

## Better Off Calculator case study

### Challenge

As a result of the pandemic, more people than ever became unemployed. Rotherham Council wanted to proactively reduce poverty by supporting residents into training and employment

### Solution

Establishing a new team to offer holistic support to residents, Rotherham helped people to improve their finances and their mental and physical health

Advisors used the Better Off Calculator to outline peoples' income and expenditure, then showed how this would change if they moved into work. This approach empowered residents to take control of their finances

### Impact

Since October 2020, the council has had **300 people** participate in the project

Over **200 residents** have been helped into work or training

**50 young people** have been helped into employment

# How Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council helped over 200 residents into work or training

To help residents to achieve their goals Rotherham Council created a new Employment Solutions team and used the Better Off Calculator from Policy in Practice. The tool was also integral to the council winning a South Yorkshire Financial Inclusion Award.

In just one week they helped 12 people into work or training. Since October 2020 over 300 people participated in the project, 200 of whom went into work or training. 50 young people were helped into work.

## The challenge of reducing poverty and homelessness during the pandemic

In 2020 the world changed drastically and many people experienced a significant income shock. Unemployment rose and more people turned to the social security system than ever before, many for the first time. In just twelve months the number of people who claimed Universal Credit doubled to six million across the UK.

Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council wanted to find innovative ways to offer preventative support to residents. Their aim was to reduce poverty and homelessness by supporting people with complex issues into training and employment opportunities.

## The implementation of a dedicated employment team sees employment figures rise

Rotherham Council established the Employment Solutions team with help from the European Social Fund (ESF) to support Rotherham's residents into education and employment. The support includes helping people access qualifications and education; providing technology such as tablets so that they can complete applications online, and offering coaching through the interview processes.

Rotherham Council's support goes beyond employment. They have taken an holistic approach to help people towards greater financial, mental and physical health.

“The Better Off Calculator is used as a motivational tool, as what better way is there to show someone how they can improve their situation by entering employment than by seeing that big difference as a financial figure?”

**Andy Johnson**  
Employment Support Officer  
Rotherham Metropolitan  
Borough Council

The team uses the Better Off Calculator to help deliver their nuanced preventative approach to poverty. The calculator shows customers if they are claiming all the support and benefits they are eligible for and, using graphs and clear visuals, gives a simple outline of the person's expenditure.

Using the built-in scenario modelling, Employment Solution officers can quickly show someone how their income and expenditure would change if they were to move into work.

The overall aim is to increase the money in their residents' pockets and help them to better employment opportunities.

### **Residents' health and wellbeing improved by the support of the Employment Solutions Team**

Since October 2020, the Employment Solutions Team has had over 300 participants on the project. In just one week they helped 12 people into work or training. Overall, by referring into Employment Solutions over 200 people have been supported into employment. The team have also been working with nearly 50 young people into new roles with the Better Off Calculator playing a pivotal role in helping them gain employment.

By using Policy in Practice's Better Off Calculator, Rotherham Council has been able to assist customers and motivate them into work and training. They have maintained excellent partnerships with DWP and resource the local Jobcentre with a daily Tenancy Support Officer who sees all new claims to Universal Credit, advising on advance payments and rent payments. They also have a Digital Support Assistant as well as a Debt Advice Officer.

Rotherham is very proud of the success the Better Off Calculator has had on people's lives. Many people are better off as a result of doing a benefit check, and they have improved their customer's health and wellbeing.

“The Better Off Calculator is vital to the success of sustaining tenancies, maximising income, helping people budget and supporting our customers into employment.

“The work we have done has led to tenancy sustainment and reduction in arrears. The calculator has supported us to set up a new Employment Initiative with wrap around support.”

**Glennis Leathwood, Employment Solutions Team Leader,  
Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council**