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website: www.jusmedia.co.uk/rotherhamreveal

EXCLUSIVE: supermarket's dirty secret on underpaying its staff

Staff pay was 30% below the minimum wage

SHAKTHI THYAGARAJAN
A former employee of a Rotherham town centre supermarket has accused the business of paying her less than the National Minimum Wage, claiming a manager told her "this is the norm here".

The employee, who wished to be anonymous and will be referred to as Jane, started working at Sprouts Supermarket on Wellgate in August this year as a cashier, when she was 17.

As well as being paid less than the legal minimum wage, she claimed cash shortfalls were taken out of her pay packet, and the stress of the job left her "crying all the time".

Jane, who is now 18, said: "I was told the salary will be £5 an hour on the day I went in for an interview and that it would increase with time if the managers thought I worked hard enough. It was only my second job so I didn't know it was illegal."

It was only after she checked the National Minimum Wage rates that she realised she was being underpaid. Anyone under 18 is entitled to be paid £5.28 an hour under the current rates, which increases to £7.49 an hour at age 18, and £10.24 at 23.

Jane turned 18 a week after she joined the business, and brought up the issue of pay with one of the managers then.

She claimed she was told her rate would not be increasing, and that "it's just what everyone here gets".

Jane alleged a manager, who has since left Sprouts, told her that her pay would only increase when managers saw that she was "working good".

Two other cashiers, both women well into their late twenties, were also paid £5 an hour, Jane claimed.

One, who had been working at Sprouts for a year, told Jane: "Don't expect them to increase your salary."

Jane claimed she was also told she would be paid partly in cash, with the rest sent to her by bank transfer, to "show the government we pay you".

If a customer's transaction didn't go through, due to a fault in the payment system it would be deducted from cashiers' salaries, Jane claimed.

The first time, £30 was deducted and Jane asked the manager why her salary was short. After the manager explained "that's just the way it is", she was given back £15 of the deduction.

She said: "I asked them to give me the copy of the



Sprouts Supermarket in Wellgate, Rotherham

unauthorised payment receipt but they kept delaying it, asking what I would do with it."

It was when it happened a second time, this time for £70, Jane decided she'd had enough.

"I was crying because I was so drained because of it. Because I do check, even

though they always say I make mistakes," she said.

In this instance, the money was not deducted after the customer returned to the store after noticing the payment had not gone through.

But due to the stress and upset of the incident, Jane felt she had to resign - just

seven weeks after starting work at the store.

On her last day, she confronted a manager about the salary issues.

She alleged she was told: "If you want to get paid the National Minimum Wage this isn't the place for you."

She claimed she is still

owed £175 by the supermarket.

The Reveal approached Sprouts Supermarket, and its parent company Golden Birmingham Ltd, and put all the allegations to them.

Manager Althaf Mohammad declined to comment, but said the member of the

management team Jane referred to in her allegations had since left the business.

A HMRC spokesperson said: "HMRC will always take action against employers who fail to meet their legal obligations, but it's really important that people who think they may be being underpaid report it."

Sheffield Wednesday and Rotherham United pay tribute to deceased 14-year old fan during match

LAWRENCE JUMA

Both football clubs held a minute of silence to pay their respects to the 14-year-old Sheffield Wednesday fan.

14-year-old Daisy Young passed away unexpectedly in October earlier this year.

Her family had discovered the young girl unresponsive in her room, just a few minutes after she had been recording TikTok videos.

Daisy's mother, Jane Young, 44, said: "[If I could speak to her now] I would

tell her how much I loved her, because the way she died, there's no answers."



Daisy Young

Mrs Young said: "Before she died she had been diagnosed over the phone with a viral throat infection.

"She was not majorly poorly and it had not concerned me as a parent because I did not think it was a serious matter.

"She had been to the hospital twice her whole life.

No stroke, no heart attack, just general things that they would go looking for."

Thousands of football

"[If I could speak to her now,] I would tell her how much I loved her, because the way she died, there's no answers."

fans and players of both teams stood in silence before their match at the Hillsborough Stadium on 29 October.

Mrs Young said doctors had requested on the emergency call that Daisy should be given pain relief medication to help deal with her throat infection.

She was then rushed to hospital, but doctors were unable to revive the teenager.

Daisy was one of nine siblings and had aspirations to work with

children. Her siblings struggled to cope with her loss as well.

Mrs Young said: "Her younger brothers are dealing with it slowly. They're going to have ups and downs once the funeral comes.

"We will have to deal with it in a different way and realise that is now closure," she said.

Daisy's family will have to wait to receive a postmortem examination that's hoped to reveal the cause of death.



Daisy Young

Latest Reveals

DRUGS: An independent investigation by the Reveal has found that hard drugs, including cocaine, ketamine and ecstasy are sold online on popular social media app, X, in plain sight, despite South Yorkshire Police's dedicated efforts to curb drug use within the borough.

NHS ABUSE: Staff at NHS Rotherham General Hospital were subject to physical and verbal abuse 135 times this year alone, with nurses affected the worst, as NHS South Yorkshire launches a 'zero tolerance' campaign. Abuse rates have picked up since the Covid-19 pandemic.

XL BULLY DOGS: As the nationwide ban on XL bully dogs threatens pet owners with possibly losing their dogs, a few have resorted to online sites to quickly sell them, with disastrous consequences. XL bully owners also face a higher risk of having their dog seized, statistics show.



Ian Rotherham

"We need to make space for water and for people, and those people need to know where and when the floods might happen"

CATCLIFFE FLOODS: Communities affected by the recent floods continue to struggle with the loss of their homes as the council hands out grants and tax exemptions. Environmentalist Ian Rotherham speaks out about the region's susceptibility to floods, and the urgent need to take action.

Today's Weather: 4°C mostly cloudy

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Full story: page 8

Full story: page 6

Full story: page 3

Full story: page 4



Nigerian artist celebrates Black History Month with tribute to his African heritage and culture

LAWRENCE JUMA

Bernard Oguru, 40, a freelance artist currently based in Rotherham, expressed his appreciation of Black History Month through a series of artworks at a local gallery.

It was the first of such an event to ever be held at the Third Space Gallery in Rotherham Market, a pop-up gallery that is hoping to engage the community with new forms of art.

Mr Oguru's interest in art began while he was still living back in his native country of Nigeria, where lots of his pieces were influenced by Pablo Picasso's cubist art style.

Mr Oguru said: "Each piece of my work has a

unique story behind it. Each addresses important issues in Africa and they also reveal my connected roots in Nigeria."

"My paintings are a window to showcase to the world what we have been through."

Various pieces of artwork that were shown during the exhibition were a fusion of different elements of his culture that

forms his identity.

Mr Oguru, who is part of the Society of Nigerian Artists in Nigeria, believes his work, which also incorporates realism as well as native textiles into portraits, symbolises the beauty of African culture and values.

Speaking of a painting of a woman with intricate earrings, Mr Oguru said: "Her vibrant colours illus-

trate what Africa is about and I wanted to express that through my painting.

"I also believe my drawings are a healer of our past and it is also a way of showing black struggles."

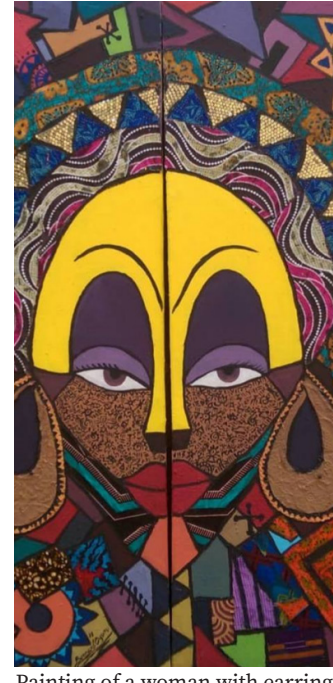
Black History Month has been observed in the UK since 1987 to increase awareness and appreciation for the contribution of people of African and Caribbean descent.

According to Mr Oguru, Black History Month is a 'recognition of black excellence as well as promoting black contributors within the UK'.

