Public Report
Improving Lives Select Commission

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting
Improving Lives Select Commission – 15 September 2026

Report Title
CYPS Performance Report 2025/2026 Outturn

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?
No

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report
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Ward(s) Affected
Borough-Wide

Report Summary
The report includes the performance outturn for the reporting year April 2025 to March 2026 for Children and Young People's Services. It includes areas of performance that are working well alongside other areas where a continued focus is required.

Recommendations

1. It is recommended that Members consider and accept the CYPS Annual Performance Report and accompanying scorecard for the outturn 2025/2026.

List of Appendices Included

Appendix 1 CYPS Performance – Members Scorecard – Q4 (March 2026)

Background Papers
None

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel
None

Council Approval Required
No

Exempt from the Press and Public
No

CYPS Performance Report 2025/2026 Outturn

1. Background

1.1 This report evidences the council's commitment to improvement by providing performance information which enables the scrutiny of service achievement levels and the associated impact on the outcomes for children and young people. It should be read in conjunction with the appended performance data report, which provide trend data, graphical analysis, and benchmarking data against national and statistical neighbour averages.

1.2 The report provides a summary of performance under key themes across Children & Young Peoples Services (CYPS) including Family Help, Social Care, Education and Inclusion at the end of the 2025/2026 reporting year (and Academic year 25/26 Term 1 and 2) and represents the monthly report for March 2026.

1.3 Performance has been considered against local targets, including associated 'RAG' (red, amber, green) rating tolerances. These are reviewed annually and are set in consideration of available national and statistical neighbour benchmarking data and recent performance levels. It ensures focus on the effectiveness of services and achieving good outcomes for children and young people.

1.4 In addition to this annual report members are advised that strong operational performance management arrangements are in place across the service with a programme of service and team-based performance meetings which are well embedded across the directorate. On a monthly basis governance is provided by the CYPS Performance Board, chaired by the Executive Director of Children's Services, and attended by the Directorate Leadership Team, Heads of Service from across the directorate along with the Head of Service, Performance and Quality and the CYPS Performance Manager. In addition to this an Assurance Board is held each quarter which also provides a quality focus as well as performance management including work undertaken by the Young Inspectors, the Practice Learning Days (PLDs) and the monthly audit programme. Scrutiny is also provided by the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board (CPPB) and Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP).

2. Key Issues

2.1 **Family Help - Summary of what was working well against some key measures during 2025/2026**

2.1.1 In 2025/26 we had an increase in the number of families engaged with Family Help, from 894 in the previous year to 1270. This means we are supporting more families at the earliest opportunity. We also increased our timeliness of engagement with 92.7% meeting the target of 3 days from initial contact.

2.1.2 For those who had a Family Assessment of Need (FAN), we met our timeliness measure of completion within 45 working days for 90.5% of assessments. 380 of the 845 assessments were undertaken by partners, such as schools and health colleagues, ensuring support is provided at the earliest opportunity by those who know children and their families well, and at an appropriate level preventing escalation.

2.1.3 Our Outreach and Engagement team met their ambitious target of registering 95% of children aged 0-5, living in the 30% most deprived Super Output Areas with Rotherham Children's Centres (now named Best Start Family Hubs) by 31st March 2026. Super Output Areas are small geographical areas developed from Census 2001 information. At year end, we had 95.2% registered. This early engagement is important in ensuring children and their families are connected with appropriate support and resources or that they know where to find them should the need arise.

2.1.4 Following registration, 81.2% of these children accessed Children's Centre (Family Hub) activities, well exceeding the target of 65% engaged within the year.

2.1.5 Our Outreach and Engagement team also support our older children preparing for adulthood. The team work directly with young people to break down barriers and find suitable Education, Employment, and Training (EET) provision. The annual outturn figures are based on a 3-month combined average for statutory reporting covering December, January, and February 2026. For these figures, lower is better. Our NEET (Not in ETT) figure was 4.9%, just above the target of 4.5%. However, our 'Not Known' figure was 0.5%; this is well below our target of 1.5% and shows a strong performance in finding young people whose destination is not known so that we can provide support if they are NEET. Our overall combined figure for both NEET and Not Known young people, was 5.5% within our target of 6%.

