

ROTHERHAM

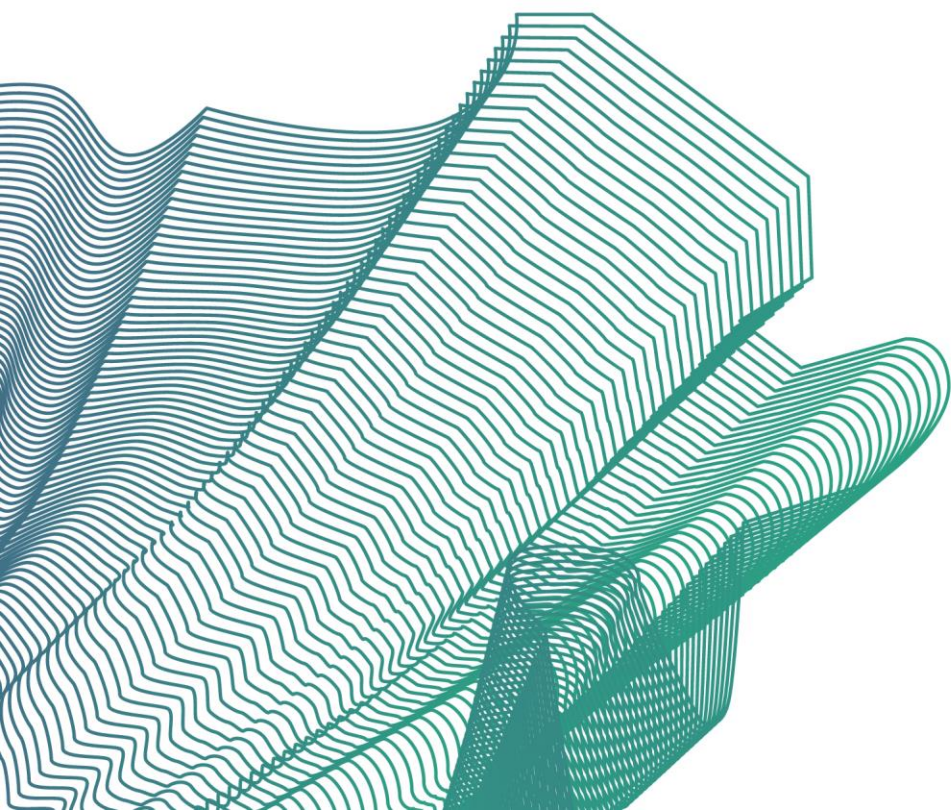
ROTHERHAM PLACE PARTNERSHIP | HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE

Rotherham Connected Co-Designing a new Online Community Platform

Progress Update August 2026

Hannah Thornton, Director of Services (projects)

