

NOTICE OF MOTION	Date of Council Meeting: 11/09/24
	Mover: Councillor Taiba Yasseen
	Seconder: Councillor Simon Currie
	Title of Motion: Child Poverty (abolish two-child benefit cap)

That this Council:

1. Notes with concern that:-
 - a. around a third of children in Rotherham live in poverty and the number has increased by 27 per cent since 2014/15 to reach 18,550 in 2021/22, and there has been four-fold increase in the number of food parcels;
 - b. 12,650 Rotherham children were eligible for free school meals in 2023/24, a rise of 84 per cent since 2015/16 despite the fact that working families earning above £7,400 per annum are not eligible, meaning that around a third of all school-aged children living in poverty are prevented from having free school meals;
 - c. a large and growing number of families in Rotherham receive no support from Universal Credit for one or more children due to the two-child benefit cap, with the average family losing out on £4,300 per year on average, and a corresponding serious impact on children's material wellbeing, nutrition, mental health and opportunities;
 - d. notes the compounding impact of welfare reforms since 2012, including the two child benefit cap since 2017, which have increased the risk to our poorest children from poverty, destitution, food insecurity, homelessness and denial of basic needs, resulting in the heightened vulnerability of children to sexual and economic exploitation, as well as greater inequality; and
2. Confirms its commitment to making Rotherham a Child-Centred Borough where the resources of the Council and partner agencies are harnessed to support every child to be the best they can;
3. Welcomes Council measures to alleviate poverty, including local welfare provision, local council tax support and funding for advice services but

understands that only Government action can reduce child poverty substantially, such as removing the two-child benefit cap (cost of £2.5bn), and providing universal free school meals in all primary schools (cost of £1bn);

4. Notes that, disappointingly, the leadership of the two largest Westminster parties have refused to adopt either of these two policies; and
5. Therefore, the Council writes to the Government to convey the importance and urgency of alleviating child poverty and the harm it causes including the **vulnerability of children to exploitation.**

The Council resolves to request that the Government commits to:

- (i) abolishing the two-child cap on benefits;
 - (ii) expanding free school meals to every child in primary school, and every secondary school child whose family receives Universal Credit;
 - (iii) raising the income threshold for free school meals in line with inflation, backdated to match the real terms level in 2018 to reflect the rising cost of living; and
6. Requests Cabinet to co-ordinate the development of a new strategy to reduce the impact of child poverty in Rotherham.