2.1.6 The Rotherham Youth Justice Service focuses on preventing young people entering the youth justice system, and ensuring that when they do, we work to 'child first' principles to ensure the best possible outcomes for young people and victims of crime.

2.1.7 The use of custody in Rotherham remains at 0.04, the same as the previous year. For comparison, the national average is 0.09 with statistical neighbours at 0.06.

2.2 Family Help - Summary of areas of continued focus against some key measures during 2025/2026

2.2.1 The rate of young people who were first time entrants into the criminal justice system was 184 in the latest reporting period. This is an increase compared with 171 in the same period of the previous year. Further work continues led by the Youth Justice Partnership Board to ensure a strong preventative offer for children at risk of entering the criminal justice system.

2.2.2 The rate of re-offending was 22.4, an increase when compared with 13.2 in the previous reporting year. This will be a continued area of focus within the service. Whilst this has increased, our performance is significantly below Statistical Neighbours average of 33.5 and the national average of 31.7.

2.2.3 Likewise, for re-offences by re-offenders, the latest data shows a rate of 4.09 in Rotherham this year, compared with 2.86 in the previous year, the national average for this measure is 4.47, whilst statistical neighbours have reduced to 1.78 in the same period.

2.3 **Children's Social Care - Summary of what was working well against some key measures during 2025/26**

2.3.1 To monitor and compare ourselves both nationally and to other local authorities like ours (known as statistical neighbours), we monitor rates of children against our 10,000 population figure. Our rates of children open to social care are all within our set targets this year.

2.3.2 Our rate of Children in Need (CiN) at the end of 2025/26 was 320.1, a slight increase from 310.7 in the previous year, but still remains within target. This is below statistical neighbour average of 406.4 and the national average of 330.3.

2.3.3 Our rate of children with a Child Protection Plan (CPP) at the end of 2025/26 was 43.3, a reduction on the previous year of 54.2 and within target. Our child protection population has safely and steadily reduced since 2022. This sits below statistical neighbours average at 57.3 and is closing in on the National average of 40.6.

2.3.4 Our rate of Children in Care (CiC) at the end of 2025/26 was 80.8 compared to 83.0 last year and is the lowest rate in Rotherham since 2016. This is below the statistical neighbour average of 100.7, but above the national average of 67.0. Children in care numbers continue to reduce through focussed work on rehabilitation and permanence, including Special Guardianship Orders. Rotherham continues to support the National Transfer Scheme for Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children (UASC), set up by the government to ensure a more equitable distribution across local authorities, meeting the overall best interests of these vulnerable children. Our CiC data includes unaccompanied children (16/481), making the cohort slightly larger than it would otherwise be based on local children.

2.3.5 In 2025/26, 58.5% of contacts coming through the front door were identified as Social Care and 39.1% were identified as needing Family Help. This shows a slight increase into Early Help and reduction in those going to Social Care for a second year running. Accessing Early Help services means families can access the support earlier without the need to step up to Children's Social Care (CSC). Family Network Meetings (FNM) and the use of Family Group Conferences (FGC) support families to develop plans to support themselves without the need for CSC intervention.

2.3.6 Sometimes children will be re-referred into the service after a previous intervention. We received 19% of re-referrals for the year, within the target of 22% (lower is better), in line with statistical neighbours at 19.9% and below the national average of 22.4%.

2.3.7 Once a child has a referral to Social Care and an assessment is deemed necessary, the timeline set in the Working Together Guidance is 45 working days for completion. We have a target which aims for 90% of assessments to be completed within that timeframe. We have continued to meet this target, with 90.8% of all assessments complete within the year, within 45 working days. Again, this is good performance compared with statistical neighbours at 84.6% and the national average of 85.7%.

2.3.8 At the end of 2025/26, we had 1.6% of children on child protection plans lasting 2 or more years. This is below our target of 2.5% (lower is better).