Voluntary Action Rotherham



South Yorkshire
Integrated Care Board

**Rotherham, Doncaster
and South Humber**
NHS Foundation Trust

The Rotherham
NHS Foundation Trust

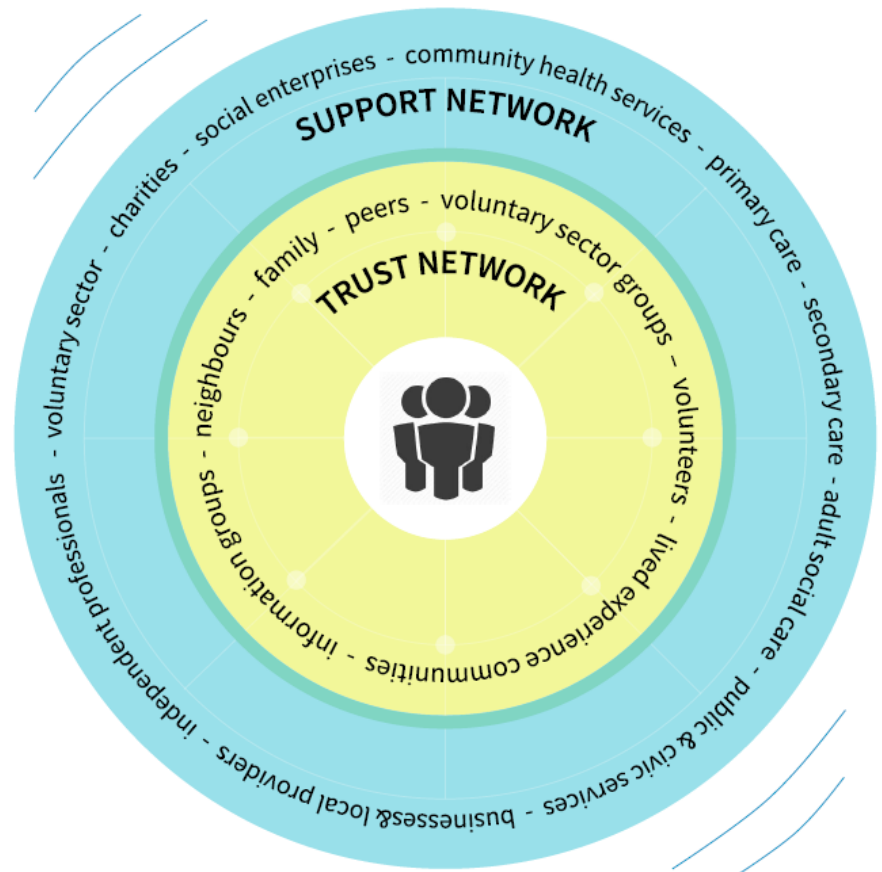
Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council

VA Voluntary
Action
Rotherham

 **CONNECT
HEALTHCARE**
ROTHERHAM CIC

Co-designing a new Online Community Platform

Rotherham Connected: a new shared community infrastructure that helps people, organisations and public services work better together - strengthening prevention, enabling earlier intervention and growing the human side of our communities through visibility, connectivity, shared insights and stronger local relationships.



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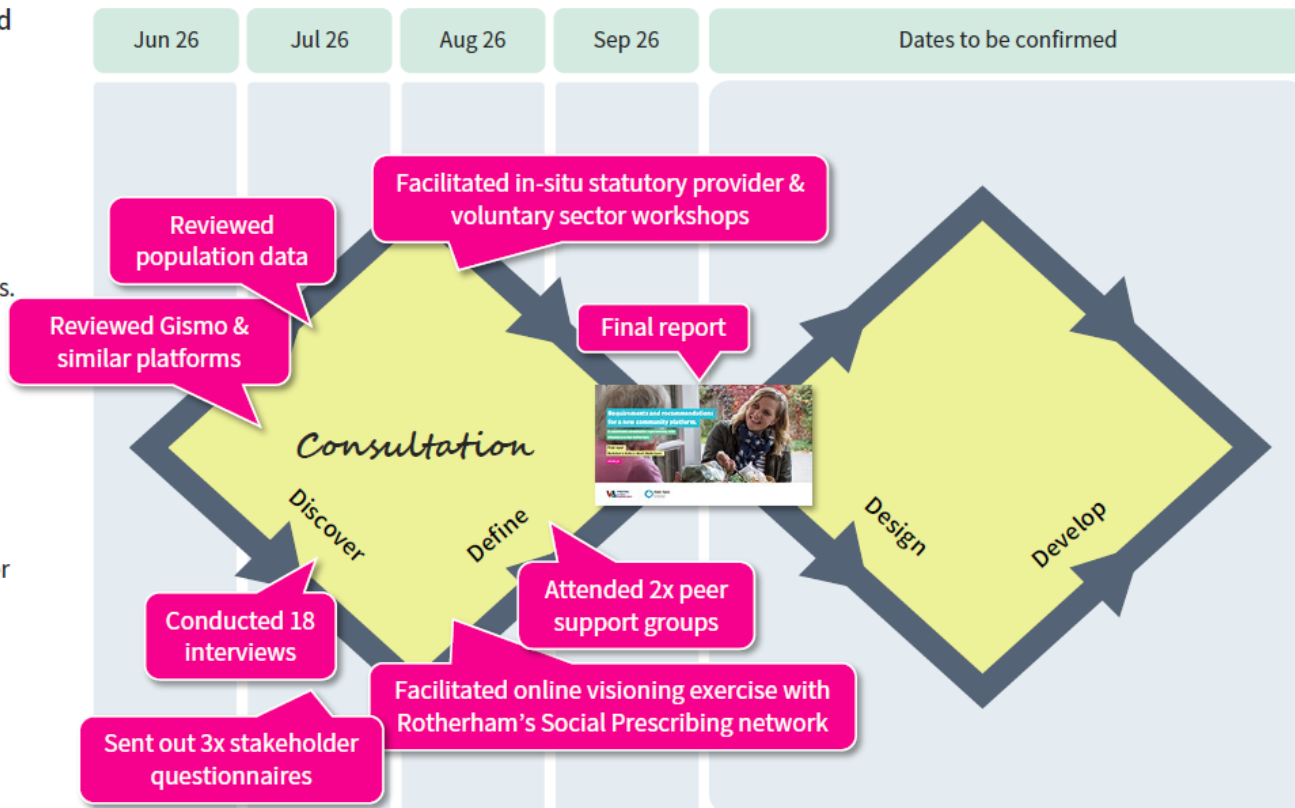
Engagement methodology

