

Councillor Chris Read – Leader of the Council

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12 June 2025

Councillor Simon Ball
Elected Member

Via email: simon.ball@rotherham.gov.uk

Dear Cllr Ball

Question to Council – Wednesday 21st May 2025

Thank you for the question you submitted to Council on 21st May 2025. I have set out your question and my response below.

Rotherham's £4.39m Household Support Fund allocation this financial year is a 12% cut from the previous £4.98m awarded under the last Government, despite rising poverty due to the winter fuel cuts, rising unemployment and upcoming disability payment reductions. How will you protect vulnerable residents from the impact of this reduced support during worsening economic hardship?

Through the Council's allocation of the Household Support Fund award, alongside the commitments made in its budget agreed in March, we will continue to be able to provide:

- Free school meals vouchers to eligible children and young people during the school holidays;
- Our local Council Tax Support Top Up Scheme, which is expected to benefit around 14,400 households;
- 2,000 grants through the Council's energy support scheme;
- Support to young people leaving foster or local authority care and living independently in their own accommodation with their utility bills;
- Hampers to vulnerable families over the Christmas period; and
- Parcels of household items including cleaning / personal hygiene products to vulnerable households.

By making these investment decisions – including topping up the national funding because of the prudent choices Labour has made locally – we are able provide the same level of support in 2025/26 as we did in 2024/25.

Some people will remember that in contrast to our approach, a few years ago you wanted to cut support with council tax to thousands of low paid households and instead use the money to subsidise a small number of homes with solar panels.

In addition, we have committed additional funds to support the borough's most vulnerable residents. In setting the budget for 2025/26, an additional £188k package of investment was agreed to support residents with the high cost of living. This included providing dedicated support through AGE UK and Citizens Advice Rotherham District to residents with the application process for Pension Credit. It also included funding to extend the successful Food Works initiative currently in operation in Sheffield into Rotherham, as well as doubling the budget for our successful school uniform scheme.

In contrast the budget proposal of Conservative members proposed to limit the Food Works investment to just one year.

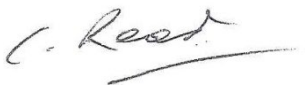
The budget also agreed the funding to make our Employment Solutions service permanent, which supports people into, to stay in and progress in work. To date this has successfully supported some 1,700 people, of which 879 people have been supported into employment and 825 into training since October 2020.

Again, the Conservative budget proposal was to cut this by £350,000.

Meanwhile, through our recently agreed participation in the economic inactivity trailblazer, over 1,000 economically inactive residents will be supported, of which it is estimated that 400 will transition into employment in 2025/26 in the borough.

All of which is on top of existing arrangements that the Council has had in place for a number of years to support residents in crisis and to provide dedicated support and advice services.

Yours sincerely



Councillor Chris Read
Leader of Rotherham Council