

# ROTHERHAM SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN PARTNERSHIP END OF YEAR ASSURANCE BRIDGING REPORT:

September 2021 – March 2022



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# Independent Chair Jenny Myers Foreward

It is a great pleasure to contribute to the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership (RSCP) update end of year Bridging Report.

The purpose of this 6-month Bridging Report is to bring us back into an annual cycle of reporting from April 2022 to March 2023.

This interim report is a summary of the update assurance activities we have been pursuing from September 2021 to March 2022 to keep children safe in Rotherham. This report reflects our commitment and achievements whilst being realistic about challenges that remain.

I continue to be impressed by the strength and depth of the partnership commitment to children's safeguarding. Such commitment during continued unprecedented measure created by COVID-19, and the additional challenges for the partnership in driving forward our strategic and operational priorities during the period covered by this interim report.

We have continued to deliver assurance that children are safeguarded during lockdown and then the easing of such temporary restriction measures, whilst being vigilant to address the risk of vulnerable children and young people being out of the protective gaze and focus of frontline staff and the impact this has placed on families.

I want to acknowledge and praise the strength of the partnership, the commitment of its frontline staff, whose dedication and professionalism has continued to make a difference in the lives of the most vulnerable children and young people in Rotherham during such unprecedented times.

As chair of the partnership in Rotherham I continue to ensure that we demonstrate openness and transparency in all our work and a responsiveness to the needs of children and young people in Rotherham.

The partnership executive and delivery groups continue to keep strong oversight of performance and safeguarding practice thereby providing high levels of assurance in our drive to keep children and young people safe in Rotherham. Finally, my acknowledgement and thanks to the Rotherham Young Inspectors, Youth Cabinet, Looked After Children Council, Barnardo's Advocacy Service, all of whom have ensured the voice and influence of children and young people stays at the forefront of the partnerships work.

# Partnership

Working Together 2018 is statutory guidance that provides children's safeguarding with a legal framework, setting out the responsibilities of local authorities and their partners. From a statutory perspective the three legally required bodies are:



# Governance and Effectiveness

The Executive Group continues to set the strategic direction and priorities of the Partnership, which in turn are dovetailed into the Health & Wellbeing Board and Rotherham Safer Partnership. The three main partners made up of Rotherham Council, South Yorkshire Police and Health continue to work collaboratively with the wider partnership and the Voluntary Consortium. We continue to demonstrate a commitment to ensuring the voice of children and young people is at the heart of implementing change.

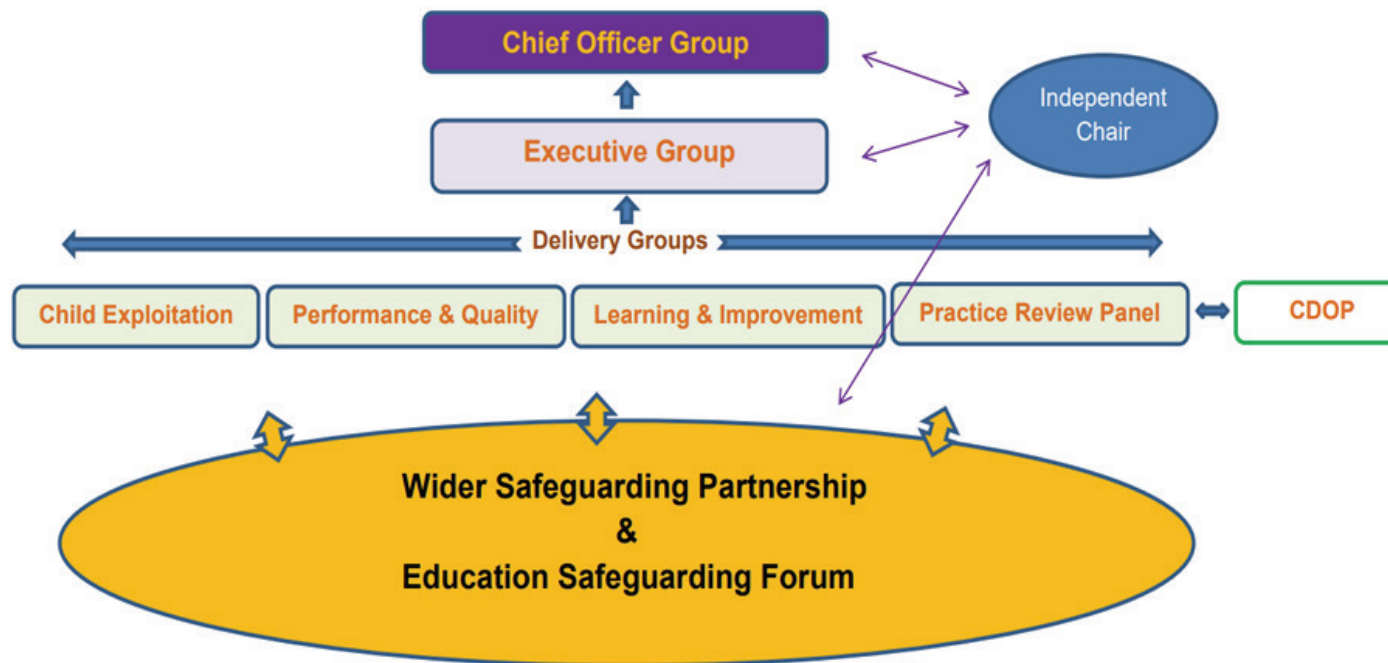
Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership has four delivery groups that lead on delivering the partnership assurance activities, innovation, improvements, learning and practice development. Each delivery group has a nominated chair and representatives from across the different multi-agencies that make up the partnership. In addition, the Executive Group has oversight of the Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).

