

EARLY HELP STRATEGY: FAMILY HELP IN ROTHERHAM 2024-2029



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FOREWORD

COUNCILLOR VICTORIA CUSWORTH, CABINET MEMBER FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE



As Cabinet Member for Children and Young People’s Services, I have a specific remit for leading targeted and coordinated action across the early years and childcare system to improve outcomes for children.

I am delighted to introduce the new Early Help Strategy: Family Help in Rotherham which is central to delivering our collective vision of ‘all agencies working together to ensure that children, young people, and families have their needs identified early so that they can receive swift access to targeted help and support’. We are coming from a position of real strength, with strong partnerships and robust early help and support provided to our children and families and are ready to build on the national Stable Homes, Built on Love’ Strategy.

This sets out a vision for children’s social care, Early Help and partners to provide the help families need to overcome challenges at the earliest possible stage, to keep children safe, and to make sure children in care have stable loving homes, long-term loving relationships, and opportunities for a good life. The Government’s strategy presents a positive vision for a ‘family-first’ approach, prioritising early Family Help and valuing the support wider family and friends can offer including as kinship carers.

In Rotherham, we want all families to be able to access advice and support, as well as providing them with the tools they need to care for and interact positively with their children, whilst at the same time looking after their own wellbeing. We have made significant strides as a partnership towards these goals over the last five years and look forward to embedding these and being ever more ambitious for children and young people with the plans outlined in this strategy involving Universal and Community Help; Focused Help; and Specialist Help.

I am committed to championing this strategy, and working with partners and children, young people and families. I am excited to see the progress we can make together.



INTRODUCTION AND APPROACH



In 2023, the Government published a new vision to transform children’s social care: ‘Stable Homes, Built on Love: Implementation Strategy’ in response to the Independent Review of Children’s Social Care. This proposes significant changes to children’s social care and Early Help, setting out a number of key ambitions including the need to provide ‘Family Help’ to help ensure all children and families can get the right help, at the right time, and in an easy way.

Further to this, Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023 focuses on strengthening multi-agency working across the whole system of support and protection for children and their families keeping a child-centred approach while bringing a whole-family focus embedding strong, effective and consistent multi-agency child protection practice.

The Early Help Systems Guide provides a framework, which helps to focus Early Help systems on common goals and progress towards these. In addition, the National Supporting Families programme is about building resilience by providing effective, whole family support at the earliest opportunity.

In Rotherham we are committed to ensuring that all children, young people, and families are resilient, successful, and safe, building on our key ambitions.

We recognise that all families benefit from and need help from time to time to enable their babies, children, and young people to thrive. We also know that moving forward most families want the resilience to be able to support themselves in the longer term, with their wider network.

For most children, young people and families in Rotherham, they flourish with support from services which are available to all families, for example GPs and Schools (universal services). Some families may need to access additional short-term support to address a specific issue, or may require more intensive, longer-term support, when experiencing more complex issues. This is common to all local authority areas, and within this document we will detail the different levels of support available for families.

We know that the needs of children, young people and families change over time and our partnership approach to Early Help ensures that families can access the right level of support at the time they need it. Central to a healthy Early Help system is agencies working together, to meet the needs of both the child and the family in order to achieve long term, sustainable outcomes.

Rotherham already benefits from co-location arrangements between a range of agencies working with children and their families as part of the development of our Family Hubs in Children’s Centres. Family Hubs help improve whole family support from 0 to 19, including Start for Life services, through a physical network of hubs including a digital and virtual offer, as well as outreach and engagement support.

This same partnership approach needs to be applied when considering contextualised safeguarding and harm outside the home. This encourages collaborative working across the partnership to help children and their families understand their environments and associations outside of the family home, and to engage with community partners in order to minimise risk within a certain area.

THE VISION AND KEY PRINCIPLES



We want Rotherham to be a great place to grow up, where children and young people are supported when needed to reach their full potential. This will mean that children grow up happily, safe, in good health and develop the skills and qualifications they need to be successful.

