

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet 09 February 2026

Report Title

Rotherham Baby Pack: Outcomes and Future Commissioning

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

Yes

Executive Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

To report on the progress of the Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme pilot and to seek approval to recommission the scheme for a further period of up to four years.

Recommendations

That Cabinet:

1. Note the high level of satisfaction with the baby packs, particularly in relation to the quality and usefulness of the items provided.
2. Approve an open procurement exercise to ensure continuity of registering and delivery of baby packs to Rotherham families.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 – The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme Report - Obtaining parents' views and feedback exercise

Appendix 2 – Equality Analysis Form

Appendix 3 – Climate Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[Proposed Revenue Investments](#)

[Decision - The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme - obtaining parents' views and feedback exercise - Rotherham Council\)](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

No

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Rotherham Baby Pack: Outcomes and Future Commissioning

1. Background

- 1.1 On 28 February 2024, Council approved the Budget for 2024/25, including provision to undertake an open procurement to identify a supplier to provide baby packs to ensure every family has access to essential items from the beginning of a child's life.
- 1.2 The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme aims to promote a fair and equal start for all children as an aid in supporting the best possible outcomes for all Rotherham's children, with intended benefits including:
 - Reducing socio-economic and health inequalities by encouraging registration with family hubs.
 - Enabling information sharing to promote targeted engagement when families may benefit from additional help and support.
 - Information on how to access Council Start for Life services via Family Hubs.
- 1.3 The intention of the Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme was for it to become a cornerstone of Rotherham's commitment to ensuring that every child in Rotherham gets the best possible start in life, by providing families with the essential items they need from birth.
- 1.4 Following a competitive tender process, Field Management Ireland (FMI) was awarded the Single Provider Framework Agreement in November 2024. The initial contract covers the supply and delivery of up to 5,600 baby packs, with a maximum annual value of £720,000 over two years, ending on 14 November 2026.
- 1.5 Registration of expectant mothers commenced on 6 January 2025 for babies due on or after 7 April 2025. The first packs were distributed the week commencing 24 March 2025.

1.6 Registration Pathways

Three registration routes are available for the Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme: expectant mothers are offered a pack on or around their 25-week appointment with Maternity Services at The Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust (TRFT). Any expectant mother not registered through midwifery can do so when registering the birth at Riverside House.

Rotherham residents receiving maternity care outside the Borough can be registered by the baby pack provider once their midwife confirms pregnancy.

1.7 Performance

From 10 January 2025 to September 2025:

	Jan – Mar*	April - Jun	Jul – Sept	Total
Registrations	324	604	659	1587
Uptake Rate	69%	86%	94%	85%
Delivered	82	749	756	1587

**Registrations of expectant mothers commenced on 6 January 2025 for babies due on or after 7 April 2025. The first packs were distributed the week commencing 24 March 2025.*

- 1.8 The average birth rate over the previous three years is 2,800 per annum. The current uptake rate is between 90% to 95%. As this is a universal offer the packs will continue to be offered to all expectant mothers.
- 1.9 At the end of September 2025, 100% of Rotherham Baby Packs had been delivered to Rotherham families who had requested them (Council Plan 2025-30).

2. Key Issues

2.1 Recipient feedback

In September 2025, Rotherham Council undertook its first survey of recipients of the Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme to obtain feedback on user experience and impact.

- 2.2 The survey indicates that the baby packs are highly valued by expectant parents with 99% of respondents indicating that they would recommend it to others. Satisfaction levels are exceptionally high with an average rating of 4.82 out of 5 for pack quality and 4.87 for the registration process. Respondents consistently highlighted the financial relief provided by the pack, with 78% agreeing it helped save money, and 80% noted its role in raising awareness of Family Hubs and local support services.

2.3 Key Findings

The full survey report is included as Appendix 1. A summary is set out below:

- 2.4 Overall Satisfaction: Strong endorsement of the scheme quality and ease of access:

- 99% would recommend the Baby Pack (Q1).
- Quality rating: 4.82/5 (Q8).
- Registration process: 4.87/5 (Q3).
- Leaflet usefulness: 4.17/5 (Q13).