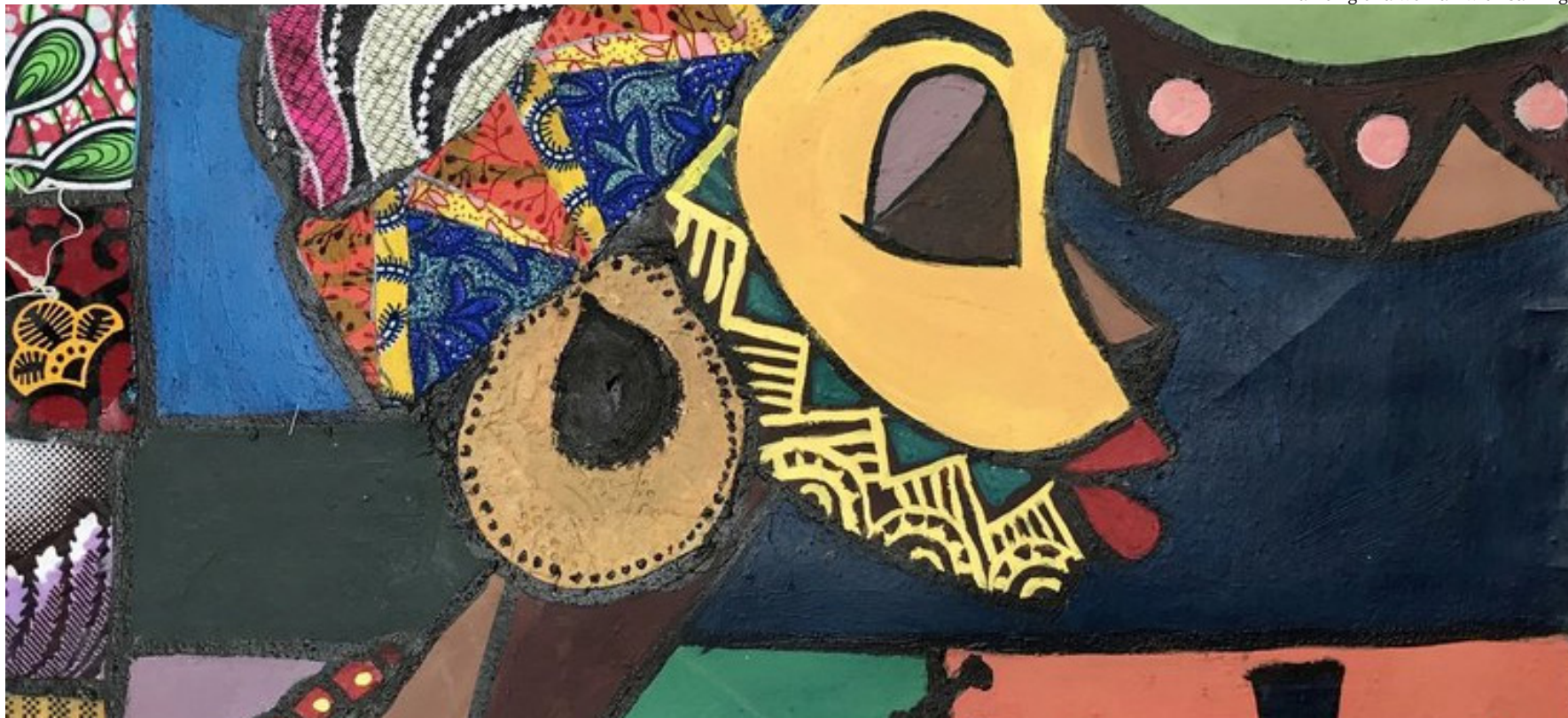
If you would like to see more of Mr Oguru's art, visit the Rotherham Reveal website.



Bernard Oguru



Painting of a woman with earrings



Painting of a woman's side profile, with African textiles mixed in

Council set to bring in stricter taxi regulations to protect the vulnerable after child sex scandal

LOUISE ARMSTRONG

Rotherham Borough Council has proposed changes to the Taxi and Private Hire Licensing Policy to increase levels of regulation to ensure passenger safety.

Changes to driver identification for ensured visibility, refresher training for drivers on safeguarding, improved vehicle signage to easily identify Rotherham licensed vehicles and DBS checks for staff working in taxi operators are included in the proposed changes to the licensing policy.

Councillor Micheal Bennett-Sylvester for the Dalton and Thrybergh ward said: "Following the Rotherham CSE scandal Rotherham is an area of ever-watchfulness.

"The proposal is a good practical set of measures and I particularly welcome making operators tell customers if they are to be sent an out-of-town registered car."

The proposal comes after concerns around taxi safety arose after the Jay Report found that criminals were using taxis to help commit atrocious crimes against young children.

The Jay Report, published in 2013, found "documents of children being violently raped, beaten, forced to perform sex acts in taxis and cars when they were being trafficked between towns, and serially abused by large numbers of men".

In 2015 another report conducted by Baroness Louise Casey, Member of the House of Lords, found that "Rotherham has not taken, and does not take, sufficient steps to ensure only fit and proper persons are permitted to hold a taxi licence.

"As a result, it cannot provide assurances that

the public, including vulnerable people, are safe," she had said.

However, taxi drivers in the borough feel the proposal is unfair on law-abiding citizens, stating profits and wages are on the line.

Dani Goldsmith, a taxi driver working in the Rotherham area said: "Drivers are self employed and all the costs add up and literally take food out of your mouth as you are having to cover overhead [costs] before making any profit.

"Rotherham Council have too many restrictions to make trade viable and

have a wage that can support your family.

"The trade needs to be profitable for drivers and the council needs to understand drivers' needs and concerns."

Sexual assault and rapes of taxi passengers have fallen drastically over the years, with reported incidents declining drastically between 2014 and 2018, and no reported incidents in the year 2018-2019, data obtained from South Yorkshire Police indicated.

Rotherham Council will be presenting the policy at the next cabinet meeting on Tuesday December 17.

Addressing childhood obesity with coaching

LAWRENCE JUMA

A charity worked with over 3000 children in the local area and provided 3000 hours of coaching in pursuit of healthier lifestyles over the past year.

Titans Community Foundation, founded in 2005, is a charity organisation that works with Rotherham Titans (RUF) with the aim of promoting rugby and healthy active lifestyles to children in primary schools.

Lindsay Jones, the Chair of Trustees at the foundation, 66, said: "We work with children who are essentially bottom of the pile, in that they are the most disadvantaged group of kids in society. This means they may not have the right environment to help maintain a healthy active lifestyle.

"We all know Rotherham has one of the highest rates of obesity amongst adults, not only in this region but probably in this country. We must protect our children and ensure the next generation do not fall into that category."

A 2020 report by Healthwatch Rotherham, an independent health advocacy group, found that 71.2% of

Rotherham is overweight or obese, 10% higher than the national average.

The Foundation offers a range of different activities, including educational programmes, which help them maintain a healthy and active lifestyle.

Mrs Jones said: "We often have children who are very eager to learn new skills that can help them later on when they decide to go to secondary school and further on.

"It's the main initiative we strive for since part of our organisation focuses on the sport rugby we have a good basis in terms of the level of activity we can offer.

"One of our rugby players is a qualified nutritionist who works with the charity and has designed an app which helps our children track what they eat alongside their activity levels."

According to Mrs Jones, the biggest challenge the group faced was finding an investor willing to donate enough money to run the activities and events.

Despite this, Mrs Jones is hopeful the foundation will be able to continue its work in the coming years.

Covid-19 reserve added to RothACS deficit

LAWRENCE JUMA

Activist Sammy Woodhouse has applauded the council's decision to fund the Rotherham Abuse Counselling Service (RothACS) after the charity lost out on a national bid.

On 20 November the council agreed in a cabinet meeting to use £170,000 of covid reserves to support RothACS, after the charity failed to win a Ministry of Justice's Rape and Sexual Abuse Support Fund (RSASF) that would've seen the charity injected with much needed aid to support its work.

Sammy Woodhouse, 38, a victim-turned-activist of the infamous Rotherham child sex abuse scandal, said: "It's a good move by the council. I've been advocating for years about the lack of funding and now we are getting some which is a step in the right direction for the community."

RothACS offers free specialist counselling to anyone over the age of 13 who've faced trauma and abuse, and the estimated funding shortfall of £40,000 could've meant a cut in these services.

Over the last year, the charity has served over 1203 residential homes in the community with their services, as well as conducted 860 assessments and 2,787 counselling sessions during this period, with 80% of clients reporting improved mental health and wellbeing.

Other regions in South Yorkshire, including Sheffield, Doncaster and Barnsley, were successful in their bids and collectively received £1 million to support their rape and abuse counselling services.