This is not only important for our children and young people, but for the future of our Borough. Research shows that experiences in childhood have a major influence on outcomes across an individual's life. By supporting children and young people to have the best possible start in life and to develop, flourish and thrive we can prevent future challenges and address inequalities.

We aim to give Children the best start in life – This is identified in the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, Rotherham Health and Care Place Plan, the Council Plan and the Family Hubs and Best Start in Life programme.

All partners are committed to working together in a coordinated way with organisations, communities, children and their families to eliminate neglect and reduce child exploitation and keep children safe from harm – This is identified in the Rotherham Safeguarding Children's Partnership Neglect Strategy, child exploitation priorities, Council Plan and Police and Crime Plan.

We are ambitious for our young people, we want them to feel empowered to succeed and achieve their aspirations – This is identified in the Council Plan and SEND Strategy.

It is also important to us that children and young people have fun with things to do and safe places to go – This is identified in the Council Plan and SEND Strategy.

Our Early Help Vision

All agencies working together to ensure that children, young people, and families have their needs identified early so that they can receive swift access to targeted help and support – This has been co-produced and agreed by partners, stakeholders, children, young people, and families.

Key principles:

We have agreed the following principles to underpin and inform our work with children, young people, and families.

- Children, young people and families are at the heart of everything we do.
- Prevention and Early Help support is better than late intervention.
- Early Help is a shared responsibility, across the partnership, and is everyone's business.
- We will ensure that children and young people thrive in their families by receiving the right help, at the right time, and in an easy way, recognising the importance of relationship-based intervention.
- We are committed to promoting fairness; respect; equality; dignity; and supporting autonomy.
- We will listen to families, have purposeful conversations and provide support to improve outcomes.
- We will work restoratively with children, young people and families.
- Public, voluntary and community sector organisations are all part of the Early Help system and work together to meet the needs of children and their families.

WHAT IS EARLY HELP?



Whilst Working Together 2023 defines Early Help (above), it also talks about 'Family Help'. This is a new term that is inclusive of all ages and incorporates a number of services across the partnership. Family Help in Rotherham is not a single service, but a collaborative, whole system approach, that works across the partnership. This means children, young people and their families receive support at the earliest opportunity from a range of different services, dependent on their needs.

Family Help is made up of public, voluntary and community sector organisations working together to meet the needs of children and their families so that they receive the right support at the right time. These organisations include public health nursing, midwifery, mental health services, the Police, schools, nurseries, substance misuse providers, educational psychologists, domestic abuse services, childminders, housing providers, and other services working with children, young people, and families.

We know that prevention is better than late intervention to improve outcomes for families. For this reason, we focus on meeting needs early, as problems arise to help prevent them from getting worse.

- * Identify needs early
- * Right Support at the right time to stop things getting worse
- * Best possible start through early education
- * Whole family approach
- * System of support
- * Supporting families
- * Partnership working

“Early Help is support for children of all ages that improves a family’s resilience and outcomes or reduces the chance of a problem getting worse. It is not an individual service, but a system of support delivered by local authorities and their partners working together and taking collective responsibility to provide the right provision in their area”

(Working Together to Safeguard Children 2023)

WHAT WE KNOW ABOUT FAMILIES IN ROTHERHAM



- **The population of Rotherham is 265,800** (Census data, 2021).
- Number of **children and young people 0 to 19 years is 62,646**.
- Number of **households in Rotherham is 113,926**.
- **Rotherham ranks as the 35th most deprived upper tier local authority in England** out of a total of 151 upper-tier local authorities (Index of multiple deprivation 2019 by LSOA).
- **21.9% of children aged 0 to 15 years live in absolute low-income families.** 25.7% of children live in relative low-income families, for comparison, the percentage rate for England is 15.1% and 18.7% respectively. The number of Children aged under 16, living in relative low-income families, financial year ending 2021 was 13,193 (Index of multiple deprivation 2019 by LSOA).
- **There are 125 schools in Rotherham.**
- Of the 41,332 pupils school years Reception to Year 11 a total of 12,034 **(29.1%) are eligible for free school meals** (October 2023).
- **505 children in care**, this includes 382 in-family based placements (December 2023).
- **73.6% of children in reception class who are at a healthy weight** (2,275 children in total), in comparison to the national figure of 76.5% (National Child Measurement Programme).
- **20.4% of pupils in Rotherham (9,325) have identified SEND needs** compared to 17.1% nationally (Spring School Census, 2023).
- **3,192 Children and young people aged 0 to 25 years have a EHCP**, a 44% increase in EHCP over the last 3 years. (EHCP data, July 2023).
- **89% of children aged 0 to 5 years old registered with a Children's Centre** and of those living in the 30% most deprived areas of Rotherham, 92% were registered (March 2023).
- **73% of children aged 0 to 5 years access Children's Centre activities.** 78% of children living in the 30% most deprived communities access Children's Centre activities.
- **323 care leavers in Rotherham** (November 2023).