One respondent noted: *“There are a wide range of really useful and clearly carefully considered items that will help any new parent. The box far exceeded my expectations, and I think it is a wonderful and helpful asset to any new parent.”* – The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme - obtaining parents' views and feedback exercise 2025.

2.5 Financial Impact: Rotherham ranks among the 14% most deprived local authorities in England, making financial relief a critical outcome:

- 78% agreed or strongly agreed the pack saved them money (Q9).
- 72% cited financial savings as the top benefit (Q16).

One respondent noted: *"It had everything I needed including some expensive items like nipple cream and baby play mat. It's also made a great storage box for baby items that I want to keep, and the top is a cute design that adds to the sentimental vibe. I'm a first-time parent so it was nice to get things I hadn't thought of. I'm still waiting to use bits like the safety stuff, so it keeps on giving."* – The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme - obtaining parents' views and feedback exercise 2025.

2.6 Information and Awareness: While most families gained new knowledge, existing parents reported less benefit, suggesting the need for tailored content:

- 80% reported they had learned about Family Hubs/Children's Centres as a result of receiving the baby pack (Q3).
- 76% felt informed before arrival; 24% did not (Q5).
- Leaflet impact: 75% rated the leaflet positively (Q13).

One respondent noted: *"I think it helps make sure every child has the same essentials they need. I also liked that it provided mums with post-partum essentials. As a first-time mum, it was really useful. I think it's better than a monetary voucher as you cannot guarantee people would spend that on their baby."* – The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme - obtaining parents' views and feedback exercise 2025.

2.7 Engagement with Professionals: There is opportunity to strengthen links with health professionals but overall, the survey suggests this is already positive in the main:

- 36% said the pack encouraged them to speak more with midwives/health visitors (Q14), with 42% saying they were already comfortable speaking with their midwives/health visitors.

One respondent noted: *"The value inside was great. Babies are expensive and this bundle has every essential item included, if you're struggling to get everything ready it's a perfect help!"* – The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme - obtaining parents' views and feedback exercise 2025.

2.8 Delivery and Access: Home delivery remains essential, but earlier distribution and clearer communication could maximise benefits:

- 66% prefer home delivery; only 5% say they would collect from a Family Hub (Q7).
- Improvement priorities: timing of delivery and awareness were dominant themes (Q17).

One respondent noted: “*really appreciated this gesture from the Council. As a first-time parent it was so nice to receive such warmth to little baby, not just the baby but the fact that there was little packages for mom herself was very thoughtful. I think it would be great if this continues and gets offered in the long-term run.*” – The Rotherham Baby Pack Scheme - obtaining parents' views and feedback exercise 2025.

2.9 Areas for improvement

While feedback was overwhelmingly positive, several areas for improvement were identified. The most common suggestions relate to earlier delivery of the pack, clearer communication about its contents, and increased promotion of the scheme to ensure wider awareness. Individual respondents will not be aware of the high take-up rate and are therefore recommending it to others.

2.10 These issues are being addressed by:

- Enhanced communication: details about the contents of the baby pack will be included in the registration email to improve clarity and manage expectations.
- Earlier distribution: The current provider, FMI is willing to trial sending the baby pack approximately six weeks before the expected due date, allowing families more time to prepare.
- Updated materials: The *Start for Life* leaflet is being refreshed for Year 2 of the pilot to ensure relevance and accessibility.
- Expanded promotion: Communications will be increased across all channels to raise awareness of the scheme and its benefits.