Speaking on the imbalance in grants received, Rotherham council leader Chris Read said: "The government's policy of making areas compete against each other for this sort of funding saw grants given to all our neighbouring authorities here in South Yorkshire while Rotherham again lost out."

With the council cash injection the charity will be able to sustain and potentially expand its vital services in its ongoing efforts to support survivors of abuse, a dire need in the borough given Rotherham's history with the child sexual exploitation scandal.

Ms Woodhouse was the first victim to shed light on the horrific abuse carried out against 1,400 young girls in Rotherham between 1997 to 2013 by Pakistani grooming gangs.

Since 2018, she has been campaigning to strip rapists of parental rights of children born out of rape. Her petition has received over 500,000 signatures and she hopes to get it through parliament.

Ms Woodhouse said: "I will continue to work towards changing the law and I hope my voice and my story will inspire other people who have gone through similar trauma."

Unlucky mother and daughter frustrated after duo's yard struck twice by same burglar, robbed of £300 riding boots

LUCY HAINSWORTH

A mum and daughter fell victim to the recent rise in Rotherham burglaries rates at their family yard in Braithwell, Rotherham.

Grace Wilson, 20, a freelance equestrian groom, recounted the events in which the burglar returned to their property twice in a month to steal a pair of £300 leather riding boots.

She said: "It has really scared me. I was there at 8.00pm by myself the second time and he was there just 15 minutes after.

"He was obviously watching me so I'm

constantly looking around to see if any lights come on or anything. It's horrible."

Miss Wilson said the man was on foot and didn't take anything else from the site after not being able to access their container.

He then made his way to another property in the village where he was seen carrying the boots and he was escorted off the site by the property owner.

Miss Wilson was also subject to theft on West Street in Sheffield City Centre earlier this year when her phone was stolen late at night.

Miss Wilson and her

family have put out a Facebook appeal about the two burglaries and stated they "desperately need a name" and a photo of the burglar.

Miss Wilson believed South Yorkshire Police neglected their case after cancelling her mother's interview after waiting 20 minutes in the station and finding no new information.

She said: "We've spent so much money putting new cameras up, putting new lights up and putting new locks on too.

"It's what we've had to do but you just think you

shouldn't have to, should you? It's been an absolute pain."

According to crime data analysis site CrimeRate, Rotherham's crime rate this year was 33% higher than the average national crime rate, and has risen to pre-COVID lockdown figures.

Rotherham's burglary rates have seen the greatest increase between 2021 and 2022 compared to the rates in the greater South Yorkshire area, CrimeRate data also indicated.

Both burglaries are still unsolved and the Wilson family have asked anyone with any information

to please contact South Yorkshire Police via their online portal or by dialling 101.

Alternatively, you can anonymously report information to Crime Stoppers on their website or phone number 0800 555 111.

“He was obviously watching me so I'm constantly looking around...It's horrible



Owners fear losing their pets as looming ban on XL bullies nears

HANNAH AULD

Lucy Peck, 19, reached down to stroke the 3 ft tall XL bully's head. A scar-ridden Enzo nuzzled it into the hip of his owner.

"He's the love of my life, I could never give him up," Peck said.

The teen was on her way to Cookes Pet Supplies, Rotherham, to purchase a muzzle for Enzo after being stopped by police the day before.

Miss Peck had adopted Enzo after he was involved in dog-fighting. Enzo's previous owners had him trained to guard drug stashes. Local police had noticed his heavily scarred muzzle whilst on a walk and prompted her to purchase a muzzle for him as soon as possible.

Miss Peck continued: "He isn't dangerous at all. I can't believe he will have to be muzzled."

Miss Peck is one of the many XL Bully owners terrified of losing her dog after Prime Minister Rishi Sunak called for a XL bully dog ban in England and Wales by the end of the year.

It was prompted after at least 10 fatalities, including three children, were recorded over the last few years due to attacks by XL bully dogs, as dangerous dog incidents continue to rise nationally and within South Yorkshire. Since 2019 over 700 dog attacks have

and the owners weren't bothered," Miss Peck said.

"You couldn't tell though; he is so gentle, he wouldn't hurt a soul."

By law, dogs can be removed for a number of reasons by police, including being an illegal breed. Four types of dog are already banned in the UK - the pit bull terrier, Japanese tosa, dogo Argentino and the fila Brasileiro. Whilst the XL bully will not be considered a 'banned breed' until 2024, they can be removed if there is reason to suspect they may be displaying 'aggressive behaviour'.

A Freedom of Information (FOI) request put to South Yorkshire police by the Rotherham Reveal found that 21 American XL Bully dogs had been seized in the area since July 2023 alone, which was around one every week.

It also found that the number of dogs seized from the Rotherham area had almost quadrupled, from 79 in 2020 to 312 in 2023, with Staffordshire Bull Terriers and XL bullies being the breeds to most likely be removed.

In the same FOI request it was also revealed that dog-related crime had almost doubled in the area since 2020, with 88 incidents in 2020 to 151 in 2023. Crimes ranged from assault with injury, to the dog owner allowing the animal to be dangerously out of control in a public place.

Environment Secretary Thérèse Coffey said: "We are taking quick and decisive action to protect the public from tragic dog attacks and today I have added the XL Bully type to the list of dogs prohibited under the Dangerous Dogs Act."

"It will soon become a criminal offence to breed, sell, advertise, rehome or abandon an XL Bully type dog. We will continue to work closely with the police, canine and veterinary experts, and animal welfare groups, as we take forward these important measures."

Miss Peck expressed her anger at the government's decisions: "I am absolutely disgusted. It's nothing to do with the dog, it's all on the owner."

"If Enzo can be beaten

“*He is so gentle, he wouldn't hurt a soul.*”

and still be so kind, then it's nothing to do with the dog," she said.

Although the proposed ban will only take effect on 31 December, pet shops

across the country have already felt the knock-off effects of it.

Gemma Parker, 21, manager of Cookes Pet Supplies, explained that the sales of muzzles had skyrocketed recently.

"We have sold a lot more muzzles, way more than usual," Miss Parker said.

When asked about the new law, Miss Parker echoed Miss Peck's concerns: "It's heartbreaking. Last week someone came in with a heavily pregnant XL bully and it's likely these puppies will be put down if they cannot be rehomed in time."

In due course it will

also be illegal to own one of these dogs without the exemption.

Miss Peck can't imagine a scenario worse than this: "He's my life."

Other XL bully owners share Miss Peck's worries. TikTok influencer Saif Afzal, whose XL bully Pablo is an internet sensation, has been vocal about his criticism of the proposed ban.

His videos, which have amassed millions of views, document Pablo's journey as a puppy to a fully grown XL bully and have received comments like 'I want one' and 'I can't wait to get one'. Owners are so desperate



Saif Afzal with his pet XL bully, Pablo

to rehome their soon to be banned pets that they turn online as a last resort.

'Freeads', the popular pet rehoming site, were found to be running 114 puppy and dog adverts, within 5 miles of Rotherham. 14 of these were XL/American Bullies, including Enzo.

Across the UK, XL bully ads make up 4% of total dog sales according to the research performed on the site in mid-October.

However, in Rotherham, the sales have sky-rocketed. 10% of online dog adverts in Rotherham are for soon-to-be banned XL Bullies.

Other sites seemed to boast a large number of adverts for XL/American Bullies as well. 'Pets4homes' saw 9% of the 104 ads being the particular breed.

On 23 October, South Yorkshire Police released a statement, urging the public to avoid buying the dogs online.

Dog Legislation Officer PC Paul Jameson said: "If you're looking to get a new dog, please consider rehoming from a reputable centre or a genuine seller."

"You are more likely to be bitten or injured by a dog you know, either in your own home, or that of a family member or friend."

Just a few days prior, a woman was attacked by a XL bully-type dog in her home in Mexborough, in front of her children, after getting the dog for free off of the internet.

The dog was subsequently removed from the property.

PC Jameson said: "Sellers online are not always honest about a dog's history and behaviour and do not have yours or your family's best interests at

heart, which can have devastating, even fatal consequences."

In response to the changing laws, the RSPCA are urging current owners not to worry if XL Bullies do receive a ban, pointing out that an exemption scheme allows owners who prove to the court that their dogs are not a danger to the public to add their pets to the Index of Exempted Dogs."

Under this scheme, owners will have to pay £92.40 to apply for the certificate of exemption and third party insurance may be required. Owners will also need to ensure that their dog is microchipped and neutered, as well as being leashed and muzzled in a public place.

