

HOME

matters

HOME GROWN 2021 Garden Competition Winners



Help to manage
your energy bills

Kyle lands
his dream job

Award success
for RotherFed



www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

HOME *matters*

Welcome to the July 2022 edition of Home Matters



As I welcome readers to this, the first edition of Home Matters for 2022, I look back to this time last summer when I was writing my very first foreword and embarking on my first year as Cabinet member for Housing. Emerging from the health, economic and social challenges caused by the COVID-19 response, we were

in a set of circumstances as never seen before.

Summer 2022 is bringing its own challenges. The rising cost of living, and in particular soaring energy prices are squeezing record numbers of households. Challenges require adaptation, and the pandemic demonstrated that abnormal challenges require unique adaptation.

I think constantly about the challenges tomorrow will bring and how we will adapt to overcome them. The wellbeing of our residents is of the utmost importance and the housing service team are here to help you however they can. As an elected representative I never forget that governments, including local ones, are elected by a specific people in a specific place, and must meet the people's needs.

The bulk of this issue is around practical and pragmatic ways to

help you with your rising energy bills (pages 4-6). The council has dedicated teams to help with all aspects of money advice as well as practical and real employment support. I've been very impressed by the wraparound service of the Pathways team (page 3), and I urge anyone looking to find a job to get in touch with them.

And finally, a particular joy amongst the challenges that we can all share in is the return of our Rotherham in Bloom Garden competition (page 8). I'm a huge believer in the power of gardening and gardens and how they transform our lives for the better. Whether it's a peaceful area to reflect, or an active gardening group or allotment bringing people together, their transformational impact on the wellbeing of communities can't be denied. Connecting with nature and the soil is a vital boost to wellbeing and the environment and should rightly gain more importance as we adapt to more sustainable futures.

Councillor Amy Brookes

Cabinet Member for Housing
Rotherham Council

YOUR INVITATION



Rotherham
Metropolitan
Borough Council

TENANTS' OPEN DAY 2022

New York Stadium, Thursday 29 September, 10am – 2pm

www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

  @HousingRMBC

After being held virtually last year, the open day is back – bigger and better than ever!

This is your chance to find out what's happening in housing services, meet other tenants, find out about local groups and put your questions to member of our staff.

Places are limited and booking is essential.

Email customerinvolvement@rotherham.gov.uk to book your place.



Rotherham Council Employment Solutions Officer, Neil Crisp with Kyle Stafford

A KICKSTART IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION



European Union
European
Social Fund

**Part funded by the European
Social Fund**

Kyle Stafford was struggling to find a job that ignited his passions, until he landed a job with his beloved football team, thanks to the Pathways to Ambition team.

When 21-year-old Kyle from Rotherham signed up to the Kickstart scheme he had only six weeks work experience under his belt, but this gave his Employment Solutions Officer, Neil Crisp, plenty of scope to find out what kind of training Kyle wanted to explore.

Since being young Kyle had supported Sheffield Wednesday Football Club, and whilst having a catch up with Neil they spotted a role working as a cleaning operative at Hillsborough Stadium, home of SWFC. Without any hesitations Kyle applied for the job and was invited to Hillsborough for an interview.

Kyle told us: *"I was so excited to get the interview but also a little bit nervous after recently being diagnosed with ASD. Neil helped put my mind at ease by helping me with interview techniques and preparing me for the different questions they might ask."*

The preparation paid off with the club calling just a few days later to offer Kyle the position.

Kyle added; *"I was over the moon to be offered the job. Once I got my start date, Neil organised my bus passes to help me to travel to work until I got my first pay packet which was a big help."*

"I've been at the club a few months now and I'm loving earning a wage in a job that I love. It's a great environment to work in and one I know will help me to continue to thrive and achieve."

HOW CAN THE PATHWAYS TEAM HELP YOU?

- Identify suitable volunteering or work experience opportunities
- Access appropriate learning or training courses
- Help develop a bespoke CV
- Access specialist support around debt, housing or substance misuse

If you feel like you would benefit from one-to-one help and advice about employment, skills or training email the team at employmentsolutionsteam@rotherham.gov.uk

DON'T BE LEFT IN THE DARK THIS WINTER



Community energy advisors Noor Salih, Lynn Clarkson and Sharon Smith

If you're struggling to pay your energy bills this winter, you're not alone, with a recent Government survey suggesting over 10 per cent of households in England are fuel-poor.