Over a four-month period, we have gathered evidence and stakeholder input to define platform requirements and a supplier assessment framework.

This included:

- Reviewing Rotherham Gismo and similar solutions.
- Analysing population data and local needs.
- Conducting 18 stakeholder interviews.
- Facilitating an online visioning exercise with Rotherham's Social Prescribing network.
- Attending two peer support groups.
- Running in-person workshops with statutory providers and voluntary sector organisations.
- Issuing three stakeholder questionnaires to gather wider feedback.

This evidence has helped define user needs, priorities, features, governance arrangements and reporting requirements for a future platform.



What people with lived experience told us

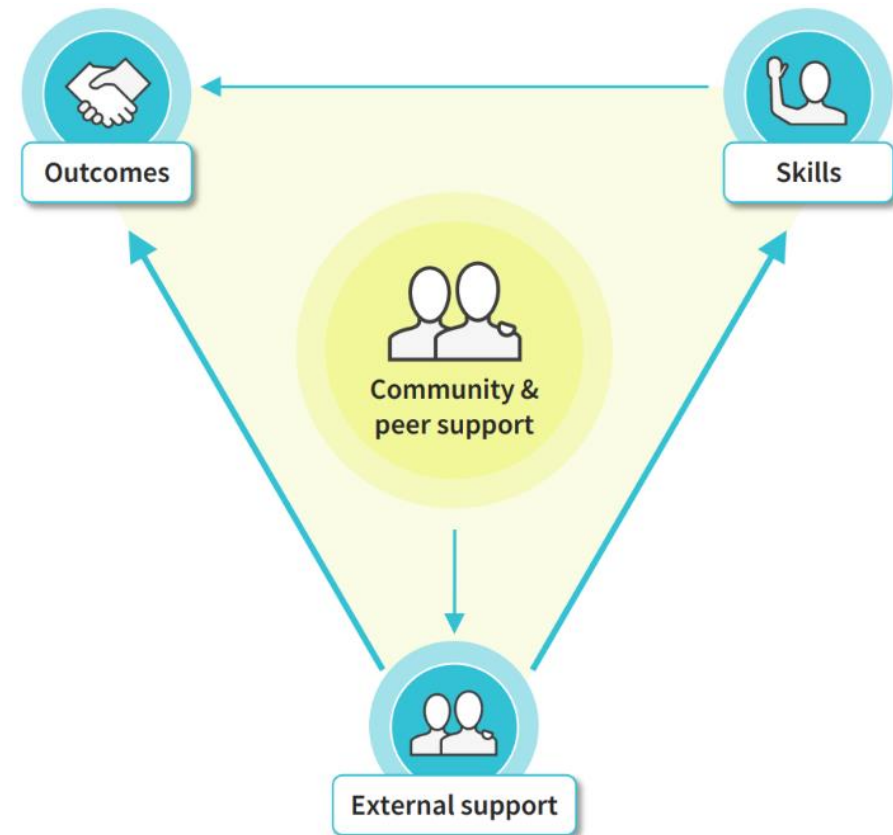
Many people have foundational needs (e.g. confidence, self-esteem, a sense of purpose) that are often best met through community or peer-to-peer support. Building these foundations helps people move forward.