Owners like Miss Peck have until 31 January 2024 to apply for a Certificate of Exemption to be registered on the Index of Exempted Dogs. Further information is to be released by the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) on how to apply.

“*It's heartbreaking. Last week someone came in with a heavily pregnant XL bully and it's likely these puppies will be put down if they cannot be rehomed in time.*”



Enzo, Lucy Peck's XL bully

“*He isn't dangerous at all. I can't believe he will have to be muzzled.*”

been recorded.

Although the public at large is in favour of the ban, the owners of these XL bullies are dismayed at the prospect of losing their furry friends.

"I rescued him. Other dogs used to pick on him

Free bookshop raises over £11,000 amid town's declining literacy rates

HANNAH AULD

A free bookshop in Rotherham Town Centre has hit an £11,000 fundraising milestone after three years of being open in an effort to combat Rotherham's literacy crisis.

The Global Educational Trust's (GET) free bookshop was opened in September 2020 in response to the historically low literacy rates in Rotherham.

According to the council's Data Hub, only 59% of Rotherham Primary School children reached the expected standard for education, including literacy targets, a decrease



GET bookstore volunteers pictured with MP Sarah Champion (in red jacket)

from 2017 where the average was 61%.

Sheila Etches, 70, lead volunteer, expressed how grateful she was for the support of the community.

Ms Etches said: "It's thanks to the generous contributions. It is good for Rotherham as [the borough] has not got the best reputation."

A large number of Rotherham alumni including Councillor Chris Read and Rotherham MP Sarah Champion have praised the GET bookshop thanks to the success of the project.

Furthermore, the project

also promotes reading for adults, boasting a large variety of literature for the community to read, which can be taken to keep from the library free of charge.

Ms Etches said the team are continuing to raise money: "We are well on our way to raising £12,000."

"We are doing so well. The atmosphere is really friendly. It's become a bit of a hub and now we have got out tables for the children as well as the elderly, to come in and have a natter."

GET bookstore is located on College Walk, Rotherham and is open to the public on weekdays.



Free books at GET bookstore



“Are we going to flood? That's not a about before you go to bed,” - anger

HANNAH AULD

8-year-old William Green still wakes up with nightmares of his house in Catcliffe flooding. Now forced to live in a caravan, his mother, Alice Green, 35, is not sure if she can promise her son safety. On Friday 17 October, the Environment Agency had issued flood warnings after persistent rainfall caused by Storm Babet had caused the River Rother to rise to dangerously high levels - highest that's ever been recorded. Five amber flood warnings were issued, with warnings in areas in Catcliffe predicted to be of medium risk of flooding.

“I came back an hour later and the water was up the street. After another two, the water was up to our waists.”

Less than 24 hours later, Green was awoken by her neighbour shouting for her to get out of the house. Green was one of the 250 people forced to flee their homes after the River Rother burst its banks. Green was asleep at her home on Orgreave Drive when the chaos had started to set in. “It was six in the morning when I heard our neighbours' doorbell ring. I thought it was weird I could hear her door so early. I stuck my head out of the

window and heard a man shouting about flooding on Orgreave Road. He told us we needed to pack a bag and to leave as soon as possible.”

Green and her husband, Chris, were out of the house within the hour. Upon leaving their sons with relatives first, the couple returned to assess the damage.

Green said: “We got the kiddies out at seven. I came back an hour later and the water was up the street. It only took two hours to reach us. After another two, the water was up to our waists.”



Furniture left broken and damp at an elderly woman's house

Although Storm Babet caused water levels to rise across much of South Yorkshire and the rest of the country, the Catcliffe and Treeton area in Rotherham was the worst hit.

Around 250 properties were evacuated in Catcliffe. Water levels at the River Rother were recorded to be at 30.53 metres according to the Environment Agency - the highest that's ever been recorded.

Since the water level was too high to drive safely, let alone walk, the emergency services were dispatched to help residents reach safety. Firefighters,

“He told us we needed to pack a bag and to leave as soon as possible.”

in their bright yellow hard hats and jackets, were seen ferrying people from their homes to the Memorial Hall on equally yellow inflatable dinghys.

At a few houses, residents were seen hoisting themselves onto the dinghys through their windows as the water level had risen past their front doors.

Over the next few days, the Catcliffe Memorial Hall transformed itself into the clean-up effort's base camp, where council officers and community groups, such as RotherFed, Voluntary Action Rotherham and Citizen's Advice talked distressed families through the next steps.

An urgent call out for supplies to hand out to those evacuated saw the Memorial Hall pile up with carrier bags full of food, clothing and other necessities.

Meanwhile, outside by the frontlines, crews dispatched by the Environment Agency were busy pumping the water away from residential areas. By 23 October, all the water had been finally pumped away - but that was only the first hurdle crossed.

As the water ebbed away, it left behind dark patches that rose two thirds of the way of houses, an ominous sign of the damage water is capable of.

River water had seeped through the carpet floors, so every step within the



Damp patches on the bricks indicating

house was followed by a faint squelch. Paint on wainscoting had chipped, and wooden furniture was left bloated, full of water.

Specialised cleaning teams were at site to help with clearing the battered furniture and other household items. 36 skips, delivered to the neighbourhood, quickly filled up over the days as the clean up continued - 11 tonnes of waste was estimated to have been thrown away.

Travel South Yorkshire operated a shuttle bus service to help the community stay connected to each other until all roads were finally opened and safe to travel on again on 27 October.

South Yorkshire's Community Foundation have

estimated that 165 homes in the borough had faced damage, with Catcliffe being at the heart of it. Homeowners in the area are estimated to have incurred over £17,000 worth of repair costs, with the figures expected to climb, according to the charity.

On 26 October, 5 days after the floods, Rotherham Council announced it would be giving a grant of £350 to all households affected by the floods.

South Yorkshire's Community Foundation had also set up an emergency fundraiser just days after disaster struck to support locals who had been affected by the floods.

However, after criticism was levelled at the council, a further £150 was added

to the initial grant through a £20,000 donation by the council to the South Yorkshire's Community Founda-

“It's our first home. It's where our children were born.”

Devastating floods were 'entirely p

HANNAH AULD

Rotherham is naturally prone to flooding due to having two rivers running through it, explains Professor Ian Rotherham, a retired environmental geography lecturer and campaigner.

“If you look at the whole catchment [area], the top is rooted in the Pennines and the water gathers pace as it rushes downhill, so when the volume of water builds and builds and when the water hits Rotherham, it's catastrophic,” he said.

The River Rother meets the River Don in the centre of Rotherham's settlement, so when both rivers converge water levels are high.

On 18 October, Storm Babet arrived in the UK and brought heavy rains with

“We need to make space for water and for people, and those people need to know where and when the floods might happen again, and what can be done to limit the damage

it - 84mm of rainfall was measured to have fallen in South Yorkshire in just one day, which caused the River Don to swell.

Continuous rainfall over the next few days resulted in floods across the county, with the tiny village of Catcliffe in Rotherham hit the hardest.

Catcliffe, and the greater Rotherham area, previously experienced devastating flooding in 2007 and 2019.

Professor Rotherham explained that urbanisation and climate change are to blame for the frequency and severity of floods across the country.

“They [the floods] were entirely predictable,” Professor Rotherham said.

“They have been predicted because of urbanisation and climate change.” Urbanisation, and the

resulting development of settlements, increases surface run-off, where rainfall runs off concrete and tarmac instead of seeping into the soil to be stored.

Climate change is also making the UK wetter. October this year, when Storm Babet hit, has been the wettest month ever recorded since daily rainfall measurements began in 1838.

“We need to make space for water and for people, and those people need to know where and when the floods might happen again, and what can be done to limit the damage,” Professor Rotherham said.

Professor Rotherham is also an advocate and advisor for “Slow the Flow”, a national campaign to educate the public on natural flood management and sustainable drainage systems.



Ian Rotherham

question you should have to worry after Catcliffe streets flooded again



the levels to which the water had risen

tion.

A few weeks later, in November the council announced it had set aside £167,000 in grants to be distributed to all the families affected, with the additional promise of another £500 provided by the Central Government as part of a national funding scheme.

In addition to the £1000 affected households will receive in grants, they are also exempt from paying council tax from 21 October until at least 31 March next year to relieve the financial burden on them.

As of 12 December, the charity had raised over £28,000 of its £30,000 target.

Green refused to comment on the council's support.