Fuel poverty can occur for many different reasons – maybe you've been made redundant, you're on a low income or you're living in an energy-inefficient home. Whatever the reason, if you are experiencing fuel poverty, it's important to remember there are ways to improve your situation and people who can help.

Rotherfed have recently introduced the Energy Know-How Scheme with community energy advisors Sharon Smith, Noor Salih and Lynn Clarkson supporting Rotherham residents to reduce energy usage and utility costs in their homes.

Sharon told us *"We are here to help reduce the worry and anxiety experienced by people who are struggling with high fuel bills."*

"We know that health problems are made worse by high fuel costs and we aim to help people to be warmer and more comfortable at home, freeing-up income for other household essentials."

"We deliver free group sessions in community venues, as well as one-to-one support remotely and via the telephone."

- Do you want to know how to heat your home for less?
- Do you need help to understand your energy bill?
- Do you want tips on how to reduce your energy use?
- Do you want to feel less stressed and worried about energy bills?

If the answer to any of these is 'yes!' contact

Sharon Smith

e. sharon.smith@rotherfed.org
t. 07983 527467

Noor Salih

e. noor.salih@rotherfed.org
t. 07983 527352

Lynn Clarkson

e. Lynn.clarkson@rotherfed.org
t. 07399 888035

The team are not currently promoting switching energy providers. This service will resume once the energy market conditions change.

HELP TO OFFSET GAS PRICE HIKE

With gas prices soaring by more than 50 per cent the Council has approved plans that will help shield tenants from the sharp rise in energy costs.

The four-year plan will see district heating increase by 15 per cent this year, with potential increases then phased in over the following three years to make them more affordable.

This will mean for tenants in a two-bedroom home, the typical weekly payment of £12.90 will now increase to £14.84.

Rotherham Council's Cabinet Member for Housing, Councillor Amy Brookes, said: "We know that many people are facing the squeeze as energy bills rise. Gas prices nationally have risen since the district heating programme was last set four years ago and it would be unfair on residents to increase bills by more than 50 per cent overnight.

"Some other places have needed to pass the cost on directly to tenants, but we are shielding tenants from a sharp rise while managing the forecasted increases in the energy prices over the next four years."

If you are struggling with your bills, managing your tenancy or you just have general money worries then please contact the Rotherham Council's Tenancy Support Team via email at rotherhamtenancysupport@rotherham.gov.uk

We have dedicated officers who can help you to get back in control.

Excessive or multiple debts causing concern?

Have you been refused a benefit or not received the level you were expecting?

Please contact us at advocacyandappeals@rotherham.gov.uk

You can also visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/money-debt-advice for further advice and support.

BE ENERGY SMART

Simple changes to day-to-day activities could make big differences to your household energy bills. Here are some handy tips to help you save on household bills.

- Only boil the water you need in your kettle and you could save £6 a year.
- Spending one minute less in the shower every day will save up to £7 per person each year.
- You can save around £30 a year just by remembering to turn your appliances off standby mode.
- Save an average of £35 on electricity a year by drying clothes on a clothesline, instead of using a dryer.
- Washing clothes at 30°C instead of 40°C can save you around £9 a year.
- Don't leave your mobile phone on charge all night – most only need a couple of hours.
- Cut back your washing machine use by one cycle per week and save around £5 a year on energy.
- Switch off lights when not in use and you could save £14 a year.
- Using a bowl to wash up rather than running the tap could save you up to £25 a year.
- Make sure to close your curtains at night to stop heat escaping from windows.



WHO CAN HELP?

The cost of living has been increasing across the UK since early 2021 with rising prices squeezing millions of households across the UK. If you find yourself struggling with increased costs, there are ways you can get help.

Whether you're struggling to heat your home, feed your family or find a job to make ends meet the Council has dedicated teams to help. Below are some websites you may find useful.

