

Cost of the School Day

listening to children and young people in Glasgow schools

WELCOME TO THE SECOND COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY NEWSLETTER

How do the ways in which schools do things impact on children and young people from low-income households? And how can schools ensure that all children and young people, regardless of family income, are protected from stigma, receive the same opportunities and are able to make the most of the school day?

Cost of the School Day is a **Glasgow Poverty Leadership Panel** project, hosted by **Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland** and working with Glasgow City Council's Education Services. The project is inspired by the success of **Poverty Proofing the School Day** from Children North East in England.

WHAT HAS BEEN HAPPENING SINCE THE LAST NEWSLETTER?

Just under 100 Cost of the School Day workshops and focus group sessions have now been held in the eight Glasgow schools taking part in the project. In total, 339 children and young people and 116 staff members have taken the time to share their thoughts and experiences with us.

Using characters and scenarios, mixed groups of children from P5 to S6 explored the day in their schools from start to finish. From getting dressed, travelling to school and eating at school to spending time with friends, learning in the classroom, events, trips, clubs and homework – what would school be like for a child who had less money at home? Are there parts of the school day where there is a risk that he or she would miss out on something or feel bad? What is currently done about this and is it working? If not, what should be done?

WHAT ARE PEOPLE SAYING ABOUT THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY?

Full findings will be published in August 2015, but, for now, here are some insightful words from children, young people and staff which offer a snapshot of some of the emerging themes.

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CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND STAFF ARE AWARE OF A RANGE OF COSTS AND BARRIERS FOR LOW-INCOME PUPILS

UNIFORM

"There's a set uniform, obviously, trousers and shirts, but you can still tell like who's richer and poorer by like the jackets, the shoes, the bags."

"Shoes and bags, that's one of the biggest things... There's some people you get that are nasty and pure heavy cheeky." (S3)

"Sometimes you notice because some people have changes of uniform all the time and some people don't at all."

"Not everybody can afford it and that's why some people don't look as... nice as some people." (P6)

"He (character used in sessions) would want to fit in with the other kids and if those were the school rules on uniform he'd feel like he had to afford it." (P7)

TRAVELLING TO SCHOOL

"Half an hour in snow, rain, sleet, hailstones?"

"And then you get to school all wet, your uniform's all wet. See, even if you don't live far away from the school enough to get a free bus pass you still take the bus, you wouldn't walk because let's say the weathers really bad - it's raining a lot and all that." (S5)

"Sometimes my mum can't pay for petrol so we walk." (P6)

"Sometimes we get phone calls - not every single week, but occasionally - to say that they've not been at school because they've no money for bus fare. That has happened, you do get those phone calls." (Staff)

FRIENDS

"A lot of people, I think, that have maybe got a lower income, round about the school, seem to be isolated and they've no got a lot of friends." (S4)

"You can't really just have friends at school and not do anything else with them, any other time."

"I think it's all the other things as well, like being able to go on trips."

"(Hang about together at) Lunch as well." (S4)

LEARNING

"Obviously the ones who have all this equipment at home, they can go home and get on with the work, get it done, bring it in, and that's it." (Staff)

"It's hard to get to school every day and then go up (to the school library or to ICT) to do homework or something. If you're busy and you can't get to them, then..." (S5)

"Some parents can't read, so they find it difficult to help their child with their homework... Homework's the last thing that they're thinking about, because they have such a difficult life." (Staff)

"Aye. I didnae want to pay 50 pence on Home Eccies. I didn't want to pay that because I couldn't be bothered because then that takes money off my lunch money, and I was like, nah."

"And would you have wanted to do it (as a certificate course)?"

"Aye." (S4)

"The honest black and white truth is that kids from high-income families are better set up to succeed. And we can't overcome all those barriers." (Staff)

LUNCH

"Sometimes it's cheaper to go out the school and get lunch because I have to pay for my lunches and it's cheaper to go out to Greggs and get something most of the time." (S1)

"Depends who your friends are, doesn't it. Like I can get a free meal and don't mind but if my friends all go out for lunch and I'm sitting by myself getting a free meal, I wouldn't like that." (S2)

TRIPS

"Big trips like that, without a doubt (young people will be missing out on). As I say, there are some kids who wouldn't even look at a thing. No point in me putting my name down. Not in a million years will they get to go." (Staff)

"You know how sometimes people might misbehave? Like - see how you're not allowed (to go on trips) because of behaviour? Like sometimes people can act all bad and then kid on they werenae allowed to go."