"This is the glue to our friendship, Without a doubt, this place has kept me sober."

Participant, Pen & Purpose (mental health support group)

"I tell people I'm lucky because I've fallen in love with my husband twice (following his brain injury). But caring for him is tough, really tough, and the people here help me."

Participant, Headway Rotherham (brain injury support group)



What practitioners told us

vision statement

Integrated communities living healthy, happy, resilient and productive lives.



impact

Less reliance on statutory services + confidence to seek and access support from community assets.

vision statement

People and their cultures become more connected and less divided. “Connected not rejected”



impact

People feel more empowered, connected, confident, included, healthier, happier. Less hospital and GP appointments.

vision statement

Community feel people know where to access support and information so it keeps people out of mainstream services.



impact

Reduced isolation. Increased community support. GP's waiting lists reduced.

vision statement

Joined up services and organisations with proactiveness and clear communication at the core that truly values the voice of all Rotherham's residents.



impact

Improved health and wellbeing. Developed relationships and having a genuine sense of community.

Exploring user journeys with partner organisations

Observations:

The group felt that Margaret's situation demonstrated the important role that trusted relationships and local networks can play in supporting people to remain independent. Although David could have sought additional help through formal routes, the most positive changes came through community connections, including support from Margaret's neighbour, local church and wider community group. These relationships helped rebuild Margaret's confidence, reduce isolation and create a stronger support network around her, while also reducing the pressure felt by David as an unpaid carer. The introduction of a trusted health visitor, supported by access to Gismo2, enabled support to be personalised around Margaret's interests, circumstances and preferences. Gismo2 helped create a joined-up approach without requiring Margaret to use technology herself. The development of a local support network also gave David greater reassurance, as he could use Gismo2 to ask for help when needed and see the positive progress Margaret was making, helping him feel more connected despite living 90 miles away. This journey highlights the value of combining professional support with community-led connections to help people maintain independence, dignity and a sense of belonging.

Example Personas (not real people) Margaret & David



- Age: 78
- Lives alone in a rented ground-floor flat, in Rotherham town centre
- Recently discharged from hospital
- Income: State pension and pension credit
- Doesn't use tech.



- Age: 52
- Role: Unpaid family carer (Margaret's son)
- Employment: Full-time office job (hybrid working)
- Lives with partner and teenage child, 90 miles from Mum.
- Caring status: Primary contact and informal coordinator of care

A shared vision for a new platform



Initial reflections

Information is fragmented

Community information is spread across multiple systems, websites and networks, creating duplication and making it difficult to know where to find trusted information.

Trust depends on accuracy

Outdated listings quickly reduce confidence. Without clear ownership and maintenance, professionals fall back on personal knowledge rather than digital tools.

Relationships remain essential

Technology should strengthen the work of social prescribers, neighbourhood teams and community organisations - not replace human connection.

People search by need, not services

Residents rarely think in organisational categories. They search based on their circumstances, interests, identity and practical constraints.