## *The Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership key functions:*

- Keeping children and young people safe in Rotherham, through ensuring its Executive Group and Delivery Groups assure the activities, procedures and practices of those working in the children safeguarding arena.
- Creating a culture of learning and development through the partnership workforce, whilst embedding new ways of working, learning the lessons from local and national reviews and delivering improvements that benefit children and young people in Rotherham in an open and transparent manner.
- Listening to and hearing the voice of children, young people and their families about the effectiveness of how we provide help and support.

# Governance Structure

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership is overseen by the partnership executive. It assures the activities of 4 partnership delivery groups made up of different multi-agency partners who provide services and safeguard children and young people in Rotherham.





# Key Priorities

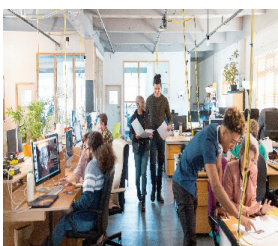
The RSCP priorities set out in 2021-23 business plan, continue to be the cornerstone of our 3 strategic key aims:



**Safe at Home:** Children who are neglected will have their needs recognised early and receive the right level of support to improve outcomes. Messages from national review into significant harm in babies under 1yr disseminated and acted upon.



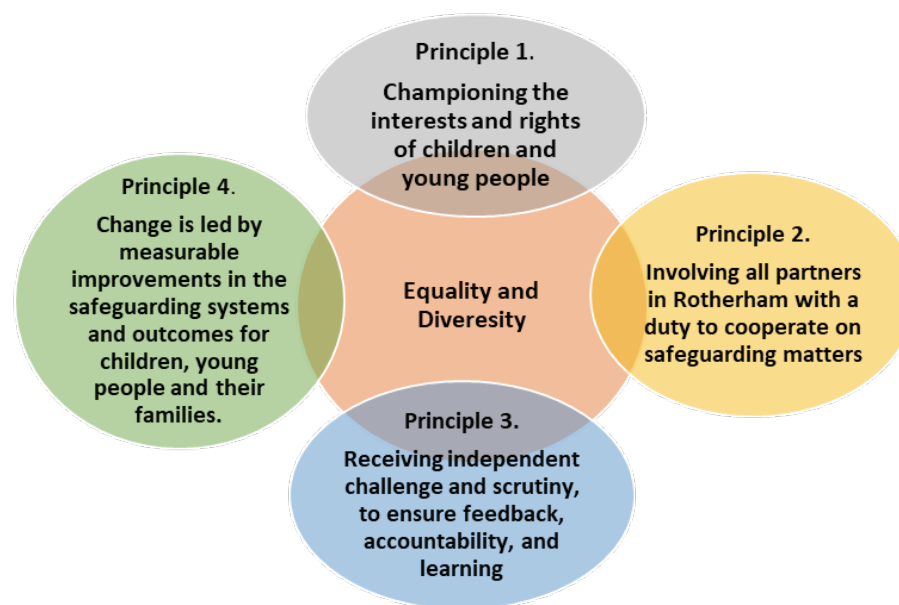
**Safe in the Community:** A multi-agency approach to contextual safeguarding will ensure that children who are being exploited in the community will be identified early. They will receive services which are informed by research and best practice.



