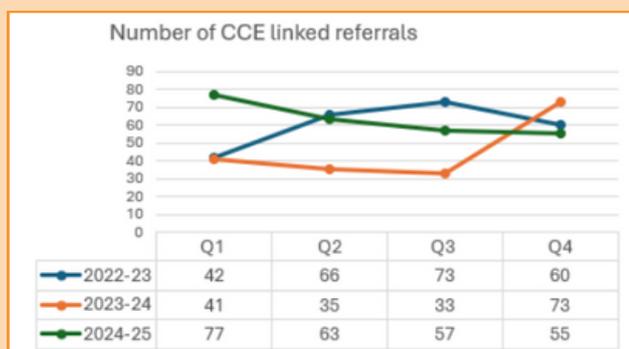
What is the current performance picture, including any gaps in data?

The data demonstrates a consistent picture in relation to exploitation in that we have seen CSE numbers and activity continue to stabilise whilst criminal exploitation continues to represent the greater proportion of exploitation in Rotherham. In addition, we are seeing a significant increase in online offences in line with the national picture.

The CE workplan highlights the preventative measures that can be taken in educating children and young people about the risks in relation to online abuse. The graph above shows a correlation across the past three years in terms of the numbers, with a steep rise in Q4. This may be due to more young people have internet-enabled devices after Christmas. The CEDG is planning to understand this data to a greater extent in 25/26.

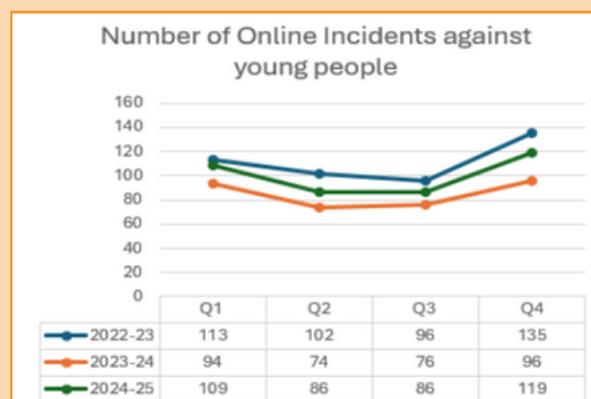
Alongside the data, our audit activity has confirmed the link between exploitation and engagement in school. With the Safeguarding in Education priority well established, CEDG and SEDG will work closely together to ensure that children are given sufficient support to remain in education and benefit from the broad positives of school life.

This is demonstrated in the graphs below:



Transitional Safeguarding

The RSCP recognises the importance of transitional safeguarding for young people moving from children's to adults' services. While this remains an emerging area of focus, the partnership is committed to strengthening pathways that ensure continuity of care and protection. In 2025–26, the RSCP will work with the Rotherham



PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Safeguarding Adults Board (RSAB) and other partners to develop a joint approach to transitional safeguarding, with particular attention to care leavers, young people with SEND, and those at risk of exploitation or mental health challenges. This will include mapping current transition protocols, identifying gaps, and co-producing solutions with young people.

What is the impact on children?

We continue to see effective and meaningful engagement with young people at risk from exploitation in the borough from a variety of professionals, the numbers of children scaled at high risk and therefore receiving a service from the multi-agency EVOLVE team has reduced from last year and year on year.

What are the priorities for 2025-26?

The launch of the Harm Outside The Home (HOTH) pathway in May 2025 will improve our ability to enhance community safety to ensure that young people enjoy Rotherham as much as possible without fear of abuse. This will require the RSCP to engage across the public sector and with non-traditional partners in formulating preventative and responsive solutions for young people at risk of exploitation. We will continue to work and develop awareness across the online space, ensuring risks are understood and that we do all we can to mitigate that risk to children by raising awareness to parent's, professionals and the local community. We will further develop information and intelligence sharing across the partnership so we can divert young people from exploitation and identify and target individuals and groups that may present a risk to the children of Rotherham.

Safeguarding in Education

What is working well at present, and what are the success stories for the group?