COUNCIL TAX

For general Council Tax help

www.rotherham.gov.uk/council-tax

Get help to pay your Council Tax

www.rotherham.gov.uk/council-tax/get-help-pay-council-tax

MONEY ADVICE

Find general money and debt advice

www.rotherham.gov.uk/money-debt-advice

Financial support for tenants

www.rotherham.gov.uk/money-debt-advice/financial-inclusion

EDUCATION

Free school meals

www.rotherham.gov.uk/benefits/apply-free-school-meals

Help buying a school uniform

www.rotherham.gov.uk/educational-awards-grants/buying-school-uniform

Rotherham Healthy Holidays programme

www.rotherham.gov.uk/childrens-health-wellbeing/healthy-holidays

HOUSEHOLD BILLS

Get help with energy bills

www.rotherham.gov.uk/energy-climate-change/energy

Energy Crisis Support Scheme

www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing-grants-finance/energy-crisis-support-scheme

Save money on your food shop

www.rotherham.gov.uk/money-debt-advice/save-money-food-costs

JOBS AND EMPLOYMENT

Employment solutions to help you into work

www.rotherham.gov.uk/pathways-rotherham

Further help, including information on benefits, mental health and wellbeing, low cost entertainment and local discount schemes can be found at

www.rotherham.gov.uk/money-debt-advice

RENT

Get advice on rent arrears

www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

Apply for discretionary housing payment

www.rotherham.gov.uk/benefits

OTHER USEFUL SITES

Citizens Advice has a comprehensive guide on what to do if you're struggling with living costs of all kinds, and can be contacted to help signpost you to services which can help -

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

Money Saving Expert Martin Lewis has also put together a Cost of Living Survival Guide with dozens of tips on how to save money during this difficult time -

www.moneysavingexpert.com

COMBATting CONDENSATION AND MOULD

Condensation is common in homes that are poorly heated and ventilated. Whilst condensation itself is harmless, it can lead to mould growth which is unsightly and may affect your health. The key to avoiding condensation is to produce less moisture.

REDUCING MOISTURE

There are things that you can do to reduce moisture in your home:

- When cooking, cover pans with lids, keep the kitchen door closed and make sure a window is open or the extractor fan is on.
- If you have to dry clothes indoors, put them in the bathroom with the door closed and the window open.
- When bathing, run cold water into the bath before the hot water to minimise steam.
- Allow plenty of fresh air into your home to avoid the indoor air becoming stale and humid.

MOULD CLEANING

Regular cleaning away of mould is vital to ensure it does not become unmanageable. To remove mould, wipe down walls and window frames with a fungicidal cleaner.

If you think you have damp and mould, book an appointment with our housing officers who can help and advise you on 01709 336009.

CUCKOOING MAY BE HAPPENING IN YOUR AREA...

...this is when drug dealers take over vulnerable people's properties to store and deal drugs.

HELP PROTECT THEM - BE AWARE OF THE SIGNS:

- An increase in people entering and leaving
- An increase in anti-social behaviour
- Increased littering or rubbish
- Different cars and bikes outside
- Signs of drug use
- Curtains or blinds closed at all times
- No healthcare or support workers visiting

A cuckooed address is a significant risk to the wider community.



If you have concerns about cuckooing where you live, contact 101 or call Crimestoppers anonymously on 0800 555 111.

BEST GARDEN



Peter Docherty – Kimberworth

I find my garden very therapeutic. It allows me time to exercise, relax and focus on finding ways to encourage wildlife.

GARDEN COMPETITION 2022



The hunt is on for the borough's best garden!

The annual Rotherham in Bloom Garden Competition is back, recognising the achievements of the borough's green fingered residents who have made a colourful contribution to brighten up their estates.

There are several categories including: best garden, best pots, planters and hanging baskets, best vegetable patch, best wildlife garden or sustainable garden and for our younger tenants, best young gardener.

Whether you use gardening as a way to relax and unwind, keep fit and healthy or to simply get out into nature why not take the opportunity to show off your own personal paradise. Plus, you'll be in with a chance of winning a little extra cash!

Whether you're just starting out or a lifelong gardener, your hard work and dedication helps to create a strong sense of community and a place we're proud to call home and we'd love to hear from you.