2.3.9 In 2025/26, 96.8% of children on a Child Protection Plan (CPP) had their plan reviewed with timescale. This is a 1% improvement on last year but just misses our target of 97%. However, we remain above our statistical neighbour average of 92.1% and the national average of 90.6% evidencing that our performance is strong when comparing with other local authorities, whilst our high target keeps us focused on this area to aim to achieve more for Rotherham children.

2.3.10 Every looked after child must have a care plan. This is a detailed plan which covers how a child's current needs will be met and the arrangements for the child's care now and into the future. We review these plans regularly and have targets set to monitor compliance. At the end of 2025/26, 96.3% of children in care had their care plan reviewed in time. This is above target and an improvement on the previous 2 years.

2.3.11 Within our Leaving Care Service, 94.9% of care leavers were in suitable accommodation, just below target by 1%, but an improvement of 0.8% on last year. Whilst this is below target, it remains above national average of 89% and statistical neighbour average of 89.7%. The national top quartile is 93.1%. The highest reason for unsuitable accommodation is young people in custody.

2.4 Children’s Social Care - Summary of areas of continued focus against some key measures during 2025/26

2.4.1 From the beginning of a child’s journey within CSC, we track and measure the timeliness of the contact response. For those contacts going through to Social Care, 80.3% had a contact decision within 1 working day, a reduction on the 86.8% the previous year, and remains below our 88% target. Ongoing assurance work completed assures us that children are not adrift and that a high majority of contacts requiring an immediate safeguarding response are actioned in a timely manner.

2.4.2 When a child is subject to Section 47 (S47) investigation and they progress to an Initial Child Protection Conference (ICPC), we have a target to hold the ICPC within 15 days of the S47. In 2025/26, 83.4% of ICPCs were complete in time, an improvement on 80% last year, but below the target of 86%. The reasons for those out of the 15-day timescale vary, but we are aware of the reason for every case. Whilst we are below our local target, we are above both the national average of 81.4% and statistical neighbours at 78.7%. There continues to be a focus on timely requests for initial conferences, supported by enhanced senior management oversight with notifications to Service Directors and DCS for review where necessary.

2.4.3 Last year we reported an increasing trajectory of children on a CPP for a second or subsequent time within 2 years of their last plan. Whilst this had started to decrease in the last few months of 2024/25, we ended last year (31/03/2025) at 17.3%, remaining above our 8% target (lower is better). In response to the rising numbers, an audit was undertaken early in 2025 sampling 47 children (23 families). The findings from this audit resulted in several recommendations, which has informed training and development programs for professionals involved in child protection.

2.4.4 A further audit was undertaken in October 2025 to measure the impact of the initial work. This showed some positive improvements and provided additional recommendations and actions to strengthen this further. A practice learning day was delivered in March 2026 with a focus on reducing repeat plans, alongside the development of an action plan and a "7 Minute Briefing". The outcome of all this work started to take effect in 2025/26, evidenced by reducing numbers, finishing the year (31/03/2026) at 12.2%. Recently shared national data (Q4 2025/26) shows that our current performance is now comparable to the latest national average of 13.3%.

2.4.5 At the end of March, 90.6% of children on a CPP had received a visit within the previous 2 weeks. This below our target of 95%. Performance in this area had dipped in Quarter 4 and has been addressed directly with social work teams. Weekly oversight by Service Managers and the Head of Service is in place to improve consistency and strengthen compliance with visiting requirements.

2.4.6 At the end of March, 97.3% of children in care had up to date visits completed within timescale. This is a slight increase on the previous year but just misses our target of 98%. As part of our annual measure review, the Performance Board agreed that this target should remain high at 98%, stressing the importance of visiting our children within timescales. We will continue to closely monitor this within teams.

2.4.7 Health and dental assessments continue to be an area of focus and is often discussed at both Performance Board and at the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, attended by partners in Health. This is due to a lag in the data so often appears to be RAG rated as 'red' and under performing, but we know that there is a delay in the data coming through and being entered on to our case management system. We are pleased to report that at the end of March 2026, we now have 93.3 % of children in care recorded with an up-to-date health assessment, which is above the target of 92%. We have 88.2% of children with an up-to-date dental assessment now recorded, which remains below target and rated as 'amber'. For comparison, the national average for Health Assessments is 90% with our statistical neighbours at 91.6%. For Dental Checks, the latest national average is 81% with our statistical neighbours at 82.5%. We are performing above all comparators for both health and dental checks for our children in care.