3 STAGES OF SUPPORT FOR CHILDREN YOUNG PEOPLE AND FAMILIES

I. UNIVERSAL AND COMMUNITY FAMILY HELP

Universal and community services are available to everyone - all children, young people, and families in Rotherham. They ensure families can access **the right support at the right time**, and prevent concerns escalating, helping families to help themselves, and preventing a reliance on statutory services. In Rotherham, these services are provided by lots of different agencies such as nurseries, schools, and colleges; GPs, midwives, other NHS services and 0 to19 public health nursing services, including health visitors and school nurses; family hubs in Children's Centres and Early Help sites, libraries, youth services, and community organisations. These services may be the starting point for any family in Rotherham requiring information, advice, and support.

Rotherham has a strong voluntary and community sector who provide support to children, young people, and families. There are a total of 750 registered third-sector organisations in Rotherham, with a workforce of 3,778 employees, 4,218 volunteers, and 1,759 trustees, providing a range of support to improve health and wellbeing, increase community participation, cohesion and belonging, build resilience and independence, and address individual needs.

What we will do:

- Develop the **self-service and digital offer** to allow families to access information they need at a time convenient to them, including online parenting courses, signposting, guidance and advice.
- Continue to deliver **the Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme** to ensure that families have access to the information and tools they need to care for and interact positively with their babies and children, and to look after their own wellbeing.
- Provide **Baby Packs** to all new parents living in Rotherham, to help give their children the best start in life.
- Continue to **enhance the Local Offer** for children with disabilities and their families.
- Develop a **SEND hub** centrally based improving our offer of recreational activities for children and young people with SEND, providing a safe disability friendly space to support families accessing the Town Centre and the opportunity for peer support and access to calm/sensory spaces.
- Ensure children and young people with SEND and their families **have their voices heard** and this makes a difference to their experiences and outcomes.
- **Work with families** to help them understand their own wider network of support through family and friends.
- Increase the **Universal Youth Work offer** across the borough ensuring young people have places to go and things to do.



- Deliver the **Children's Centre offer** to children and families 0 to 5 years, increasing engagement with this universal offer.
- Further work with our **Voluntary and Community Sector to deliver services** to more children and young people across the Borough.
- Promote the **early identification of children and young people's needs** to ensure timely intervention to support them.
- Continue to deliver **Operation Keepsafe** – a multi-agency initiative that enables a proactive response to children and young people that are at risk due to being unsupervised and vulnerable due to the time of night that they are out, or the risky situations that they place themselves in.
- Ensure that all children and young people get the best possible start by working with families to **increase the number of children accessing early education.**

- Work in partnership to **expand wraparound care options** (before and after school) for primary school children by increasing the number of places available, to support working families.
- Continue to work with public and private sector partners to deliver **improvements in the choice of housing** available in Rotherham.
- Aim to **improve the health and wellbeing** of Rotherham residents, reduce health inequalities and protect the population from health harms.
- Continue to deliver the **'Rotherham Backs Breastfeeding'** campaign (as part of the Breastfeeding Friendly Borough Declaration).
- Aim to make **maternity and neonatal services more personalised** and equitable.
- Continue to support children and young people's mental health and wellbeing and as part of this we will aim to **improve timely access to mental health assessments and intervention.**
- Work in partnership with organisations, communities, children and their families to **increase their understanding of vulnerabilities to exploitation**, and keep children safe.
- We will encourage and support professionals and members of our community to **spot the signs of neglect** by increasing engagement, awareness and understanding of neglect.
- Continue to work with our local community to **recruit, retain and grow the best in-house foster carers** so that the needs of children and young people can be met in Rotherham.
- Partners will work together to increase the number of **young people accessing supported internships** and other opportunities for employment.