Last year's winners dish the dirt about what inspired them to enter and transform their outdoor space.

BEST YOUNG GARDENER (AGE- 7-18)



Maizie Barnes – Catcliffe

My Grandad taught me all about flowers and I have grown all my own plants, as well as making myself a table and chair.

BEST VEGETABLE PATCH



Robert & Zen Turner – Swinton

We love being outside and take inspiration from the colour of our plants. Gardening is hard work, but for us it's a way to share ideas and encourage others to enjoy nature.

BEST POTS, PLANTERS AND HANGING BASKETS



June Smith – Dinnington

Having had to leave my home last year, I was worried about what my new garden would look like. Luckily, there was a lawn on the front and back! Having loved gardening all my life, I have really enjoyed transforming the plot into my little haven.

BEST WILDLIFE GARDEN



Kevin Garrett – Maltby

My garden has developed over 20 years to create a wildlife jungle paradise. Here, I can escape into a tranquil oasis surrounded by nature and discover something new every day.

BEST YOUNG GARDENER (AGE 0-6)



Arthur Ozyer-key – Thurcroft

My garden is so much fun, I love to plant flowers and look for worms in the soil. I really wanted a rainbow garden, so my mummy got me rainbow lights and colourful flowerpots.

To enter this year competition, submit your entry by Sunday 7 August via the Council website - www.rotherham.gov.uk/tenantinvolvement



ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOUR

what can you do?

Do you feel worried about what's going on in your neighbourhood or intimidated by a neighbour's behaviour? Anti-social behaviour (ASB) affects many people and can have an impact on your household and your community. If you're experiencing ASB, it's important to know you're not on your own and there are people who can help you deal with it.

WHAT IS ASB?

ASB includes a range of behaviours which cause harassment, alarm or distress to others, for example:

- Excessive noise (banging, shouting, amplified music)
- Hate related non-crime incidents
- Rowdy, aggressive or threatening behaviour or language
- Nuisance associated with frequent visitors
- Problems caused by animals e.g. persistent dog barking, fouling etc
- Graffiti, litter or fly tipping
- Intimidation or harassment
- Nuisance from vehicles – including 'off road' vehicles.

HOW TO REPORT ASB

If you feel threatened, intimidated, witness a crime or suspect someone may be dealing drugs, you should always contact the police first. For non-emergencies you can telephone **101** or report online **www.southyorks.police.uk**.

You should dial 999 when life is threatened, people are injured or there is a crime in progress and an immediate police response is necessary.

Other anti-social behaviour issues including noise, flytipping, litter and graffiti should be reported to the council online at **www.rotherham.gov.uk**

We understand that some people are concerned about reporting issues due to fear of repercussion or because they do not think their concerns will be taken seriously. We can assure you that all reports of anti-social behaviour are taken very seriously, and we do not tell anyone who has complained.

WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The Council will contact you about your case and take you through the next steps and an officer will keep in contact with you on a regular basis to keep you informed of progress.

Your case will not be closed until you are satisfied that the nuisance has been resolved.

For more info visit **www.rotherham.gov.uk/community-safety-crime**

ENGIE IS CHANGING

Over the coming months one of Rotherham's repairs and maintenance contractors, **ENGIE**, will rebrand to become **EQUANS**.

You will begin to see EQUANS vans around the borough and operatives carrying out repairs and maintenance in your home will wear EQUANS uniform and have EQUANS ID badges.

Nothing else will change in terms of the service you receive and you should continue to report repairs using the same process.

Remember – always ask for ID when someone attends your home.



TOP AWARD FOR FRIENDSHIP PROJECT



Congratulations to Rotherfed, who last month celebrated receiving a prestigious award for their pioneering befriending project.

The team won the Richard Crossley Excellence in Community Action Award at the TPAS Virtual Awards ceremony last October. Due to the high number of COVID-19 cases at the time, the Rotherham celebration event was put on hold, but it was finally able to go ahead last month with the award presented by the Council's Housing team.

The Friendship Calls project was set up at the height of the pandemic to support some of our

most vulnerable residents who struggled to cope with loneliness and isolation, with the scheme becoming a lifeline to some tenants.