"We are on the better end of things. We started our restoration work early. As soon as we flooded we ripped out all of the damp. We will probably be out of the caravans first," she said.

Others have not been as lucky. An landlord of a nearby property, who did not wish to be named, explained that their tenants had chosen to leave the property and they had no choice but to cancel the contract.

The landlord said: "The council have done about 80% of what they needed to do. I am left to clear the house myself."

Despite having been forced out of her own home, Green had been busy helping her neighbours in the initial days

when the situation was at its worst, one of whom was an elderly woman whose recently deceased husband was heavily dependent on medical equipment.

"She's an elderly woman on her own. The council contractors have only ripped out a few units, so the damp in her house is rising. She lost her husband last year and had he still been here, there's no way she would have gotten her husband's equipment out in time," Green said.

A lot of residents in the area were reluctant to speak to us. A lot of them were also furious at having their properties destroyed yet again.

The River Rother, eponymous to the borough, had burst its banks and

released torrents of murky rainwater in 2007, which saw over 700 villagers evacuated from Catcliffe.

12 years later, after prolonged rainfall, water levels at the River Don peaked and resulted in the Catcliffe area, among others, flooding again. 48 families were evacuated, local transport services were interrupted and cars were seen floating down flooded roads.

So severe was the impact in 2019 that it

“

The council have done about 80% of what they needed to do. I am left to clear the house myself.

prompted the council into action - a £270 million plan to address the wider South Yorkshire region's flood risk, and also climate change challenges, was devised.

The '6 Priority Flood Alleviation Schemes' will consist of the Rotherham to Kilnhurst Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Parkgate & Rawmarsh Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Whiston Brook Flood Alleviation Scheme, the Eel Mires Dike Flood Alleviation Scheme at Loughton Common, the Catcliffe Permanent Pumping Station and the Culvert Renewal Programme.

Also known as the 'living plan' (since the plan is expected to evolve as the team researches), construction of all six schemes is expected to start in 2025, subject to funding.

Speaking of the scheme when it was first announced, then mayor of South Yorkshire, Dan Jarvis MP had said: "After the devastating floods across South Yorkshire, I fought for government funding to protect us from a repeat of the scenes we saw in 2019 - securing £80 million which has helped towards the launch of today's flood catchment plan to protect the region.

"This 'living plan' will continue to evolve based on what we learn over the coming months and years, but it will always ensure that we protect homes and businesses across South Yorkshire from the devastating impact of flooding," he said.

However, this isn't without its shortcomings.

Funding the schemes has been an issue since day 1, and one that still hasn't been fulfilled - £36.5 million is still needed to fund the £52 million the plan requires.

Clearly, there is still a long way to go before the council can confidently assure families like Green that they will never have to scramble out of their beds at the crack of dawn. It is uncertain when all the residents will be able to move back into their homes, or whether they might be evacuated again. Amidst all this uncertainty, Green is optimistic that her family will return to their property soon.

Green said: "We are reluctant to jump ship. It's our first home. It's where our children were born."

[Other photos and videos can be found online at our website: www.jusmedia.co.uk/rotherhamreveal]



Highway Maintenance were at the scene helping residents clear up



A skip full of water-damaged items

'unpredictable', according to environmentalist



Professor Rotherham pictured with BBC Yorkshire weatherman Paul Hudson

He said: "If you can slow the flow even by a little bit, it could prevent the whole catchment from overflowing."

“

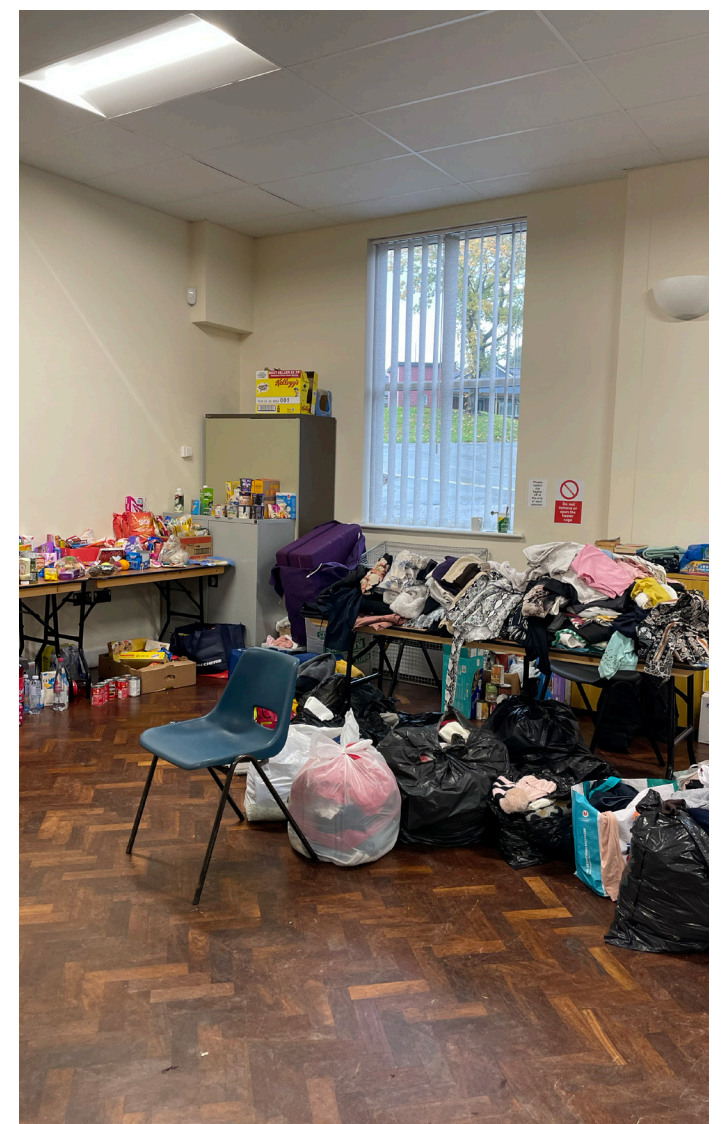
Water gathers pace as it rushes downhill, so when the volume of water builds and builds and when the water hits Rotherham, it's catastrophic.

"When Fishlake in Doncaster flooded [during the 2019 floods], the banks burst at night and it was like a tsunami."

Since the disastrous 2019 floods, Rotherham Council introduced its 'Six Priority Flood Alleviation Schemes', which will include creating new and strengthening existing flood defences, bridge works, public realm improvement works and wetland creation along a 4km reach of the River Don, plus similar works at Kilnhurst.

However, difficulties in securing funding to finance the schemes has prevented any progress since the plan was first announced.

Another £36.5 million is still needed before the council can approve construction on any of the scheme.



Emergency food and other supplies piled up at Catcliffe Memorial Hall



Gravediggers' salaries increased by 30%

SHAKTHI THYAGARAJAN

Gravedigger strikes in Rotherham were cancelled as cemetery staff accepted a new pay offer put forward by their employer.

Staff received their new real living wage (£10.90 per hour), plus 20p since 25 October. Weekend and bank holiday pays also doubled from £20 to £40.

The pay offer will be in place for the next two years.

UNISON, one of the UK's largest trade unions, said in a press release: "The agreed pay rise means the lowest-paid workers will see their salary increase by almost 30% over the two-year period."

The privately-employed gravediggers of Glendale Grounds Maintenance were previously paid around £1,100 less annually than their council-employed counterparts, UNISON Yorkshire and Humberside had revealed.

UNISON Rotherham branch secretary, Ruth Askwood, said: "Workers have stood up for themselves and got the result they wanted."

"It means they can now concentrate on doing the job they care passionately about – and will get a fair wage for doing it."

UNISON Yorkshire and Humberside regional organiser Dan Wood said: "This is a fantastic outcome for staff who were sick of missing out simply because they're employed by a private company rather than the council."

Strikes that were initially postponed to take place in October and November were called off as a result of the new pay offer.

Clear majority: Labour secure by-election

HANNAH AULD

After tallying the totals of the election, Labour continued to hold the Kilnhurst & Swinton East Ward area with a 64.6% majority.

Nigel Harper from the Labour party, was elected to be the councillor for the area after he gained 810 votes. The majority was overwhelming, with Conservative candidate Patricia Collins coming second with less than double – only 293 votes.