2. FOCUSED FAMILY HELP

Focused Family Help is available where families have not been able to effect positive change with the support of universal services and they need additional support. This may be an enhanced, more intensive and/or specialist support. It can be delivered in the home, in health settings, through schools, Children's Centres, and the voluntary and community sector. It might include parenting intervention, mental health and emotional wellbeing support, targeted youth services, youth justice services, and housing and employment services. Focused Family Help can support children and families who have several needs, or whose circumstances might make them more vulnerable.

What we will do:

- Ensure **community-based, multi-disciplinary focused family help services** are available to provide seamless support for families, spanning Early Help and child in need (Section 17 Children Act 1989) provision. This is inclusive of children with additional needs and disabilities.
- Avoid multiple assessments of children and their families **working seamlessly with partners** to build on existing information and assessments, ensuring that those best placed undertake or are supported to undertake assessment work where appropriate.
- Ensure that when children and their family have an identified need, **access to support is simple, avoiding delay and duplication** for children and families.
- Collaborate with education, health and social care where appropriate to **provide support for children with additional needs**.

- Work collectively with the Police, schools and colleges to continue to **deliver Operation Encompass** raising awareness of the impact of domestic abuse on the next school day for children.
- Work to ensure **all children and young people in Rotherham with SEND enjoy good physical and mental health**.
- We will work closely with schools within the Rotherham and the Department for Education (DfE) as they **develop mainstream SEND resource provisions** supporting children to continue to receive their education locally.
- Ensure **appropriate support for children will longer term health needs**.
- Work with colleagues across the partnership to **determine who is best placed to support the family, ensuring support is specific and based on need** such as housing; domestic abuse support services; education; community safety.
- Work with families to **help them share their circumstances with trusted family and friends**, with a view to extending their support network, improving resilience and providing a safe exit strategy.
- Work with partners to **review the current Early Help Assessment template to ensure it is streamlined and family-friendly**, as well as being a tool that be used by a range of partners.
- Ensure that across the wider family help system that school attendance is viewed as 'everybody's business' and **that barriers to attending school are understood and supported** through Early Help Assessments and the Rotherham School Attendance Matters Pathway.

- Work with health colleagues to **provide better access to mental health and wellbeing support programmes** for young people.
- Work with our schools to **reduce the number of children who are excluded**.
- Deliver targeted work with Rotherham's Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) and not known young people, supporting young people in **Years 12 and 13 to access employment, education, and training**.
- Deliver **street-based work with young people** within their communities.
- Continue work with partners, community safety and Police to support **early identification of vulnerability to prevent child exploitation and deliver support through Evolve outreach in schools**.
- **Support successful preparation for adulthood**, including independent living and employment.



3. SPECIALIST FAMILY HELP

Statutory services to children and their families are provided where children and young people need a high level of support or may be experiencing or likely to suffer significant harm. This can include services for disabled children, special school arrangements or specialist physical or mental health provision, for example. It may also include child protection services, working with those experiencing harms outside the home, care arrangements or youth justice services, including custody. Specialist Family Help is provided to families where the concerns are high and in circumstances where improvements have not been achieved through universal and community family help, or focused family help.

What we will do:

- Provide **a timely response to escalating concerns** for children wherever those concerns arise.
- **Utilise existing relationships with families**, across the partnership with those who best know our children.
- **Use family group conferencing or network meetings at the earliest opportunity** to support children to remain within their family network where it is safe to do so.
- Advocate for children and engage with schools to ensure children receive and engage in an **appropriate education offer**.
- Work with health colleagues to best **understand any unmet needs** (including mental health) for children, and ensure plans are in place to meet these needs.
- Ensure our Short Breaks offer is **flexible and meets need**.



