

Councillor Chris Read – Leader of the Council

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11th April 2025

Cllr Joshua Bacon
Elected Member

Via email: joshua.bacon@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Bacon

Council Meeting – Wednesday 9th April 2025

Thank you for your question to Council on Wednesday 9th April which I have set out along with my response below.

As a result of Labour's vicious welfare cuts, their own Government impact assessment say overall they expect 250,000 people, including 50,000 children, to be pushed into relative poverty – this is additional people going into poverty. Is there anything the Council can do additionally to support those affected in Rotherham?

As you will be aware, during the tenure of the last Conservative government – of which you were a vocal supporter – some 700,000 children fell into poverty.

During that time we established a number of local measures to support low income families. This included our Council Tax Support Top Up for low income working age households, which you voted to scrap, and more recently permanent funding to support local people into work, which you described as “a niche activity”.

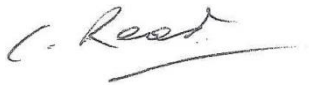
In addition, we've used the Household Support Fund to assist low income families with food vouchers during the school holidays, provided additional support to our network of foodbanks, funded welfare advice and support (including through the Open Arms programme), made it easier to access credit union support, become a Real Living Wage employer, and refreshed the Rothercard scheme to cut prices for low income families. Most recently, as you know, we secured £1.7m from the government specifically to help those economically inactive residents, including those with long term ill health conditions.

The 250,000 number that you referred that was produced by DWP assumes that not a single person moves from welfare to work. However, alongside the proposed reforms to the welfare system a further £1bn of support was announced as part of the Spring Statement to provide targeted, personalised and guaranteed support for anybody on sickness and disability benefits to help them find work. It is not unreasonable to assume that people will be supported to move from welfare to work.

The Green Paper is currently subject to consultation, and as I said at the meeting on the 9th, even if the plans do go ahead they will not come into effect for more than a year, so we will be able to make informed decisions if there are further steps it would be appropriate for the council take during that time.

I hope you find this information helpful.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Chris Read
Leader of Rotherham Council