

Councillor Victoria Cusworth – Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

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Our ref

VC/KS

Please Contact

Councillor Victoria Cusworth

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24th January 2025

Councillor Gina Monk
Elected Member

Via email: gina.monk@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Monk

Question to Council – Wednesday 15th January 2025

Thank you for the question you submitted to Council on 15th January 2025. I have set out the question and my response below.

What can the cabinet member tell us about the impact of this Council's decision to auto enrol eligible families for free school meals in Rotherham?

One of the barriers to ensuring that eligible children get access to free school meals (FSM) and schools get the additional resource they need to support disadvantaged children is that parents can have difficulties claiming (enrolling) for FSM, Auto-enrolment means the Council can identify eligible children and sign them up without parents having to do so. Parents are still given the option to opt out.

Following the move to Auto-Enrolment for FSM, an additional 340 children from 271 different Rotherham families to have been identified as eligible for a free school meal.

This 340 is made up of 207 primary school pupils, 116 secondary school pupils and 17 special school pupils. The financial benefit to these Rotherham families from daily access to a nutritious meal during the school day is estimated at £136k per year. This is enhanced by the numerous non-financial benefits of a daily nutritious meal

which include improved overall nutrition, improved concentration and engagement in school, and access to the Healthy Holidays Programme out of school term.

There is also a significant financial benefit to Rotherham Schools from this work, with each child entitled to a free school meal also attracting Pupil Premium Grant (PPG) funding for the school (£1480 per primary school pupil and £1050 per secondary school pupil). This scheme has resulted in an additional amount of £448,560 in PPG funding to Rotherham schools (£306360 for primary schools, £121800 for secondary schools and £20400 for special schools), all of which will be used to support disadvantaged children under the terms of the PPG.

I hope that my response is helpful.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Victoria Cusworth
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Services
Labour and Co-op | Kilnhurst and Swinton East Ward
Peer Mentor and Member Peer | Local Government Association Labour Group