- Where level of risks indicates, **work collectively** with Police and Health colleagues to investigate concerns and best support children and their families.
- Work jointly with partners and **utilise partnership information** to best understand children's situations **to inform joint decision making**.
- Engage **specialist teams** within social care to respond to crisis and support children and young people to remain within their networks where it is safe to do so.
- **Work with Health colleagues** to ensure our Children in Care benefit from timely health assessments and dental appointments and that any identified needs are met.
- **Work with families and partners to support planning** at all levels for children.

DELIVERY PLAN

Phase 1 (2024/25) Design



- Consult with children, young people and families on new ways of working
- Identify and consult with stakeholders (wider Local Authority, Police, Health etc)
- Consider the new 'Working Together to Safeguard Children' Framework 2023 and incorporate any required changes for Rotherham (P2)
- Develop a roadmap - child's journey across the Early Help system
- Review and update Early Help Systems Guide (July 2024)
- Budget and HR integration for relevant agencies

Phase 2 (2025/26) Implement and Deliver



- Clear governance arrangements
- Operational Group(s)
- Implement key outcome measures
- Implement the re- designed system
- HR support
- Budget monitoring
- Continued engagement with children, young people, families, staff and stakeholders

Phases 3 and 4 (2026/28) Maintain and Operate



- Ongoing delivery of services
- Implement Government changes/legislation
- Monitor service quality and adjust
- Measure success/outcomes
- Responding to learning - continuous improvement
- Budget pressures
- External evaluation

Phase 5 (2028/29) Evaluate



- Seek feedback from children, young people and their families
- Assess and identify areas of development
- Review and refresh strategy

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

The Early Help Partnership Group will be accountable for strategic oversight of performance across the Early Help system in Rotherham. They will provide robust governance and accountability arrangements with scheduled analysis and reporting to understand the impact of delivery for children and families and embed a partnership approach.

A multi-agency performance management framework will be developed which will monitor success via a set of outcome measures and key performance indicators from across the partnership. There will be direct links with other strategies and plans and may also be cross-cutting across partner agencies.

There are some examples of outcomes below, however, these could change during the co-production and implementation phases of the strategy delivery plan.

Local authority outcomes

- Reduce the number of children with speech, language and communication needs.
- Reduce contacts which progress to Children's Social Care assessment.
- Increase in the number of Early Help Assessments completed by partners.
- Reduce the number of children and young people where neglect is a primary concern.
- Increase the number of children and families ceasing Early Help support, achieving positive and sustainable outcomes.
- Increase the number of young people accessing Universal Youth Work sessions.

- Maximise the number of children aged 0 to 5 being registered with and accessing a Children's Centre.
- Reduce first time entrants into the Youth Justice Service.
- Continue to reduce young people re-offending in Rotherham.

Education outcomes

- Increased preparedness for children starting school in nursery or Key Stage 1.
- Increase school attendance.
- Reduce the number of permanent exclusions.
- Improve attainment outcomes for our Children in Need (CIN).



Health outcomes

- Increase breastfeeding continuation status at 6 to 8 weeks.
- Improve parent/infant mental health relationship.
- Increase in the number of families attending weaning sessions across Rotherham.
- Reduce the number of 5 year-olds with visual tooth decay (or other similar oral health outcomes.)
- Increased engagement in the Weight Health and Attitude Management service.

Safer Rotherham Partnership outcomes

- Reduce the number and seriousness of children and young people missing.
- Reduce the number and severity of domestic abuse incidents.
- Reduce the number of children at risk of and experiencing exploitation.

Year 1 – Overall Outcome of success

By the end of March 2025, all actions identified in the design phase of the delivery plan will be completed and project management controls will be in place to begin implementation and delivery.



OUR VISION OUR CHILDREN - RESILIENT, SUCCESSFUL AND SAFE



Thank you to all of the organisations and individuals
who will be supporting and delivering the Early Help Strategy