Rotherfed's CEO, Phil Hayes, told us: *"We are delighted to have received this award. It is great recognition for our team who have worked immensely hard over the course of the pandemic and continue to provide support to the vulnerable residents across the borough."*

Although restrictions have eased you can still register to receive calls or become a volunteer. **For more information visit www.rotherhamfederation.org or call 07376 666191.**



Cabinet Member for Housing, Councilor Amy Brookes hands over the award to RotherFed's Nicola Evans

COUNCIL HOUSING Annual Report

April 2020 – March 2021



WELCOME TO OUR HOUSING ANNUAL REPORT 2020/21

This report summarises the performance of the Council's Housing Service during the last financial year, April 2020 to March 2021.

The report highlights where service areas have performed well and, more importantly, where there is room for improvement.

I'm pleased to share the report with you as part of your Home Matters magazine to ensure you all have the chance to see how well we are performing and how your rent is spent.

We've continued to work hard to improve our service and so much has been achieved over the past 12 months including:

- The delivery of new high-quality homes, including 44 completed new homes at Broom Hayes, Broom Valley and 14 new bungalows in Treeton and Ravenfield, and the start of a further 171 in the Town Centre.
- Rent collected exceeded rent owed for the year, meaning outstanding unpaid debts reduced by one million pounds this year.
- A lot of work has been done this year to sustain our tenancies and support our tenants including:
 - o Over 100 vulnerable residents helped into employment / training
 - o 5,700 telephone calls made to potential vulnerable tenants to check on their wellbeing
 - o Covid Winter Fuel Support Grants were issued to over 2,500 residents
- Sustaining decent homes (99.95% of properties) and landlord compliance with 99.98% of gas servicing and 97.06% of electrical fixed wire testing completed. Independent fire risk assessments for all five high density blocks.
- 99.92% of anti-social behaviour cases were resolved.
- Increase in the digitalisation of services, allowing more opportunities for tenants to get involved.
- Established a rough sleeper team to find accommodation and support for those at risk of rough sleeping, finding accommodation for 546 people.
- Provided emergency accommodation to 1,105 households to prevent homelessness.

At the outbreak of the pandemic, the housing services were adapted to concentrate on the most critical functions. Most of the temporarily suspended services have now resumed, albeit at a reduced rate, but the effect of the pandemic is reflected in the performance figures below.

For the financial year 2021/22 we identified a number of priorities to focus on:

- We will implement our new Housing Management IT system, which will enhance customer experience
- We will continue delivery of our new homes programme, including in the town centre
- We will refresh our key strategies, including the Housing Strategy, Financial Inclusion Strategy and Homelessness Prevention and Rough Sleeper Strategy
- We will continue to develop and enhance our services to fully meet the requirements of the Charter for Social Housing White Paper
- We will continue to help our tenants to sustain their tenancies, through a range of tenancy support initiatives.

If you have any comments about this report please get in touch with us by emailing councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk or tweet us [@HousingRMBC](https://twitter.com/HousingRMBC)

Paul Walsh
Acting Assistant Director,
Housing Services

PERFORMANCE AT A GLANCE

Rotherham Council is committed to delivering excellent services to our tenants and providing houses that you are proud to call homes. Here's a round-up of how we performed in the key areas that you said matter to you most.

COUNCIL HOUSING STOCK



KEEPING YOUR ESTATES SAFE (anti-social behaviour)



Number of ASB complaints reported

3,068
2018/19

2,557
2019/20

2,359
2020/21

Percentage of ASB complaints resolved

99.89%
2018/19

99.80%
2019/20

99.92%
2020/21

Target 92%

BETTER THAN TARGET

HOUSING INCOME & FINANCIAL INCLUSION

Rent collected as a percentage of rent owed (excluding arrears brought forward)