2.11 These actions aim to enhance the scheme's impact further, reduce duplication of purchases for parents, and strengthen engagement with local support services. This baseline survey provides a strong foundation for measuring progress and evaluating the effectiveness of any changes in the next survey, which is planned for September 2026.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

- 3.1 **Option 1 - Recommended:** To recommission the baby pack scheme for up to a further four years with the annual budget of £410,000 plus yearly CPI increases.
- 3.2 As with the previous tender, prospective suppliers will be asked to submit their best product and offer within the available budget. The intention will be to ensure the baby pack contains the items and quality, as experienced during the pilot period. This will include the supply of a sample box for evaluation.
- 3.3 Potential price rises will be mitigated as the supplier will be required to commit to the price of the pack.

3.4 **Option 2 – Not Recommended:** To end the baby pack scheme when the current contract expires. The scheme is meeting its initial aims and is well regarded by parents and professionals.

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 A feedback exercise with parents has been completed and detailed in section 2 of the Cabinet report.

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 Subject to Cabinet approval, the tender will be advertised in April 2026, allowing 12 months to secure a provider partner and facilitating sufficient time to set up a registration and delivery system, and source the products and packaging which was key feedback from the initial procurement exercise.

5.2 The current provider, FMI, will continue the registration process for boxes until the contract ends in November 2026 and will then honour those orders with existing stock until 31 March 2027. (This is due to the planned 10-week lapse between registering for a pack and delivery).

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 The procurement for the supply of baby packs will be undertaken in compliance with the Council's Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules and the Procurement Act 2023.

6.2 The budget available for the baby packs from 2026/27 will be £410,000 per year. This is an increase of £50,000 and reflects the increase needed to provide the same quality and number of items in the pack. This will increase in line with inflation over the course of the contract.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 Legal Services has been involved throughout this project and have provided advice as and when required.

7.2 There are no further legal implications raised by this Cabinet report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no Human Resource implications in relation to this scheme. There are no Council staff employed as a result of the Rotherham Baby Pack scheme.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 The Rotherham Baby Pack scheme is an initiative that aims to give all children in the Borough a fair and healthy start in life. By providing mother and baby essentials and connecting families with support services through

the Family Hubs and 'Start for Life' booklet, the scheme will continue to reduce inequalities and improve early childhood outcomes and development.

- 9.2 There has been collaboration between Public Health, Children and Young People's Services (CYPS) and TRFT throughout the development of the scheme.
- 9.3 The Scheme aligns to Rotherham's Health and Wellbeing Strategy and the commitment in Rotherham's Integrated Health and Social Care Place Plan to enable a strong start in life for children and young people. This also supports the aim in both the Rotherham Together Partnership Plan and the Rotherham Council Plan to ensure that children get the best start in life.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 The Rotherham Baby Pack scheme is a universal offer for all children, families and babies born in Rotherham.
- 10.2 An Equality Analysis Form – Part B has been completed and accompanies this report at Appendix 2.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 The Climate Impact Assessment (Appendix 3) acknowledges the potential environmental implications of the scheme. The proposals will be assessed at the tender stage. This will ensure alignment with the Council's strategic commitment to environmental protection, sustainability, and ethical practice. These commitments will be actively monitored and managed through robust contract management processes to mitigate any adverse impact.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 The key partners include Public Health, CYPS and TRFT. There will be increased engagement between Public Health, midwifery and Health Visiting services (TRFT) and Family Help.
- 12.2 Partners are engaged and committed to developing and participating in the Rotherham Baby Pack scheme.
- 12.3 Partners will be involved in implementing the Rotherham Baby Pack scheme with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in place with TRFT, as well as Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with internal Council departments, e.g. Registrars of births, deaths, marriages and civil partnerships.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 The baby pack scheme experienced increased item costs in year 2 due to inflation and global supply chain challenges.

- 13.2 If the recommendation to recommission is approved, a detailed tender specification will be provided that clearly defines quality standards, the same pack contents, and delivery expectations. This will ensure suppliers are contractually bound to maintain quality within the agreed budget.
- 13.3 Potential price rises will be mitigated as the supplier will be required to commit to the price per pack.

14. Accountable Officers

Ian Spicer, Executive Director of Adult Care, Housing and Public Health

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	21/01/26
Executive Director of Corporate Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	20/01/26
Service Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	19/01/26

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