**Safe Safeguarding Systems:** We will know if services and practice is effective and how this is improving outcomes for children. We will also identify areas for continuous Learning and improvement, eg Safeguarding Practice Reviews and challenge these to improve both practice and outcomes.

## Equality & Diversity

Rotherham partnership in safeguarding children and young people is delivered on the foundation of 5 strong principles. At the heart of these principles is our commitment to deliver services fairly, transparently and equitably within our communities.



## Funding Arrangements

The Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership funding arrangements is provided by the three main statutory agencies. Management oversight for budget spend, is provided through the Partnership Executive Group by-monthly meetings.

Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership Funding	
Rotherham Council	£115,352
NHS Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group	£115,352
South Yorkshire Police	£44,475
Totals Budget	£275,179



## Joint Adult and Children Partnerships

The two independent chairs for the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Adults Safeguarding Board meet quarterly to look at cross safeguarding partnership issues for the most vulnerable children and adults in Rotherham. This included strengthening pathways for vulnerable young people requiring ongoing support and transition into adult service.

Both partnerships have also continued to achieve assurance through the promotion of an annual Section 11 Joint Self-Assessment between the adults and children's partnerships. During 2021-22 the joint self-assessment process scrutinised two of the eight performance standards which underpin these partnership arrangements.

**STANDARD 4** – Service improvement and development considers the need to safeguard and promote welfare and is informed, where appropriate, by the views of children, adults, and families / carers

**STANDARD 7** – There is effective multi-agency working to safeguard and promote the welfare of children, adults, and families.

Partners were invited to complete an online survey monkey questionnaire and attend a Challenge and Scrutiny Panel made up of other partner agencies. The children and adults partnerships also have continued to jointly promote safeguarding awareness week.

# Independent Child Sexual Exploitation Review

Following a motion to the Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council's in November 2021 into ongoing child sexual abuse in Rotherham, the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership was asked to consider the issues outlined in the motion on any changes, amendments, or additional activities that may be appropriate. The independent chair of Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership was asked to lead the review and appointed two highly experienced experts in child sexual exploitation (CSE) and child safeguarding.

The review team carried out an objective and transparent review of the concerns raised by the Rotherham Conservative Council Group in their briefing paper. The final review report was published on the 19th May 2022 and presented to RMBC Overview and Scrutiny Board on 27th May 2022.

## *Key findings of the CSE review were:*

The response of the Rotherham Division of South Yorkshire Police (SYP) and the Council to information provided by the Conservative Councillors was effective and robust and that the specific allegations from the briefing paper were not founded

SYP in Rotherham had a strong multi-disciplinary partnership approach to CSE and all the information provided by the Conservative Councillors was able to be tracked and where appropriate, action was taken.

No evidence was provided to support the claim that council staff said their managers told them not to talk about CSE or make reports about CSE.

Significant progress has been made in Rotherham in its response to CSE and that it has developed strong leadership, accountability and locally developed multi-agency relationships and scrutiny.



“Rotherham has a strong CSE strategy. We found evidence that authorities are working effectively to keep children safe and not only are there robust performance frameworks and effective pathways for intelligence, but also areas of good practice.”

“However, there is always some learning and areas for improvement. Whilst the review is not making any firm recommendations it does make some suggestions for improvements, such as more detailed training for Councillors on local safeguarding systems and processes after being elected and the on-going need for SYP and Council to work to re-build public trust and confidence, which is likely to be required for a considerable time.”



# Partnership Working in Response to Child Exploitation

Partnership work has focused on continuing to identify and challenge those Rotherham commercial establishments who fail to identify the warning signs of child exploitation. The Partnership led by South Yorkshire Police have delivered training/education to a range of local business and hotels. Unannounced assurance visits have been completed during this period and will continue through 2022. This work is particularly focuses on ensuring that all hotels across Rotherham can identify such concerns when people are requesting or checking into rooms.