2.4.8 For dental assessments, this still remains below target across the year. This was raised at Performance Board in February 2026 and an action taken to dip sample the data for reasons behind this. The Service Manager did this work and presented it at Performance Board in March. The sampling revealed that 20 of the children had received their dental checks but these had not been updated on the system and 15 young people had refused their dental checks. We also know that a number of health and dental assessments have been delayed due to capacity in health services. This gave us some actions to take away, including instructions for workers needing to update the system, and has been taken to the Health and Wellbeing Group. We agreed at Performance Board that we would provide an update in 6-8 months' time to see how these actions have taken effect.

2.4.9 We have a target of placing 80% of children in care in family based settings. We remain below target in 2025/26 with 76.3% in family based settings. We continue working with in house fostering and external Independent Fostering Agencies to increase the number of children stepping down from residential placements to family based settings.

2.4.10 At the end of 2025/26, 58.5% of children in care for at least 2 years had remained in a stable placement, below the target of 68%+ (higher is better). 12.2% of children in care had 3 or more placement moves, above the target of 8% (lower is better). We reported last year that we had undertaken dip sampling following challenge at Performance Board. The most prevalent themes were difficulties associated with the child or young person's complex needs or challenging behaviours. The resilience of foster carers has also been problematic, and we have seen an increase in carers giving notice on children's placements. Another factor was the new processes in place that involves tracking children in Step Down Panel and 16+ Panel until they reach a destination which would be considered permanent. This has driven practice around children returning home and moving young people into independence and continued into 2025/26. This created a momentum of planned moves for children, which impacted the placement stability measure. However, this does mean that more children are in placements aligned with their assessed needs, which is positive for those children.

2.4.11 Further detail around placements was presented at Performance Board in February 2026 in response to the declining performance over the year and it was suggested that we undertake a Practice Learning Day for Placement Stability for further learning and awareness. We will also be doing further analysis to look at the number of placement moves that are planned positive moves.

2.4.12 For our children with a permanence plan of adoption, we measure the timeliness of their adoption process. The average number of days between a child coming in to care and being placed with their prospective adopters was 548.7 days, above the target of 365 (lower is better). The average number of days between a placement order being granted and the child being matched to an adoptive family was 260.4 days (lower is better), above the national target of 121 days. At the start of the year, we matched and placed a child with particularly complex needs with the search involving a sibling too. This inflated the average making it difficult to come back down as it is only a small cohort of children. Throughout the year, data has been reviewed jointly with the Regional Adoption Agency (RAA) confirming that timeliness has been influenced by complexity of cases, including older children, sibling groups and delays in care proceedings.

2.4.13 For our older children leaving care or preparing to leave care, we initiate and maintain a Pathway Plan. At the end of 2025/26, 87.1% had an up to date Pathway Plan. At the end of 2025 we had some changes in the Leaving Care Management team, which impacted performance, but this is now improving and we will continue to monitor. The number of care leavers with up to date pathway plans increased in Q4 but remains below the target of 90%.

2.4.14 Within our Care Leavers cohort, 57.9% of young people were in employment, education, or training (EET) at the end of 2025/26, below the target of 66%. A third of these young people not in EET was due to illness or disability, or pregnancy or parenting. Whilst we are below our local target, we remain above the national average of 54% and statistical neighbour average of 50%. We are working with the virtual school and agencies to address the decline in the number of Care Leavers who are in EET. There is a joint focus group working to develop plans to support our children back into EET, with representation from children's social care, virtual school, early help, EHCP team, post 16 education provisions, care providers, and employment solutions.

2.5 Education and Inclusion

2.5.1 The year-to-date figures referenced in the March 2026 Members Scorecard include Term 1 and Term 2, as we are still in Term 3. We will report on the full academic year end data and attainment results in the Members Scorecard, during the Autumn Term.

