

# **Update on Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-2029**

## **Improving Lives Select Commission 28<sup>th</sup> April 2026**

**Chris MacDonald, Head of Safeguarding, CYPS**

# Definition

- Child exploitation is not easily defined.
- Multiple forms of harm which are exploitative, including child sexual exploitation, child criminal exploitation, radicalisation and trafficking.
- A common thread in all exploitation of children is using an imbalance of power to manipulate, coerce or control a child to make them behave in way which the exploitative adult wants, for their own benefit.

# Duties

- The Council has a duty to safeguard children and provide services to children and their families to promote their welfare.
- The Council also has a duty to work with partner agencies and partner agencies have a duty to work with the Council to keep children safe.
- Exploitation of children is a pernicious crime and the Council's commitment to tackling it remains unwavering, as does our commitment to listen and learn from past mistakes.

# Background

- July 2024 – Cabinet approved the *Child Exploitation Strategy 2024-29: A Vision for Managing Risk Outside The Home*.
- The Strategy is delivered through the Child Exploitation Delivery Group (CEDG), within Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership.
- CEDG is chaired by Detective Superintendent Anna Sedgwick. There are working groups which report into CEDG, and a link to the operational Child Exploitation Tactical Group.

# Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership

Under the Multi-Agency Safeguarding Arrangements, the Lead Safeguarding Partners are:

1. The Chief Executive of Rotherham MBC
2. The Chief Executive of South Yorkshire ICB
3. The Chief Constable of South Yorkshire Police

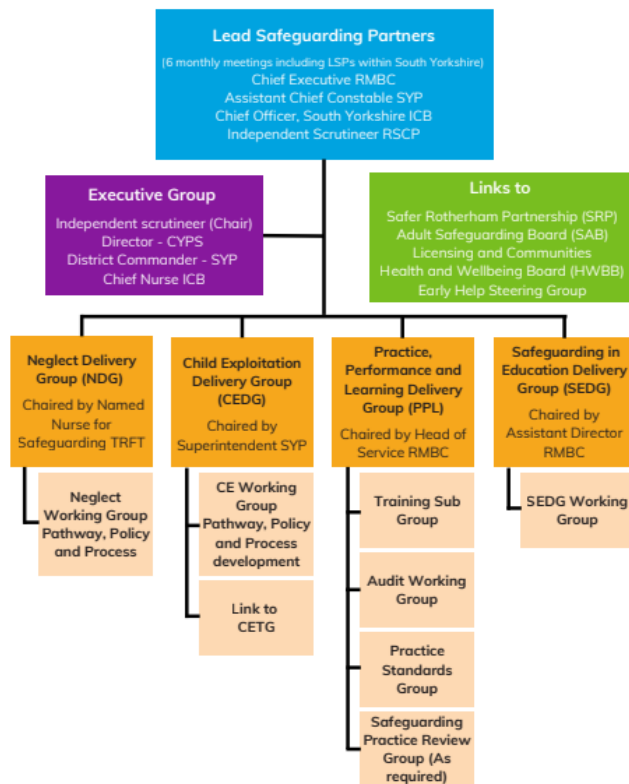
The Delegated Safeguarding Partners are:

1. Strategic Director, Children's Services, Rotherham MBC
2. Director of Nursing, South Yorkshire ICB
3. Chief Superintendent for Rotherham, South Yorkshire Police

There is also an Independent Chair and Scrutineer for RSCP, Darren Downs.

# Governance

RSCP Structure



Child Exploitation Delivery Group meets bimonthly, and reports into the Executive Group bimonthly.

There are four priorities:

1. Prepare
2. Prevent
3. Protect
4. Pursue

# Prepare

- Rolling multi-agency training programme, led by our specialist Evolve service, which considers wider 'Harm Outside The Home' approaches too.
- Rigorous approach to taxi licensing in Rotherham, which was commended in Baroness Casey's National Audit.
- Section 175 self-assessments and our follow-up assurance visits explicitly consider how schools safeguard children from exploitation and online harm.
- Improved early intervention, as identified through partner agencies completing more of our Family Assessments of Need.

# Prevent

- Using Operation Makesafe and Operation Keepsafe as tactics to disrupt and dissuade exploitation in the borough.
- *Fearless* campaign targeted young people aged 11 to 16 years old to empower them to report crime, including knife crime, drug dealing and exploitation, anonymously.
- South Yorkshire Police have attended a number of forums, including the Designated Safeguarding Lead forum where each school is represented, to promote intelligence sharing.

# Protect

- Harm Outside the Home approach introduced, which extends the role of the independent Chair from young people at risk of significant harm to children in need as well.
- Robust multi-agency data which allows us to monitor trends. This includes a range of measures for the Police including intelligence, referrals and offences which relate to child exploitation.

# Pursue

- Child Exploitation Tactical Group provides a weekly multi-agency environment to assess and manage risk, including legal powers to disrupt exploitation. Successful operation and criminal prosecutions have emerged from CETG.
- Strong links developed into Organised and Violent Crime Silver Group to ensure a robust multi-agency approach to the role of organised crime in child exploitation.
- There are commissioned services which support survivors of child sexual exploitation, child and adult, with recovery from their experiences.

# Ofsted ILACS November 2025

*Children at risk of going missing from home and being exploited receive a highly effective service from Evolve, the specialist exploitation team. Children are routinely offered timely return home interviews, enabling professionals to understand the reasons for children going missing, and to inform safety and trigger plans for children. When concerns are escalating, multi-agency child exploitation meetings are convened promptly to share intelligence and coordinate disruption strategies.*

*Comprehensive exploitation risk assessments are completed by social workers and inform multi-agency interventions. Children receive support from knowledgeable, skilled practitioners who build trusting relationships through consistent, trauma-informed engagement. This relational approach increases children's confidence in trusted adults, enabling disclosure and strengthening protective factors [p11].*

# Priorities in the next 12 months

- Developing the Harm Outside The Home approach to grow the focus on locations and 'hotspots', in conjunction with CETG, Neighbourhood Tasking Groups and Community Action Partnerships.
- Improved interface for partners with the launch of the Children's Portal, which will allow partner agencies to submit their Family Assessment of Need directly onto Early Help and Children's Social Care systems.
- Sharpening the link between intelligence and the focus of Operation Keepsafe and Operation Makesafe.
- Developing improved child exploitation training packages for non-traditional partners from the leisure and hotel industries.
- Positioning the workplan to ensure a focus on what data demonstrates are the most prominent forms of harm.

# Thank you