The Philomena Protocol initiated in Rotherham by South Yorkshire Police in 2020 is continuing to assist commissioned placements for children and young people who are Looked After or are missing. The development of these measures provides a checks and balance systems before young people are reported missing. The last 6 months have seen the protocol firmly embedded, and now it is being rolled out across other parts of the South Yorkshire region.

Most referrals to Children Social Care during 2021-22 from partner agencies relating to exploitation were from the police (close to 45 %) with then schools being the next main referrer.

## Of the Child Exploitation cohort



## Of the Child Sexual Exploitation cohort



South Yorkshire Police and its partners operational commitment to safeguarding children and young people at risk of exploitation has been demonstrated through a number of safeguarding activities:

- Weekly Intelligence led meeting and activity against exploitation are chaired by Detective Inspector with the emphasis on the 4 broad headings of Prevent, Prepare, Protect and Pursue.
- All intelligence is discussed whether it relates to victims, perpetrators, locations, or vehicles.
- Review all new intelligence submissions and missing child episodes, through analysing the concerns, mapping exercises, and safety planning and actions to mitigate or eliminate the risk.

- Whole way of working, sharing full intelligence reports with all partners, a collegiate approach of full information sharing.
- Information is shared, considered, actions devised, followed up, and results recorded on an action schedule.

In January 2022 the Safer Rotherham Partnership, commissioned Remedi to undertake a consultation with young people and adults who had been affected by child sexual exploitation and involvement in Police investigation during the year 2020.

One of the key finding in the report by Remedi called 'Victim Voice' supported the need for further investment in the Evolve multi-agency pilot being mainstreamed. During 2021-22 the Evolve Team responded to an increasing range of complexities and risk to children, young people and their families exposed to exploitation in Rotherham.

A critical area of keeping children and young people safe, is our response to all reported missing episodes by ensuring we offer a return home interview. At the end of 2021/22 a total of 80 missing episodes had been completed within 72 hours. We have continued to invest in several preventative commissioned services during 2021-22. For example Barnardo's Trusted Relationships (CCE) and Reach Out services (CSE) deliver activities as part of a three-strand approach to preventing child exploitation.

These are:

- Preventative education in a variety of settings, and predominantly in primary and secondary schools. Activities include awareness and information sessions delivered to parents, carers, teachers, head teachers and senior leaders in schools and other professionals.
- Targeted outreach to young people at risk of exploitation, in and out of school settings – to build community intelligence and prevent young people becoming at risk or involved in exploitation.
- Direct support to individual young people and their parents, to identify, reduce and manage risk in relation to child sexual exploitation and child criminal exploitation

One of our focused pieces of work for 2022-23 will be to review and deliver a new Rotherham Exploitation Strategy for 2023 - 25, which will reflect the National Strategy published in January 2021.

# Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP)

Rotherham has been hosting the South Yorkshire CDOP since October 2021 (to cover four quarterly meetings). A representative of the National Child Mortality Database was invited to present to South Yorkshire, with a focus on how to understand what constitutes a modifiable factor for a child death, as an assurance intervention, with an aim to improve consistency and accuracy across South Yorkshire (acknowledging that there is no agreed national standard). South Yorkshire colleagues were also asked to contribute case summary information for a thematic review relating to obesity in pregnancy.

A joint audit between RSCP and Rotherham NHS Foundation Trust (TRFT) was undertaken to review compliance following the 2018 child death review guidance. At the heart of this innovation was the need to improve dissemination of key messages through a virtual learning event. Planning has also commenced for an Autumn 2022 event.

Several reviews into child death have already experienced delay because of capacity issues, further cluster of child deaths is likely to add to challenge of progressing the review processes as sadly 23 child death notifications were received during 2021-22 (representing a large increase from the previous year of 13 child deaths. We also appear to be seeing increased complexity in child deaths.

National data trends suggest a decline in infant mortality overall may have slowed/stalled in more deprived parts of the country (with the infant mortality gap now apparently widening). There is also a sense that the levels of deprivation are probably rising because of austerity measures and more recent poor economic conditions (cost of living, pandemic, Brexit, the war in Ukraine) social deprivation ect)

Additional capacity is being planned for during 2022=23 through an increased panel session being proposed in the Autumn/Winter 2022 to mitigate an expected backlog.





