

Councillor Chris Read – Leader of the Council

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23rd June 2022

Cllr Michael Bennett-Sylvester
Elected Member

Via email: Michael.sylvester@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Bennett- Sylvester

Supplementary Question – Council Meeting, 25th May 2022

Thank you for your supplementary question at Council on 25th May regarding whether the policy for free school meal vouchers could be changed to ensure that families were given a choice of which supermarket they could use.

I've now had chance to check with Children's Services in relation to your question. The way that the scheme operates, the council provides funding to schools who then take responsibility for purchasing and distributing the vouchers. Contrary to what I had understood, some schools do seemingly provide vouchers that are valid across a number of different supermarket brands.

Officers tell me that they consistently request that schools make the vouchers or support provided through this programme as accessible as possible for families who receive the vouchers and have asked that all steps are taken to make sure that the vouchers purchased are linked to supermarkets that are both in the locality of the school but also offers the best possible value to maximise the impact of this support. The feedback has been consistent, and the schools align with this expectation although there are some challenges i.e., special schools and pupil referral units that have school communities spread right across the borough.

As part of the investment of support across the impending summer break, I have asked that Nathan Heath, Assistant Director, Education and Inclusion uses the next school leaders update to reiterate the expectation that schools make this programme of support as accessible as possible for the families that need this support the most.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Chris Read
Leader of Rotherham Council