2.5.2 Whilst education data is reported termly, we continue to check and challenge our education performance at the monthly CYPS performance board, working collaboratively with colleagues across the service to take a whole service approach on impact and outcomes.

2.5.3 Summary of what was working well against some key measures during 2025/2026

2.5.4 International research shows that children who spend longer in early years provision have better educational outcomes later. It also shows that high-quality early years provision particularly benefits children from low-income backgrounds. At the end of Term 2, 91.2% of eligible 2-year-olds were taking up an early education place in Rotherham, well above the 80% target. This is higher than statistical neighbours at 77.9% and the national average of 74.8%. A preferred education setting is important for both children and their families in their everyday lives. This year, 99.1% of primary children were allocated a place at one of their 3 preferences on National Offer Day, above the national average of 98.3%. For secondary pupils, 97.7% were allocated one of their 3 preferences, performing above the national average of 95.6%.

2.5.5 Attendance year to date remains stable when compared to the previous year, with 94.1% attendance in primary schools, similar to 94.3% in 2024/25; and 90.8% in secondary, similar to 90.5% in 2024/25.

2.5.6 For persistent absence, 15.4% of children in primary schools missed 10% or more sessions and 23.8% of children in secondary schools missed 10% or more sessions. This is a slight increase in primary compared to last year, but no change for secondary compared to last year.

2.5.7 Our Virtual School provides Personal Education Plans (PEP) for our children in Care. This is a statutory document that outlines a child's educational progress, needs, and aspirations, as well as the support they receive in their educational setting. It's a key part of a child's care plan and is used to ensure looked-after children receive appropriate educational support. The PEP is a living document that is reviewed termly, to ensure it remains relevant and effective. At the end of term 2, 96.1% of children in care had received an up-to-date Personal Education Plan in the term, consistently remaining above the 95% target throughout the year.

2.5.8 Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) primary transition reviews completed by the statutory deadline of 15th February 2026 reached 99.5% for a year running. Secondary transition reviews completed by the deadline of 31st March 2026 reached 90.3%. Both are well above the target of 70%.

2.5.9 **Summary of areas of continued focus against some key measures during 2025/2026**

2.5.10 Whilst overall attendance and persistent absence remain within tolerance levels, severe absence has become a concern following an increase in term 2 to 0.9% in primary. This is in line with the national average but is above our target of 0.8% (lower is better). Severe absence is children missing 50% or more sessions. For secondary schools, we are currently on target and slightly improved on last year. Severe absence is being addressed within service through several measures, including attendance mentors, joint work with ISOS, and analysis of part time timetable data.

2.5.11 The latest attainment data is the summer 2025 outturn.

2.5.12 64.9% of early years foundation stage pupils achieved a Good Level of Development (GLD). This is a 0.5% increase on the previous year but remains 3.4% lower than the National average.

2.5.13 77% of Year 1 passed the phonics screening check, 3% lower than the National average of 80%. This was a reduction of 1.5% in the previous year.

2.5.14 As part of the RISE programme (Regional Improvement for Standards and Excellence) universal offer, Rotherham LA has been offered ten places on a fully funded DfE regional phonics project, delivered in partnership with Barnsley, Sheffield, and the English Hub. English Hubs offer a range of support and continuing professional development (CPD) to primary schools to improve the teaching of early reading, with a particular focus on systematic synthetic phonics, early language, and reading for pleasure. Barnsley have seen strong outcomes in Phonics and GLD and significant impact through partnership with Jerry Clay English Hub. The project aims to raise attainment, strengthen early reading through high quality training, targeted support, and collaboration across local authorities and the English Hubs.

2.5.15 Last year we reported that our schools were to focus on the writing curriculum in the same forensic way that they did the reading. RoSIS have provided CPD around early writing. We have seen some improvements this year with 60% of pupils achieved the expected standard in Reading, Writing & Maths (RWM) in KS2, this is an increase of 1.4% on the previous year. We have improved on this measure for 3 consecutive years. However, we remain 3% lower than the national average.