# Mental Health, Wellbeing & Hidden Harm

The Neurodevelopmental Assessment Team in Rotherham are experiencing an unusually long length of wait for neurodevelopmental assessment for children and young people. We have seen an exponential rise in referrals into the service over a period with referrals into the service outstripping the clinical capacity to complete assessments.

The service is struggling to meet the demands and referrals coming into the service with the clinical capacity that is available. Steps have been taken since 2019 that will collectively contribute to a reduction in waiting times at a service level whilst leading to improvements in access and support to families at a Place level.

## The outcomes for children and young people resulted in:

Additional CCG investment into the service increasing the size of the team adding in one principal psychologist, an additional assistant psychologist, and a pathway coordinator

An internal review and redesign of the assessment pathway leading to a pilot of an 8-week assessment pathway

Redesign of the referral pathway to an online referral system via education to ensure that all relevant information is received at the point of referral

Rotherham Clinical Commissioning Group invested in a pilot to embed a digital diagnostic pathway to work alongside the Rotherham CAMHS diagnostic pathway

The Rotherham Partnership approach is the development of a graduated response so that families can access support that is required regardless of clinical diagnosis. Across Rotherham several steps have been taken to improve local pathways and support available to professionals and parent:

Whole system training based on the licensed Autism Education Trust model

A structured and consistent resource pack to support the workforce in schools

A rolling programme of evidence based training modules that parents can access to support challenging issues regardless of whether their child has a diagnosis

Development of a SEND Resource kit for all professionals accessible via the internet

Peer support service for parents

A multi-disciplinary team/panel with input from education psychology to consider all referrals into the pathway on a weekly basis

# Rotherham Voluntary and Community Consortium

The Consortium of voluntary and community services continuing to drive best practice from what was formerly a special interest group of the Rotherham Safeguarding Children Board, to the now the Children, Young People and Families Consortium. The Consortium includes safe and well as a standing agenda item in its monthly meetings to allow the voluntary and community sector organisations (members) to discuss practice issues and monitor the Consortium experiences in engaging with statutory partners on social care and safeguarding issues; support, brief and de-brief consortium representatives of Rotherham Wider Partnership and its delivery groups; monitor and contribute to an online safeguarding self-assessment in-conjunction with building the consortium capacity.

The Consortium also, through discussion in its monthly meetings and through quarterly surveys, audits gaps in training and reviews. It also promotes available opportunities for an aligned workforce with regards to safeguarding children and young people.

The Consortium role in the safe and well agenda provides the partnership with a mechanism to review and learn from the Consortiums experiences. The consortium auditing of training needs provides insight to inform the learning and development prospectus.



# Rotherham MASH

Work has been progressed on baby clinic, with continued meetings taking place on a fortnightly basis. It will be reviewed in the next 3 – 6 months, considering the relatively new midwifery/early help pathway, as well as the recent move (May 2022) to restorative conversations with MASH via telephone, enabling midwives to have direct conversations with social workers.

This has improved the quality of information-sharing at this early stage. It is anticipated that as both become embedded, the two options will eradicate the need for a separate baby clinic. The new process needs to be streamlined and reviewed to consider baby clinic offers any added value moving forward.

The MASH has also completed two partnership audits in response to assurance on MASH processes and practice. The scope of the audit was to amalgamate this assurance activity to any learning from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review on Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes.





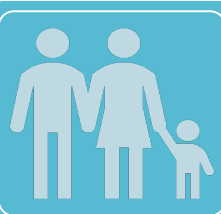
# Early Help Services and Partnership Working

The effectiveness of Rotherham's early help services is overseen through an Early Help Steering group. This partnership approach promotes the offer of assessment and support to children, young people and their families when concerns regarding their welfare begin to emerge, across the continuum of need.

We know from extensive assurance audit activity and performance data that the early help offer is well established and 'mature' in Rotherham. We know that early help improves the child and family situation and reduces escalation to children's social care as child in need numbers have consistently dropped since 2016 when the offer was launched:

Rotherham families, particularly those with babies born during lockdown told us that our support was a lifeline. Although the pandemic meant reduced face to face group activity across our Children's Centre offer. A wider range of interventions were offered virtually and face to face on a reduced scale.

The Service worked closely with the Registry Office to develop a pathway to improve children's centre registration during the difficult periods of the pandemic so that families could access activities and support from one of nine Early Help locality hubs, this means that services are available locally to give families a better start (and beyond).