The candidates were announced on the 6 October 2023 and include: Patricia Anita Collins (Local Conservatives), John Richard Gelder (Liberal Democrats), Nigel Harper (Labour), Peter Key (Yorkshire Party), Paul Neville Martin (Green Party) and Adam Wood (Reform UK).

The election was called after former Labour councillor Stuart Sansome resigned. The retired steelworker was first elected for the old Swinton ward in 2014 and after nine years, was told he was not to be re-elected to represent the Labour party for the next Rotherham elections in 2024.

The remainder of the votes were sparsely distributed between Reform UK (4.6%), The Yorkshire Party (3%), The Liberal Democrat Party (2.4%) and The Green Party (2%).

Smoking cost the economy £80 million in deaths, illness

LAWRENCE JUMA

Unemployment, reduced productivity and smoking-related deaths cost the local economy £81.3 million, a council review found.

Councillor David Roche, cabinet member for adult social care and health revealed that smoking resulted in economic loss, including £30.4 million in productivity levels, £43 million in smoking-related unemployment and £7.9

million in smoking-related deaths.

In the Tobacco Control Review commissioned by the Rotherham Borough Council, smoking was listed as "the single greatest contributor to the total burden of disease in Rotherham".

Rotherham's Tobacco Control Work Plan aims to see the city smoke-free (when 5% or less of adults

smoke) by 2030, in line with the government's smokefree ambition.

Councillor Roche said: "We're set to miss the 2030 target which will mean Rotherham will have the highest smoking prevalence in South Yorkshire."

"We need to change and need to refocus our targets."

16.9% of Rotherham adults were smokers in

2021, compared to the 13% national average.

According to the report, the current projections estimated smoking prevalence in Rotherham to be 10.2% by 2030, more than double the national aim.

As such, reallocation of funds, among other things, were recommended in order to address the issue but its effectiveness were questioned.

Tyler Ewens, 21, a local, said of the recommendations: "It does not completely fix the issue. Instead it raises the probability of drug use within our community."

"Smoking helps me concentrate when I'm doing long hours of work. I'm not addicted but I'm definitely not open to switching to vaping," he said.

Councillor Roche said:

"Investment in tobacco control is highly cost effective. Every pound spent on smoking cessation services is estimated to deliver a £10 saving in future health care cost."

Rotherham Council's investments into tobacco control include the 'Quit for Good' programme, which aims to encourage as well as the 'Stop the Start' campaign.

Abuse against NHS staff poses challenge to future medics

HANNAH AULD & SHAKTHI THYAGARAJAN

Around 135 incidents of pabuse towards NHS Rotherham staff were recorded over the last year, the Reveal can say.

Staff at the Rotherham General Hospital were subject to a range of abuse, including physical, verbal and sexual harassment over the last 12 months.

A student medic at the University of Sheffield, experienced this abuse firsthand while they were on placement at the hospital.

The student, who wished to remain anonymous, explained they faced daily verbal abuse from

"One member told me that a patient had once tried to hit them because they were so drunk. It's not okay."

patients: "My placement was in Rotherham. I knew it had a bad reputation but I had no idea until I began working,"

they said.

"I'm thankful I did not receive much abuse, only what I consider to be part of the job, but it still made me dread going to work. People can be blunt and rude but I think because I was a student, they were nicer to me," the student said.

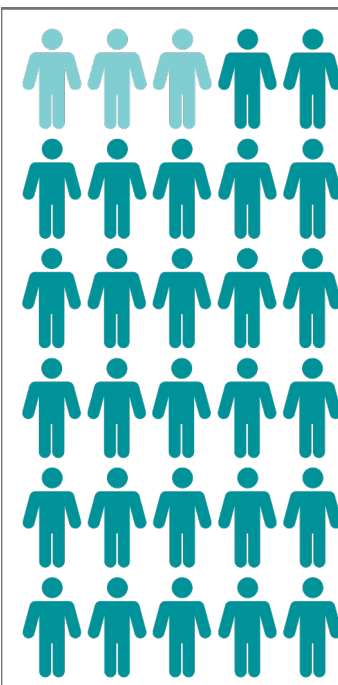
"I would hear awful stories in the staff-room however. One member told me that a patient had once tried to hit them because they were so drunk. It's not okay," they said.

NHS South Yorkshire launched a public campaign earlier this month to advocate a zero tolerance to abuse towards their staff.

'#NotInADaysWork', backed by South Yorkshire Police, plans to support primary care staff across the region by putting a stop to aggressive and abusive behaviour from patients and members of the public.

UK's largest trade union UNISON's Yorkshire and Humberside's regional organiser Sarah Brummitt said: "These figures are truly alarming. UNISON's priority is to make sure the NHS is safe for both patients and staff."

"NHS workers do an incredibly stressful, pressurised job. They should not have to go into work worried about being assaulted," she said.



1 out of 30 staff working at Rotherham General Hospital were physically abused this year



A man charging his electric vehicle at a carpark charging point.

£365k plan for EV charging stations

Seven new EV charging stations, requiring £365k investment, is on the table as council strives towards net-zero status by 2040

LAWRENCE JUMA

Rotherham Council have taken steps towards a greener future with the expansion of electric charging points as part of its 'forward programme'.

Rotherham Council has proposed plans to develop seven new charging stations costing £365k in a move targeted to helping the city to be more sustainable by 2025.

Councillor Dominic Beck said: "One of our main aims is to make sure the availability of EV charges is expanded across the borough so we have been making great progress, we have over 40 charging points and we hope to net zero by 2040."

The seven sites include

Greenlands Park in North Aston, Clifton Park in Doncaster Road, Laburnum Parade in Maltby, Greensborough Library, Kiveton Park Library, Main Street in Rotherham and Maltby Customer Service Centre.

In a council report, there were plans to add new charging stations as well as improve the existing stations.

David Allan, 59, a Rotherham resident, said: "I believe the commitment the council is making towards adding more electric charging points is crucial to moving away from internal combustion engines."

"I own a Polestar and compared to the running cost of a regular diesel car, it is night and day," he said.

Not only will the proposed stations be the next step to expanding the region's electric vehicle infrastructure, it will also support the council's plans to combat climate change.

In a study conducted by the council, 80% of respondents of fossil fuel vehicle drivers would be more likely to consider transitioning to an EV if public off-road charging points were available in their local area.

Approximately third of the respondents said they don't have a suitable place to charge their electric vehicle during the day, and 80% of them said they will use public off-road carpark charging points if it were available.

If it is approved, construction at sites all will be completed by 2025.

The South Yorkshire Combined Mayoral Authority (SYMCA) has been allocated funds from the central government's 'Getting Building Fund', totalling £1.8 million to develop electric vehicle infrastructure in the region.

Along with part of the SYMCA's allocated funds, the council will also use external grant funding acquired through the Clean Air Zone (CAZ) scheme, and its capital allocation.

Although £365,000 has been estimated in the proposal, it's subject to change according to grid connection costs of each of the seven locations.

'Rotherham Gary' celebrates four years of spreading joy

HANNAH AULD

Retired gardener turned 'agony aunt' has celebrated his fourth year spreading motivational morning tweets to raise awareness for mental health.

Gary Hellemen, 60, has been posting a "Good Morning Rotherham" every day of the week from his home in East Dene since 2019.

Mr Hellemen said: "I have got lived experience of mental health problems

and I think looking after mental health is important."

"It gives me a sense of happiness. I don't want people to suffer in silence. I try to help people, tell them to take care and look after themselves."

Mr Hellemen's following began to climb after he posted about the passing of his mother, May, on 28 September 2023.

"When I lost my mum, I had around 300 followers. The next day, after tweeting about it, I had gained a lot more and had almost 1200 likes on the post.

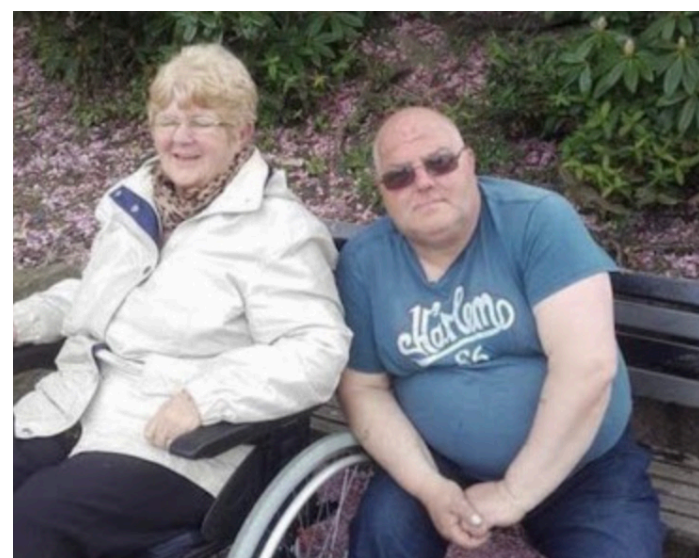
"It's my way of putting a bit of cheer on people's lives in the morning and obviously other people enjoy it too."