99.67%
2018/19

100.75%
2019/20

101.83%
2020/21

Target 99.67%

BETTER THAN TARGET

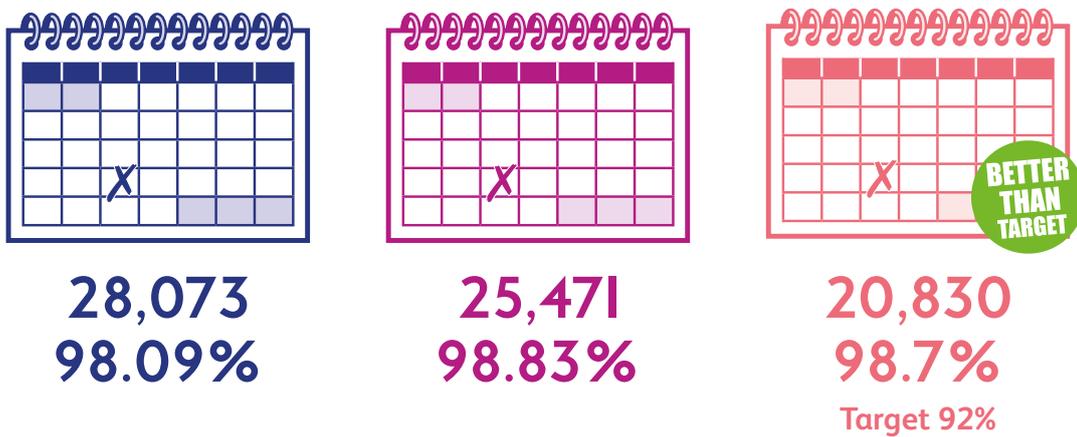
REPAIRS AND MAINTENANCE

Number and percentage of responsive repairs completed Right First Time



*The reduced target and performance was due to a change in contract and therefore definition of what constitutes Right First Time.

Number and percentage of repair appointments made and kept



COMPLAINTS AND COMPLIMENTS

Number of complaints received for Housing Services



Number of complaints responded to within corporate timescales



GAS SERVICING

Percentage of properties completed



CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

Percentage of tenants satisfied with the repairs service



Number of compliments received



MAKING SENSE OF THE MONEY

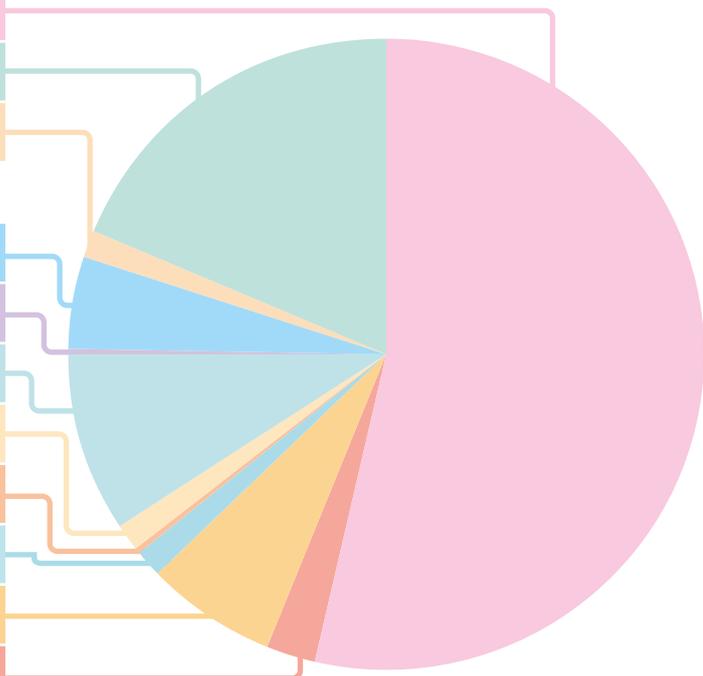
Rotherham Council owns and manages over 20,000 council homes. In 2020/21 the income was £90,173,965

Below is an overview of how your rent was spent during the year.