The Early Help Assessment are completed in a timely way, The completion rate in 2021/22 was 91.4%. This has remained stable when compared to the 2020/21 when it was 91.3%



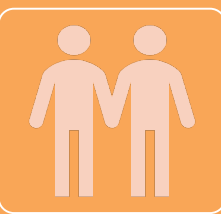
2021/22 some 390 Early Help Assessments and plans were completed by partners. This is in addition to 747 Early Help Assessments completed with Children Social Care



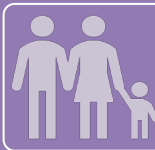
At the end of March 2022 there were 1272 families (2777 children) open to the Early Help service with 2020 family episodes closed in 2021/22.



At the end of March 2022 there were 1272 families (2777 children) open to the Early Help service and 2020 family episodes were closed in 2021/22.



72% of children aged 0-5 living in the 30% most deprived SOA's in Rotherham have accessed Children's Centre activities in 2021/22 which is a significant improvement when compared to the 2020/21 rate of 68%.



Children and families can expect swift engagement following contact in the Early Help service with annual data highlighting 88.8% of families were engaged within the 3 day timescale. This has remained stable when compared to the 2020/21 engagement figure of 88.9%.



The pandemic affected registration and engagement rates across children's centres due to the reduced ability to engage with groups. 87% of children aged 0-5 living in the 30% most deprived SOA's in Rotherham registered with a Children's Centre in 2021/22 which is a slight improvement when compared to the 2020/21 registration rate of 86%

- **Strengthen the Early Help/Midwifery Pathway:** This was finalised in 2021-22 leading to the co-location of services. This has meant improved information sharing through pregnant women attending ante-natal clinic linked to children's centres at the earliest opportunity. Those women requiring further intensive early help support can be offered this during their pregnancy. Training has been delivered to midwifery and progress within the pathway is being monitored regularly.
- **Reducing Parental Conflict:** Early Help has driven work with partners over the last 12 months to develop the 'Rotherham Relationships Charter' to endorse our commitment and secure widespread buy-in from several partner agencies in adopting a relationship focus on their service delivery. This was agreed to complement previous and newly planned training and helped us to 'stretch' the restorative/relational approach into mainstream practice across the public and voluntary sector.

- **Tavistock Relationships Service:** The Tavistock supported us in this developmental work, to upscale and embed relational, parental conflict approaches across the partnership, with wider partners and eventually across the wider council and town. Training has now been delivered to an additional 178 Rotherham children's partnership staff.
- **NEET/Not Known:** The combined NEET and not known outturn for 2021/22 was 4.9%. This measure is calculated as an average across December, January, and February returns. This shows improvement on the previous 12 months and whilst the pandemic initially proved problematic in terms of engagement, we are assured that support in this area for young people is positive.



# Listening to the Voice of Rotherham Young People

The numerous experiences and opportunities offered to children & young people at the LAC Council, Lil' LAC Club and the wider LAC population through voice & influence campaigns, participation activities & community events are specifically designed to empower, increase social capital, raise self-awareness and self-esteem, to foster resilience and support better outcomes for our vulnerable children & young people. Here are some of the things that we have been doing over the past six months:

**Capital of Culture Consultations:** the group have been engaging in ongoing consultations and exploring ideas for Rotherham's Capital of Culture 2025, some based on their previous visit to the National Videogame Museum and discussions around theatre and performing arts.

**Decriminalisation of Looked After Children Leaflet:** The LAC Council have worked together to create a young person friendly guidance to support the decriminalisation of looked after and leaving care young people in Rotherham. The guidance sets out the agreed roles of Rotherham Council, partners and all adults involved in the care of Looked after Children in reducing any involvement in crime

**LAC Connection Sessions:** The LAC Council engaged with managing issues shared by our young people, including stress management strategies and techniques offering comfort and promote connectedness with each other

**Looked After Children's Review Consultation:** The group welcomed Wendy Parker and Fran Ford from IRO who brought their LAC Review forms for the group to comment upon. It was a lively discussion as young people shared their experiences of completing them and issues they face. It was revealed that although these forms are supposed to be completed by young people they are very often not. The information was taken away to inform future LAC Review Forms.