His motivational tweets to the Rotherham com-

munity include wishing the residents a "Marvellous Monday" or a "Wonderful Wednesday".

Hellemen volunteers as a lived experience researcher at local schools and universities in his spare time and he also frequently responds to Twitter DM's.

He said: "It gives me a sense of happiness. I don't want people to suffer in silence. I try to help people, tell them to take care and look after themselves. I was like an agony aunt at first but it's a brilliant help."



Gary Hellemen pictured with his mother, May Rotherham



The Museum of the Moon: an outer space artistic experience

KUSHA SINGH

Over 4,000 visitors flocked to see a 'moon replica' art exhibition installed at the Rotherham Minster.

Artist Luke Jerram's 'Museum of the Moon' art installation attracted thousands of visitors while on display at the Rotherham Minster between 18 and 30 November.

Rotherham Minster had its doors wide open to the public, offering free viewing and accepting school visits over the two weeks.

FLUX Rotherham, a local NGO that promotes culture and creativity, and Rotherham Minster had partnered together to host Jerram's installation.

Helen Jones, director of FLUX Rotherham said: "This will be a fantastic couple of weeks for the town. I'm really looking forward to welcoming thousands of people to this free event, offering something truly out of this world in their hometown."

The Reverend Canon Phil Batchford of Rotherham Minster said: "We are delighted to be able to partner with Flux Rotherham and host the Museum of the Moon at Rotherham Minster.

"We are passionately committed to the life and regeneration of our town and hope this will in some way contribute to that."

Living in the UK but working internationally, Mr Jerram creates artworks at all scales that are known to deliver messages and inspire communities to often recognise 'challeng-

ing concepts'.

The Museum of the Moon is one of Mr Jeram's most successful projects to catch the public's imagination and has been displayed 300 times in 30 different countries.

Measuring 7 metres in diameter, each centimetre of the internally lit spherical sculpture represents 5 kilometres of the moon's surface.

Surround sound composition crafted by the esteemed BAFTA and Ivor Novello award-winning composer, Dan Jones, was also part of the exhibition experience.

In addition, the exhibition showcased high resolution NASA imagery of the lunar surface.

Sophie Ellingham, Children's Capital of Culture Festival Maker and Project Lead for Flux Rotherham said: "Bringing the 'Museum of the Moon' art installation to Rotherham is an incredible opportunity for us.

"Having the opportunity to showcase and plan amazing installations such as this one in our town has been an incredible experience for me, and I can't wait to see the public's reaction," Ms Ellingham said.

During its stay in Rotherham, the Museum of the Moon was suspended inside the 55m high tower of the Rotherham Minster.

Following the official public launch, a number of organisations had also coordinated to provide a diverse range of activities and programmes, including yoga sessions and introductions to the thriving local artistic community.



Artist Luke Jerram's 'Museum of the Moon' installation at the Rotherham Minster.

£9m loss to affect the homeless

HANNAH AULD

Increased numbers of homeless people and inflation have left Rotherham with a £9m budget deficit to support them in the coming financial year, despite the council's plans to save.

In the last two years, Rotherham has seen a 46% rise in homelessness cases. A report showed that the council dealt with around 130 new cases of homelessness every month so far this year, almost double the amount of cases in 2021.

Rotherham council's financial reports show the deficit is largely due to increased pressures surrounding children and adult social care, rising food costs for school catering, increased demand for homelessness services and rising property costs.

Will Wylclck, a council spokesperson said: "The Rotherham council plans to look at the issue from all possible angles to be able to eradicate it for good which is why we believe our revised plan will bring desirable outcomes"

In response, the council has attempted to mitigate homelessness with Rotherham's Homelessness Prevention, an early intervention and support scheme and the rough sleeper strategy.

However, to continue the scheme and similar intervention programmes, the council say they will have to use their financial reserves to cover costs for 2023/24, and potentially for 2025/26.

The recent floods, caused by Storm Babet, has only worsened the issue. The Council have said that they "are trying to make sure everyone has a roof over their heads" but the budget cut could be an issue in the upcoming months.

If you see anyone in the local borough you are concerned about please contact the Rotherham Council Homelessness Team.

Adoption agency celebrates their one-year commitment to helping children find homes

LAWRENCE JUMA

'One Adoption' celebrated their one year anniversary of helping children be assigned to their correct adoption homes in October.

Michael Richards, 63, service manager for the agency said: "We had over 59 children that were trying to find new families. We successfully managed to allocate a good amount of children to new and safe homes."

“Some children may encounter difficulties in their past lives due to poor parenting

The agency is in partnership with councils across South Yorkshire, including Rotherham Council, and together they work to support children who are in need of finding a new home.

One Adoption operates within three regions - the North and Humber, South Yorkshire and West Yorkshire.

Each agency works closely with the local authority to ensure families and children are correctly placed in the right homes.

Mr Richards said: "The court makes a placement holder and from that point they want us to have a child move in with their adopted families within that time gap."

Children in need have typically been away from their families or separated from their birthplace from an early age, according to Mr Richards.

Due to their start in life,

most children with adoption plans carry a certain level of care and attention that will need to be met by the agency.

Mr Richards further added: "Some children may encounter difficulties in their past lives due to poor parenting and that is why the aim is to bring national attention to the need for adoptive parents to come forward for the children that we're trying to find new families."

When the children are adopted the agency highly recommends that they stay in good contact with their birth families with several benefits being highlighted by the agency. Some of these benefits are to build their self-esteem, help with their identity and to support these children.

Mr Richards said: "Each child has their own unique contact plan that we make for them which is in accordance to their situation,

adopted children often share a strong curiosity over the identity of their parents and our job is to

find them a new home not to stop them from knowing who they are and where they came from."



Couple with their adopted child (image credit: One Adoption)

'Reclaim The Night' event returns to educate

HANNAH AULD

Rotherham-based women's charity 'Apna Haq' saw over 100 people attend their 'Reclaim the Night' event, aimed to raise awareness against gender based violence.

The evening kicked off with a march through Rotherham Town Centre at 6pm, 23 November, and was followed by refreshments and inspiring speakers at the Ministry Pavilion.

Chief Executive of the event, Zlakha Ahmed, 63, expressed her delight at the success of the event.

Mrs Ahmed said: "We were very excited to have received the draft of the programme. We were immensely grateful for the contributions."

'Apna Haq', which translates to 'Our Right' in Urdu, supports black and minority ethnic (BME) women and girls in Rotherham who are victims of any form of violence, including domestic

violence.

Rotherham notoriously struggles with domestic-based and gender violence. According to the Safer Rotherham Partnership, domestic abuse crimes accounted for 18% of offences reported in Rotherham in 2020-2021 alone.

Mrs Ahmed said: "We have worked hard to raise the profile of Apna Haq as we are independently funded, instead of funded through the council."

Rotherham held its first Reclaim the Night in 2015 and the event has continued for the last eight years.

Councillor Emma Hoddinott said: "Part of the event is to meet in the town centre and 'reclaim the streets' to highlight how they should be safe for all.

Mrs Ahmed said: "The 16 days of Action is such an important movement, particularly for the women of Rotherham."



“We know what oppression feels like”: human rights activists call for a ceasefire on Gaza war

KUSHA SINGH & HANNAH AULD

Hundreds stood to protest the continued bombing in Gaza, outside Rotherham Town Hall on 26 November. The planned protest was hosted by Sheffield's Solidarity group and took place with over 200 attendees and included speakers and performers.

Labour Councillor Taiba Yaseen, who spoke at the event, expressed her disgust at the lack of parliamentary action. She said: “All people of colour know this. We know what oppu-

“*We know our history of imperialism, we know what it feels like when someone on the map draws squiggly lines and says just get on with it.*”

tion feels like. We know what oppression feels like.”

“We know our history of imperialism, we know what it feels like when someone on the map draws squiggly lines and says just get on with it.”

