

ParentMail Sent on 28 October 2020

Helping Hand' – Buckinghamshire Council's commitment to children in need over half term

Sent on behalf of Gareth Drawmer, Head of Achievement & Learning

Dear Parents

Due to the unprecedented impact of COVID-19 this year, Buckinghamshire Council is supporting pupils who are eligible for benefits-related free school meals and are committed to ensure that no child in need goes hungry.

The council with our partners in the voluntary sector have already spent over £180,000 on food for families in need. In addition, we already have plans to develop a number of longer term programmes to assist the most vulnerable, with programmes aimed at early intervention, manage family finance and with £120,000 committed to schemes to help residents grow their own food, if they can, and learning how to cook healthy food on a low budget.

This autumn half term we want to ensure that families across Bucks, with children eligible for free school meals, know how to access the wide range of support that is available. Buckinghamshire has a strong voluntary and community sector which is active in supporting vulnerable families. Our 'Helping Hand' team can help direct people to the support that is right for them. This may be from the voluntary or community sector or direct from the council. If anyone is worried about food over half term, and not sure what help is available, please contact the council's 'Helping Hand' support line on 01296 395000, and someone will be 'on hand' to help you. This programme is funded by joint support from the Government's Hardship Fund provided to local councils over the summer and Buckinghamshire Council.

Martin Tett, Leader of the Council, said "We don't want any child in Buckinghamshire to go hungry this holiday. As a council we are committed to ensuring that does not happen. We know how fantastic our communities are with supporting each other during times of crisis, there is lots of local support available. We also know it isn't always that easy to know where to turn, so I would encourage anyone with a child who is eligible for free school meals and is worried, to contact us so we can ensure they can get access to the support they need. We are here and can offer that practical help, including links to supermarkets if needed too."