Capital Charges	£48,399,773	53.7%
Repairs & Maintenance	£16,825,641	18.7%
Estate Management	£1,281,189	1.4%

Staffing and Service costs

Housing Management	£4,370,353	4.8%
Anti-Social Behaviour	£123,398	0.1%
Central Services	£8,319,392	9.2%
Income Management	£1,396,408	1.5%
Tenant Involvement	£88,840	0.1%
New Housing and Housing Strategy	£1,400,077	1.6%
Housing Options, Allocations and homelessness	£5,734,346	6.4%
Contracts, Investment & Compliance	£2,234,546	2.5%
Total Expenditure	£90,173,965	100%

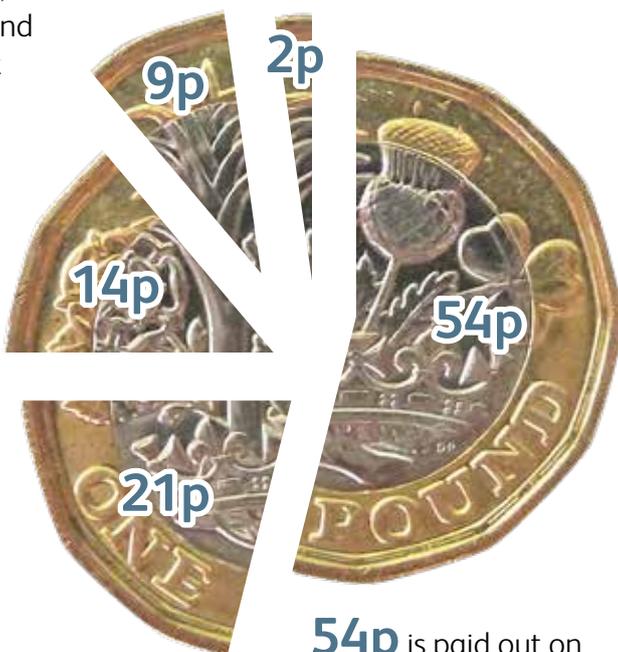


FOR EVERY £1 OF RENT YOU PAY

9p is spent on central services such as management, administration and business support

2p is spent on developing new housing

14p is spent on managing estates and tenancies including letting houses and collecting rent



21p is spent on repairing the houses and getting them in a lettable condition

54p is paid out on capital repairs, new Council housing, and interest on borrowing and depreciation charges

FOCUS ON INCOME

Most of the income comes from rent but tenants and leaseholders are also charged for services and facilities that the Council provides. 

House Rents	£77,183,270
Garages and Ground Rent	£729,156
Furnished packages	£4,059,174
District Heating	£591,290
Communal Facility charges	£334,887
Right to Buy receipts	£117,000
Leaseholder contributions to services	£199,155
Aids & Adaptations	£52,491
Miscellaneous Income (incl. strategic)	£345,260
Total income	£83,611,684
Transferred from reserves	£6,562,281
Total funds used	£90,173,965

UNHAPPY WITH A REPAIR?

PLEASE TELL US FIRST - WE WANT TO HELP

Reports show there have been a rising number of claims farmers going door-to-door across the borough and targeting social media. Please be aware, these are not Rotherham Council representatives.

A claims farmer encourages people to make compensation claims for repairs (and other services) they are unhappy with, which they then sell on to legal firms for their own financial gain. Some will tell you they are working for the council when they are not.

- Always ask for ID when someone attends your home and if you feel at all intimidated – call 999. A Council representative will always show you their ID.
- Always speak to the Council before you sign any documents relating to repairs. Don't sign anything you don't understand.
- Always report any issues to us first on **01709 336009** so we can put it right.

If you are still unsatisfied you can contact the Council's complaints team using the details below.



DO YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT ABOUT A COUNCIL SERVICE?

If you have a complaint there are a number of ways you can get in touch to tell us.



COMPLETE A WEB FORM

www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints



EMAIL

complaints@rotherham.gov.uk



TEXT

07860 021 447



CALL

01709 382121



POST

The Complaints Manager
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council
(FREEPOST RTCT-XKLS-ZHAZ)
Riverside House
Main Street
Rotherham
S60 1AE

If you are dissatisfied with the outcome of your complaint the team will advise you on how to escalate your complaint to the Housing Ombudsman.

If the matter relates to your landlord you can seek the advice of the Housing Ombudsman at any time on **0300 111 3000**.

Further information can be found at www.rotherham.gov.uk/complaints

CONNECT TO OUR SERVICES

ONLINE

All of our services are available 24/7 online www.rotherham.gov.uk

For housing information visit www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing

or email councilhomes@rotherham.gov.uk

TELEPHONE

For housing enquiries and repairs call **01709 336009**