This protest came in the wake of results from the SNP's motion held on the 15 November, which called for a ceasefire. Rotherham MP Sarah Champion was one of the 125 MPs who had voted against the continued support of Israel.

Rotherham Councillor Firas Miro, spoke at the event, representing the Jewish Community in Rotherham. He said: “They have used anti-semitism and they have weaponized it to make sure that there is no criticism of the policies of Israel.”

“The number of people that I saw actually getting kicked out of the Labour party for anti - Semitism was a disturbing sight.”

Between the chants and performances, a moment of silence for the Palestinian citizens who lost their

lives.

Phil Turner, a member of the Sheffield Palestine Solidarity Campaign (PSC) who helped organise the event, said: “The dehumanising of people in Gaza, the Palestinians, is in complete contrast to how an Israeli gets represented in the media.”

“Can resistance stop the Israeli horror? This is not a British question, it's not a European question, it's an international, global question.”

The protest took place in the wake of the larger London movement which took place on Armistice day.

More than 300,000 pro-Palestinian demonstrators marched through central London on the 11 November. Mr Turner was amongst the protestors, who attended alongside other members of the Sheffield PSC.

Mr Turner said: “The coverage is absolutely vile. It's a stomach churning report.”



A child at the protest holding a sign that says "ISRAEL KILLS CHILDREN LIKE ME. STOP THE GENOCIDE"



Protestors gathered outside Rotherham Town Hall and holding flags



Phil Turner giving a speech standing next to Palestinian refugees

Islamophobia on X over Israel-Gaza war

HANNAH AULD

Twitter (now 'X') users flooded the site with a slew of Islamophobic tweets and drew comparisons between the Palestinians in Gaza and the Pakistani men convicted of the Rotherham child sexual exploitation scandal.

Palestine sympathisers were met with racist Twitter responses, which insinuated that those standing in solidarity with Palestine were also sympathising with the Pakistani gang of men who groomed and sexually exploited over 1,400 young girls in Rotherham until 2013.

One tweet read: “We can't speak up for the raped teenage girls in Rotherham so don't expect outrage for the beheaded babies in Palestine.”

Another tweet read: “Well reminded of the fact that those who wave the PLO flag are the same ones who kept quiet about their children being raped (hashtag)rotherham.”

On October 7 Palestine's Hamas, the national liberation and resistance movement, fighters breached a border security fence killing Israeli civilians and soldiers.

Videos depicting the Hamas terror attacks released by CBS on 25 October prompted another wave of Islamophobic comments.

Since then vicious fighting has ensued in the Gaza region, with an estimated 18,000 Palestinians reported dead as of 11 December.

Charity organisation Remidi has been support-

ing those affected by the rise in religious hate crime in the area since the attacks were broadcast.

In South Yorkshire, there were a total of 4,130 recorded hate crimes in the year 2021-22, which is an increase of 22% from the previous year. Since the Israel-Hamas, a Reuters investigation found that Islamophobic hate crimes had increased 140%.

Remidi, established in 1996, offers victims of crime the opportunity to engage in a restorative intervention with the person responsible.

Nicole Slater, 46, Sheffield, manager of the youth team for Remidi has been working with her team to tackle the rise.

Mrs Slater said: “It only takes a google search to see that Rotherham suffers from hate crime.”

Whilst the tweets serve as a reminder that the rates of hate crime remain a real threat to Rotherham's Muslim community, which made up just shy of 10% of Yorkshire's population in the 2021 census, Slater said that there is hope for things to change.

“We have been working with the Rotherham Council for the last four years and our data shows there has been a decrease in reoffending,” Mrs Slater said.

“We have a hate crime practitioner who delivers sessions to educate people on the effects of hate crime in the community.”

“It is important that intervention is spread across the country” she said.

Illegal drugs sold online in plain sight despite police efforts to curb drug use

HANNAH AULD

Dealers are advertising illegal drugs such as cocaine, ketamine and ecstasy on social media platform 'X', a Rotherham Reveal investigation has found.

A search on the site connects users to dealers advertising the hard drugs daily using

One drug user, who wished to remain anonymous, told the Reveal: “If you typed 'drugs' into X so many [results] would pop up. I messaged one and they added me straight back asking what I wanted to buy.”

“All of them were selling big batches and only replied at night. I knew someone who had picked it up from them but they seemed really intimidating. I thought it was so dodgy.”

A second drug user also admitted trying the numbers posted online.

She said: “Sourcing the number was too easy. It took a matter of seconds

to source multiple dealers who were advertising the same details multiple times a day.

“They responded incredibly quickly and sent an extensive list of drugs they had available.”

Since the Reveal started

“*All of them were selling big batches and only replied at night. I knew someone who had picked it up from them but they seemed really intimidating.*”

investigating the sales, the numbers used by the anonymous users have been removed from X.

However, alternative numbers have been posted.

The discovery of these online drug sales comes after extensive attempts from South Yorkshire Police to curb Rotherham's drug usage, which is on the rise.

Drug use has become pervasive within the community in recent years. A viral TikTok video that exposed bloody needles carelessly discarded in public toilets in the town centre sparked outrage at the brazenness of drug use.

Whitney Ainscough, who posted the video, was with her two young children when she went into a public restroom. Her son had asked: “Mum, why is

there blood?”

Miss Ainscough said: “I went in and told him to use a different one whilst I had a look and saw a needle bin with blood on the top, it is absolutely disgusting.”

“They could have any blood disease and my son has ADHD and potentially ASD and a tendency to touch things he should not. I will never use those toilets again,” she said.

In 2022 alone, there were approximately 1,500 arrests for possession of hard drugs by South Yorkshire Police in Rotherham, information obtained by the Reveal under the Freedom of Information Act showed.

South Yorkshire Police has been running Operation Duxford since last year, with the aim of target-



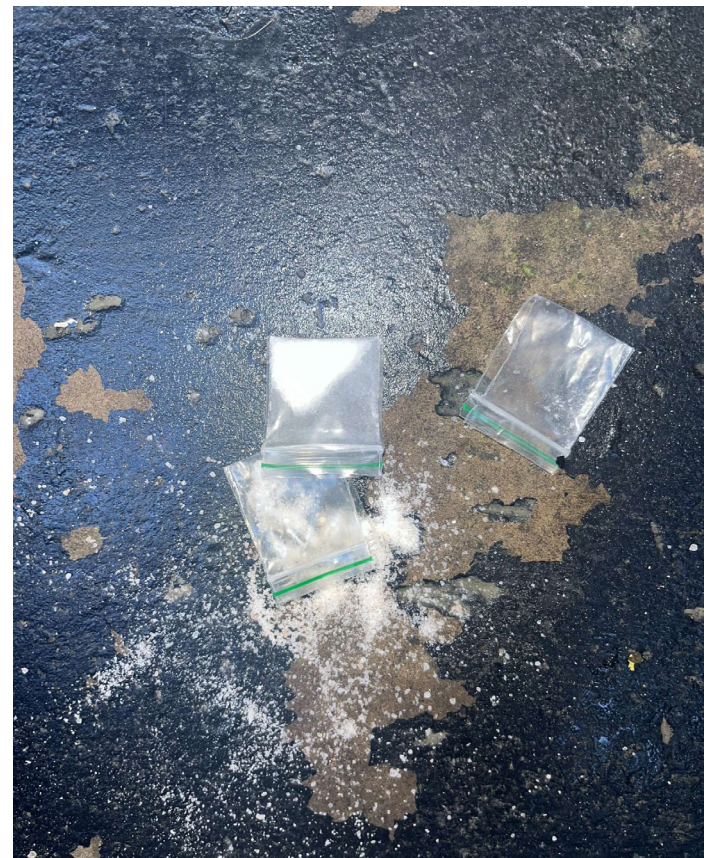
Whitney Ainscough

“*I had a look and saw a needle bin with blood on the top, it is absolutely disgusting.*”

ing organised crime and exploitation.

In October this year, more than a dozen people were arrested as part of the operation after they were found to be in possession of large quantities of drugs and weapons.

Inspector Liam Walters, who led the operation, said: “We've seen some really encouraging results from this Operation Duxford with officers executing warrants to tear apart and disrupt criminality, while showing to the public the



Ketamine was one of the hard drugs the dealers offered

work we do day in, day out to tackle crime.”

South Yorkshire Police has not responded to a request for a comment on the

availability of drugs via X. Under X's ads content policy, the promotion of drugs and drug paraphernalia is prohibited.