# Audit Assurance Activity

Audit activity is at the cornerstone of assuring we children and young people are safeguarded and delivering improvement. Partnership audits have been undertaken with a focus on:

- Physical Injuries in children under 5 years
- The MASH has also completed two partnership audits in response to assurance on MASH processes and practice. The scope of the audit was to amalgamate this assurance activity to any learning from the Child Safeguarding Practice Review on Star Hobson and Arthur Labinjo-Hughes. This assurance activity summary report concluded:



## Audit Schedule

October 2021 Audit on 116 children 10.6 % of 1293 contacts

February 2022 audit on 83 children contact 6.4 %

## Findings

Professional curiosity was evidenced alongside any history being considered. In general high standards of practice were evidenced in responding to concerns about the welfare of children

Procedures and processes were consistently followed, including screening and management oversight being evidenced

Good use of partners, particularly schools through triangulating information and follow up with referrers

Bespoke work and follow-up with children to understand more about their lived experiences and circumstances, where threshold could not be evidenced

# Learning and Development

The partnership continued to deliver a smaller portfolio of virtual training and online learning events despite the continued uncertainty brought about by the Covid pandemic during the latter part of 2021-22. We have continued to oversee responsibility for promoting a culture of continuous learning and practice improvement across the partnership.

The Partnership Practice Standards Group produced and disseminated 7-minute briefings on learning from their appraisals of areas of partnership practice.

On Safer Internet Day in March 2022 Rotherham Digital Champions network, delivered training sessions to 60 professionals under the theme of child sexual exploitation and the risk from online sharing of images, and information.



Rotherham's drive to continue to learn about the risk exploitation is exposing our children and young people too, has been at the forefront of our specialist Evolve team who have delivered exploitation workshops to 16 education providers, in-conjunction with workshops to the head teachers of Rotherham secondary schools. The Evolve team on a quarterly basis has provided workshops to professionals from social care, early help schools, culminating in 150 participants in attendance.

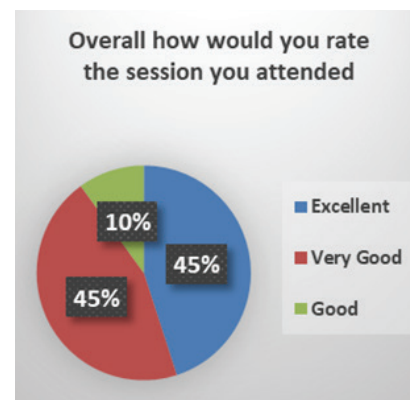
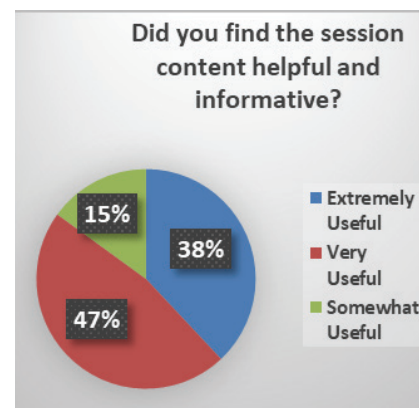
The Education Safeguarding Forum met in March 2022 through two virtual events for heads of schools and designated Safeguarding leads with 88 participants attending.

Despite the impact of the covid pandemic of the 15 e-learning modules within the training prospectus some 4978 modules have been completed by staff across the Rotherham partnership. A further 939 staff have attended one or more virtual training events.



In November 2021 both Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership and the Adults Safeguarding Partnership Board collaborated in delivering the Rotherham Safeguarding Awareness Week.

- 29 Online awareness sessions delivered over 5 days
- 615 registered attendees
- Social media post throughout the week.
- Wide reaching involvement (schools, voluntary sector, probation, contractors)
- Presentations included child exploitation and county lines from South Yorkshire Police.
- 4 South Yorkshire regional events



The survey monkey feedback from the Safeguarding Awareness Week:



# Rotherham Safeguarding Children Partnership - Business Plan 2021 -2023

## PRINCIPLES

1. Championing the interests and rights of children & young people.
2. Involving all partners in Rotherham in a duty to co-operate on safeguarding matters.
3. Receiving independent challenge and scrutiny, to ensure feedback, accountability and learning.
4. Change is led by measurable improvements in the safeguarding systems and outcomes for children and their families.