The group has successfully developed and updated the Safeguarding in Education Work Plan, which is key for implementing the strategic intent of the group. The workplan focuses on Understand, Protect and Include, similar to the "4 Ps" used for the Child Exploitation Delivery Group. There has been a positive increase in group membership, ensuring broader representation across different phases of education and all settings. The group now includes representatives from Early Years, Primary, Secondary, College, Special, and Nursery settings, alongside other professional groups outside education. The process for Section 175 returns has been well-received following the cessation of the Virtual College reporting mechanism, with return rates at 95%. There has also been positive engagement and follow up meetings held with schools to offer challenge and scrutiny.

The area Designated Safeguarding Leads meeting continues to be very successful, with the majority of schools represented. This group provides the RSCP with the opportunity to share learning and plans with education colleagues to engage them in RSCP activity.

What needs to improve, and what areas of work are we concentrating on at present?

The education scorecard will support the group's ability to track key indicators of risk and will identify areas for improvement. The current scorecard has been refined and requires further development in 2025-

PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

26.

A heavy focus going forward will be to understand and respond to child on child abuse, including, harmful sexual behaviour, online bullying and the sharing of indecent images. We will deliver guidance to schools in relation to their safeguarding practice in this area.

There also is increasing evidence of the harm caused by illicit vapes, which can often be used by young people, and whilst not specific to the education arena, the RSCP recognises the crucial role that school and education settings can play in delivering key messages to young people.

The number of children Electively Home Educated (EHE) continues to rise in line with national data. Recent research from the National Panel clearly demonstrates the complexities in addressing harm where children are also educated at home. In response the EHE services will build on their success in reducing children being taken off roll by their families with additional capacity in 2025-26.

What is the impact on children?

The s175 process gave assurance that schools are well equipped to meet their safeguarding requirements, and an increase in Early Help Assessment completion from education partners suggests that confidence in managing arising concerns has increased.

What are the priorities for 2025-26?

Publication of the Safeguarding in Education Strategy will crystallise the intent in bringing Education partners clearly into the business of the RSCP and in line with the national agenda. The strategy and further planning will be influenced by

the views of young people, and work has commenced to gain children's views and to drive safety for children in schools and alternative education settings.

The benefit of this group being at a strategic level is that it can influence the activity in other areas and gain from shared expertise across the partnership. The strategic priorities in relation to Neglect and Child Exploitation have a significant bearing on safeguarding practice in the education sector, and these relationships will be enhanced further in 2025-26.

The new Education Working Group will be developing a guide for intervention and knowledge regarding Child on Child abuse to sit alongside the s175 process, enabling schools to assess their needs in this emerging area of practice.

In relation to EHE, the group will oversee the governance and safeguarding practice of children at risk and home educated.



PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

Practice, Performance and Learning

The Practice, Performance and Learning (PPL) Delivery Group oversees the quality assurance and training offer from the RSCP. In addition, the group has responsibility for coordination the learning from case reviews and escalations. Four subgroups sit under the PPL Delivery Group.

- **The Audit Working Group** – coordinates all audit activity
- **The Practice Standards Group** – resolution of partner dispute/escalation and oversight of policy
- **The Training and Learning subgroup** – coordination of training activity and implementation of learning
- **The Safeguarding Practice Review Group** – meets when required to discuss any children potentially requiring a rapid review.

Audit activity 2024-25

This year RSCP has completed five audits.

- March 2024: The JTAI Serious Youth Violence
- July 2024: The Partnership Response to Neglect
- September 2024: Electively Home Educated Children
- November 2024: The JTAI Domestic Abuse
- February 2025: The Partnership Response to Child Exploitation

Colleagues across the multi-agency partnership completed comprehensive audits, analysing the detail of records and available documents, to assess the impact for children and families of professionals’

practice. The scrutiny and challenge enabled good practice to be identified alongside learning and opportunities for further training in areas such as neglect, child sexual abuse.

Learning for practice was identified in the following areas, which have informed the learning and development action plan for 2025-26, which will be coordinated by the PPL Delivery Group and reported to the Executive.

Key learning themes

- Cross-border information sharing processes could be more collaborative, effective and timely to protect children and families from risk and harm.
- Improving the routine completion by all partners of GCP2 to understand the impact of neglect and cumulative harm.
- MASA and MAIS processes continue to effectively identify risk and provide immediate protection for children and families.
- Assessments and plans need to routinely include consultation with fathers and absent carers.
- Where family networks are identified, they are routinely supported by partners and provided with clear expectations for them to support children.
- Education review and challenge processes are in place and robust in scrutinising and challenging alternative education provision, including subsequent modified timetables.
- Evidence of the improvement in consistent recording of children’s voices and the impact of diversity, intersectionality and unique characteristics.

PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

- Evidence that genograms and chronologies are consistently initiated at MASH and are subsequently reviewed and updated.

Actions so far

- GCP2 pathway and screening tool agreed and launching in April 2025. The impact of this will be reviewed in August 2025.
- Harm Outside the Home Pathway agreed and launched in May 2025.
- SEDG to receive six monthly updates in respect of Elective Home Education and review processes for alternative education and modified timetables.
- In addition to increased GCP2 training, a Partnership neglect training proposal to be approved, and training delivered to partners by March 2026.

Planned Audit Activity for 2025/26

- Quarter 1: Intrafamilial Child Sexual Abuse
- Quarter 2: Child Protection Medicals
- Quarter 3: Evidence of Impact - RSCP Delivery Groups
- Quarter 4: TBC

Practice Standards

For vetoes 2024-25, there were 5. The group supported the Chair's veto for 3 and did not support for 2.

There were 3 appraisals referred. These were returned to the referrer for direct discussion between managers.

Safeguarding Practice Reviews

This year has seen no SPRs undertaken although a review from last year has been completed, with actions being tacked through the PPL Delivery Group.

Training Group

The training subgroup launched in 2024 and is focused on developing the RSCP learning offer for 25/26 and beyond. At present, it is acknowledged that our learning offer is smaller than similar safeguarding partnerships and that this has not changed much over the last several years.

The RSCP has continued to provide a core offer of training for colleagues in 2024-25. In this time, 856 staff have attended courses as detailed in the table below:

| Course | Sessions | Staff attended |
|--|----------|----------------|
| Abianda (Girls in Gangs and Groups) Training | 8 | 102 |
| Child Exploitation and Contextual Safeguarding | 4 | 45 |
| Complexity and Curiosity in the Context of Child Exploitation | 6 | 87 |
| Cumulative Harm and Child Neglect | 2 | 10 |
| The Role of Designated Safeguarding Leads and Processes within Rotherham CYPS and MASH | 3 | 59 |
| Education Safeguarding Forum | 3 | 330 |
| LADO and Allegations Management | 1 | 21 |
| Level 3 Safeguarding Children | 2 | 57 |
| Multiagency Level 3 Safeguarding Training | 7 | 145 |

PROGRESS ON STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

In November 2024, the RSCP held Safeguarding Awareness Week in conjunction with RSAB. The theme was neglect, and over 100 colleagues and senior leaders attended both the local and regional launch.

Over the course of the week, 20 further sessions were delivered to colleagues, and covered themes such as professional curiosity, modern slavery and online risks for young people. Professionals attending gave the following feedback:

- More detailed background information regarding far-right extremist groups and how to identify.
- More information about the Graded Care Profile and how this can inform practice.
- Legislation around dogs, data around dog attacks and their frequency with specific reference to South Yorkshire.
- The content was very informative, helpful guidance regarding the apps young people are using and the language they use.
- The cultural discourse that dominates perspectives on domestic abuse and those involved and affected by it, and the resistant discourse. What constitutes coercive control and how the signs can be overlooked by professionals and not recognised by the victims.
- Safer sleeping advice provided.

What is the impact on children?

The group oversees all activity regarding child reviews and audits and as such informs the development of procedures and practice. This year we have seen guidance on assessing dangerous dogs and follow up regarding inter agency working.

Planning for 2025-26 includes

- The refreshed RSCP prospectus, completed March 2025.
- A review of course content for Child Exploitation and Harm Outside the Home to reflect the Contextual Pathway.
- Increasing the cohort of GCP2 trainers, bringing GCP2 training into the partnership rather than through the LA learning and development service in order to reflect the access by all safeguarding partners. Development of a shorter briefing/training around neglect/GCP2/screening tool and working with resistance.
- Enhanced collation of course feedback, to be produced in a report back to the training subgroup
- Closer ties with RSAB training and potential for joint training in areas such as self-neglect, trafficking and mental health.
- Development of our use of Eventbrite/Microsoft forms to enhance the booking experience.
- Training alongside health partners for safer sleeping and safeguarding children around dogs
- To develop professional curiosity training alongside delivery to DSL forum.



THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY



Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership has an Independent Chair and Scrutineer, who deliver two main roles within the partnership that are essential to its running. The chair and scrutineer coordinate the activity across the partnership on behalf of both the DSPs and LSPs.

The key roles that the chair and scrutineer ensure are delivered are:

- The functions required under the MASA and WT23 are complied with by all the relevant agencies and partners.
- The relevant organisations are delivering to the expectations of the partnership and are actively contributing.

- The governance is functioning, and there is a culture of accountability, through high support and high challenge.
- The approach to safeguarding is collaborative and expands beyond the partnership to other statutory boards such as the RSAB and SRP.
- That local learning and learning from National reviews and work is embedded into core practice.
- The wider partnership and other relevant stakeholders are contributing to safeguarding across Rotherham
- The audit schedule is effective, including the management of Section 11 and Section 175 audits.

THE ROLE OF INDEPENDENT SCRUTINY

- There is an effective scorecard that provides reassurance to the communities and professionals alike.

The chair and scrutineer also engages in direct scrutiny with organisations and professionals to provide reassurance over the findings of audits, such as school visits and mock inspections. This helps validate that services are delivering as expected, and impact is being seen within the communities.

The key guiding principles of scrutiny that the partnership adheres to are that the role will:

- Provide constructive “critical friend” challenges to all areas of activity.
- Ensure the voice and concerns of children and young people are addressed.
- Drive an improvement in public services across the partnership.
- Be aware of the local, regional and national pressures and best practice.

During the last year, the chair and scrutineer has:

- Reviewed performance information and enhanced the scorecard across the partnership.
- Delivered a joint Section 11 event with RSAB and is progressing the subsequent improvement plan.
- Developed a programme of scrutiny and audits to reassure professionals and children and young people.
- Delivered wider partnership events focused on themes of “Unseen Children” and the challenges connected to EHE.
- Worked with other scrutineers across the region, providing assistance, learning and identification of best practice.

- Assisted with the development and launch of a number of new strategies
- Obtained reassurance from other areas for the executive, such as CDOP, LADO and the Rotherham Together Partnership.

During the next year, and 2025 to 2026, the chair and scrutineer will:

- Review and develop the audit schedule for activity against the priorities
- Continue to embed and enhance the scorecard
- Enhance the voice of the children in the executive and work of the partnership
- Continue to deliver wider partnership themed events
- Continue to build relationships with relevant stakeholders and the voluntary community
- Refresh the funding principles across the sub-region in collaboration with other Children partnerships
- Work with partners to implement the Families First Programme.



CONCLUSION



The RSCP has enjoyed a productive year with many of the strategic priorities seeing significant progress and activity. This period has consolidated our efforts, and in 2025-26, it is expected that we will see increased positive impact on the children of Rotherham. Examples of this are in relation to the Neglect pathway, which should target increased recognition and earlier intervention, reducing negative outcomes for children, and also with regard to the Harm Outside the Home pathway which takes the Child Exploitation offer in Rotherham further by refocusing on risk which is contextual to communities and individuals who may pose risk to our young people.

It is anticipated that our data suite will continue to support our ability to collate the evidence of our impact across the partnership, including information from non-statutory partners.

The Families First Partnership Programme will bring exciting and comprehensive changes to the field of child protection in

the next year and is an exciting opportunity to continue our journey of improvements. The RSCP will be at the forefront of this delivery in supporting our partners to deliver against the set timescales and objectives. We are confident that the Safeguarding in Education (SiE) priority and the supporting Delivery Group put us ahead of the curve in relation to working alongside education partners and achieving strategic oversight at the heart of the partnership. The SiE strategy will be launched in late 2025 and will reaffirm this commitment.

As always, the RSCP continues to rely on the strength of its relationships, partners remain honestly robust and collaborative, supported by a small but highly stable and experienced business unit. Child Protection practice in the first quarter of this century continues to evolve to deliver in complex and changing times, and this partnership is steadfast in its flexibility and determination in order to meet these challenges head on.



w: www.rscp.org.uk
e: RSCP@rotherham.gov.uk