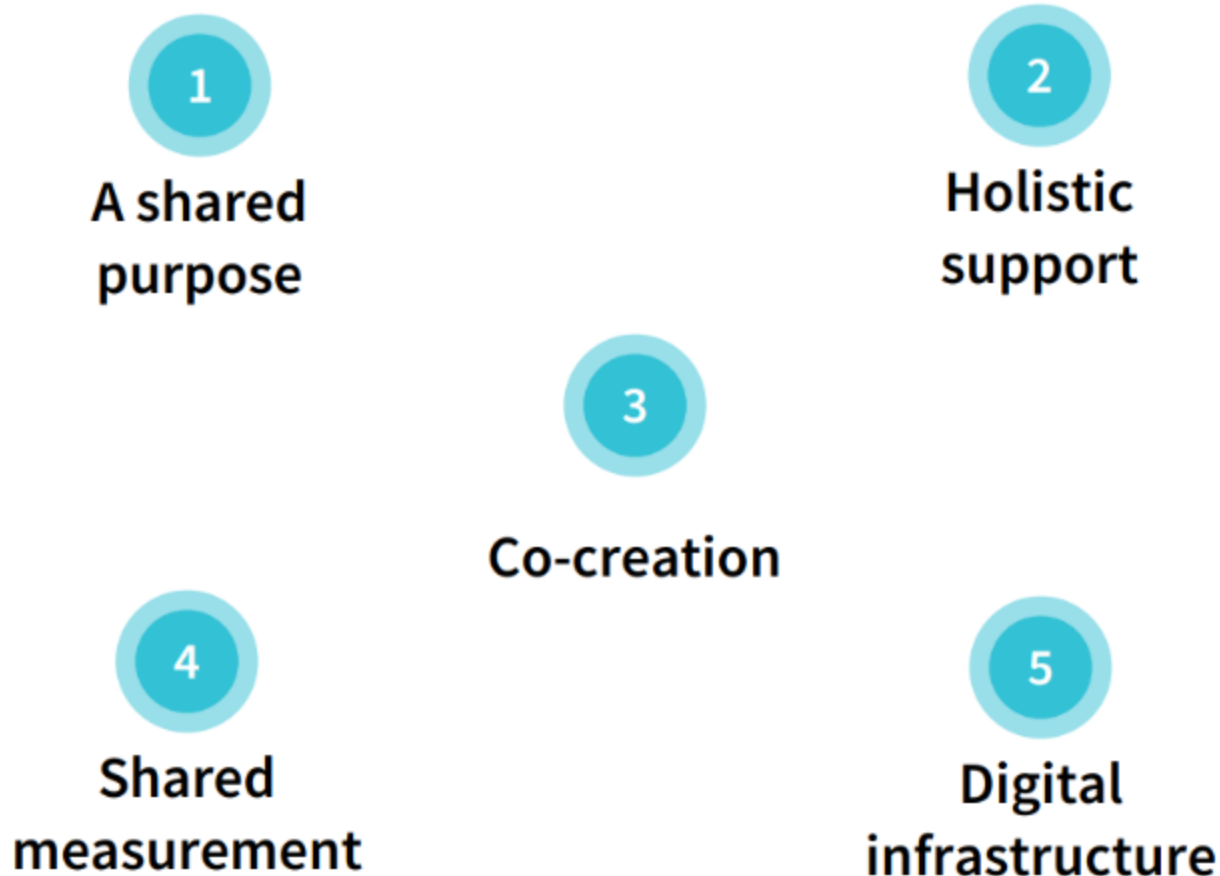
Finding information is only the first step

Barriers such as transport, confidence, cost, literacy and accessibility mean people need support beyond simply finding information.

Data could strengthen prevention

A shared platform could provide insight into community needs, gaps in provision and emerging trends.

Principles for the next steps



Recommendations

Rotherham Place Board is asked to

- Note the progress made to date, initial findings and shared vision.
- Note the opportunity for future shared infrastructure.
- Commit to working with us to further develop this opportunity.