2.5.16 6% of KS2 pupils achieved higher standard in reading, writing and maths combined. This is 1.1% higher than last year but 2% lower than the 8% national average.

2.5.17 38.4% of KS4 pupils achieved grade 5 or above in English and Maths. This is similar to last year at 38.5% and remains below the national average of 45.2%. We are following a subtle but downward trend.

2.5.18 The average attainment 8 score also declined this year from 42.10 to 41.80. Again, this is below the national average of 45.9.

2.5.19 Numbers of Elective Home Educated (EHE) children continue to rise with 901 at the end of term 2 compared to 747 at the end of term 2 last year, creating pressure within service and continuing an upward trend. Work with our schools regarding inclusion and belonging should support locally but whilst ever policy enables parents to remove children from school so freely this area of work is envisaged to grow further.

2.5.20 The growing numbers of children with an Education Health Care Plan (EHCP) continues, with 4122 at the end of March 2026, compared to 3721 at the same time last year. This increases every year. We have a timeliness measure for the number of EHCPs issued within 20 weeks. In January 2026, performance dropped below the target of 58% for the first time in the last 2 years. This was discussed at Performance Board in February and brought back in March as an area of focus. The key findings presented informed that the service is simultaneously managing overdue cases (in part resulting from staff absence in the first 3 months of term), with a high wave of new Requests to Assess in early 2026, alongside reduced timeliness from the Educational Psychology Service (EPS), with some cases being of high complexity. Timeliness from Health, CAMHS, and Social Care all remained good and not contributing factors.

2.5.21 Due to a number of cases entering the early stages simultaneously, they will all reach advice deadlines in April/May and require drafting in June/July. We therefore know that they system will experience rolling pressure for at least the next few months.

2.5.22 In terms of mitigation, we have sought approval for three temporary coordinators to support with the backlog, however, this will take time to fulfil. The EPS have agreed to implement virtual assessments and have confirmed increased capacity from September 2026. Within the service, we have increased tracking and performance monitoring to ensure those that can be completed are done so without delay.

3. Options considered and recommended proposal

3.1 Members to consider and accept the CYPS Performance Scorecard for March 2026 (Out-turn 2025/26) as attached – Appendix 1

4. Consultation on proposal

4.1 N/A

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

5.1 N/A

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

6.1 There are no financial implications with this report.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

7.1 There are no legal implications with this report.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

8.1 There are no human resource implications with this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

9.1 Performance and Quality assurance is a key element of the work of Children and Young Peoples services to ensure that outcomes are improved for Rotherham children and their families and that they are resilient, successful, and safe.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

10.1 There are no Equalities and Human Rights implications with this report

11. Implications for CO_2 Emissions and Climate Change

11.1 There are no CO2, Emissions or Climate Change implications with this report.

12. Implications for Partners

12.1 Partners and other directorates are engaged in improving the performance and quality of services for children, young people, and their families, including via the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership (RSCP), the CYPS Performance Board, the Corporate Parenting Partnership Board, the Early Help Steering Group and the SEND Strategic Partnership Board. All boards receive performance reports on a regular basis.

13. Risks and Mitigation

13.1 Inability and lack of engagement in performance management arrangements by managers and staff could lead to poor and deteriorating services for children and young people. Strong management oversight by the Directorship Leadership Team and the continued development of the Performance Management Framework mitigates this risk by holding managers and workers to account for any decline in performance both at a team and at an individual child level.

Accountable Officer(s)
Kelly White, Service Director Family Help
Stuart Williams, Service Director, Children's Social Care
Niall Devlin, Service Director, Education & Inclusion
Helen Sweaton, Joint Service Director, Commissioning, Performance and Quality

Approvals obtained on behalf of:

	Name	Date
The Executive Director with responsibility for this report	Nicola Curley, Executive Director of Children and Young People's Services	28/07/26
Consultation undertaken with the relevant Cabinet Member	Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Children and Young People - Councillor Cusworth	26/08/26

This report is published on the Council's website.