"It covers it up. I'll just misbehave and get sent home."

"And then folk are like 'why arenae you going?' 'oh I'm not allowed.'"

"Cos I'm bad." (S3)

SCHOOL CLUBS

"I had just said for first year this year, because I thought they can come along and ones who are maybe vulnerable can maybe make friends, but then if I want to do things then I'm like, 'You got a pound?', 'No', 'Well, you can't come.' Then it's like you're almost just giving-- only if you can pay you can come type thing, so that's quite hard." (Staff)

"And there's some contest with the dancing and that's the reason I couldn't go because it cost too much to go to the concert."

"And buy the clothes and the shoes..."

"... I couldn't afford to go there." (P6)

FUN EVENTS

"See if you come in and there's all this stuff like Beat the Goalie and there's all the stuff but you cannae do it and you're walking around with your pals and they're doing it but you cannae do it cos it's like 50p or a pound." (S1)

"Here, see Prom, it's 50 pound just to go and then you've got everything."

"You've got to first put down the deposit then you've got to buy your dress..."

"And then your hair and make up."

"And it's no like you can miss that cos that's like --"

"It's an important milestone." (S4)

"Aye, because the attendance really dips (on non-uniform day)"

"People just come in and they're wearing their uniform so you can tell who cannae afford it." (S6)

SCHOOLS ARE DOING LOTS OF GREAT THINGS ALREADY TO REDUCE OR REMOVE COSTS AND BARRIERS

"We can say wee Johnny's mammy's been ill, not got any money, or we know the reason why they've not been here, we'll put the name in (for trips). And again, it would be subsidised. We'll think well, they won't pay... we'll just pay his. So that all happens. The kids don't really know that." (Staff)

"See with like the blazer and that, there's this thing if you say to them that you're on benefits or that or you don't get that much income you say to them and they either reduce the price or if like somebody gives in their old blazer cos it's too wee for them then you can maybe get it." (S1)

"Some of the times if you don't have any pencils in your house or anything the teacher gives you some pencils to borrow and you then bring them back to school." (P6)

At one ASL school, staff support parents to take up entitlements, offering help at Parents' Evenings with form filling and information on benefits and grants.

... BUT CHILDREN, YOUNG PEOPLE AND STAFF HAVE LOTS OF IDEAS ABOUT WHAT MORE SHOULD BE DONE. HERE ARE JUST A FEW...

- Offer resources to everyone and then nobody would stand out
- More talking about poverty in school so people understand it – "It would make you more aware of it. It would make them realise what they say affects people." (S3)
- Make sure that everyone entitled to a free meal signs up for them
- Should be allowed to handwrite homework instead of on the computer
- School library should be open every day for computer access
- Help us but keep it quiet
- Don't ask for money for fun events – it's embarrassing if you don't have it
- Take family income rather than just distance from school into account when allocating free transport
- "They should make the trips free for one thing, because it's embarrassing for people that wouldn't be able to afford them to go up and ask. We could do fundraising... (the Council) could provide us with money to start the fundraising, you could buy things and sell them on to make profit. Something like that. That'd be a good learning opportunity as well." (S3)

NEXT STEPS: RESPONDING TO WHAT WE'VE FOUND OUT

Over the next couple of months, findings will be shared with schools so that they can decide on their top priorities and how they want to respond to what children, young people and staff have been saying. Findings are also being shared with relevant departments within Glasgow City Council, Scottish Government and with other stakeholders able to take forward plans to improve low income learners' school experiences.

REPORT LAUNCH

Full findings will be launched at an event at the start of the next school year 2015/16 in a report focusing on:

- key issues affecting low income children and young people at school
- actions which currently help in schools
- new ways forward to overcome poverty related barriers and stigma
- practical 'ask these questions in your own school' guidance.

OTHER PROJECT UPDATES

COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY INSPIRED PROJECT DUE TO START IN EDINBURGH NEXT YEAR

"Inspired by the work that is taking place in Glasgow, Edinburgh has started work on its own project to 'poverty proof the school day.' With rates of child poverty rising, especially for children in extreme poverty, and the damaging effects it has on children's life chances, Edinburgh's Children's Partnership has made actions to mitigate the impact of poverty a high priority."

(John Heywood, Lead Officer for child poverty, Edinburgh City Council)

Edinburgh City Council's new Cost of the School Day inspired project will take place in 6 Edinburgh schools over the coming school year. Part of the city's Child Poverty Strategy, the project will work with pupils, staff and parents next year, looking at what more can be done to reduce or remove school-related costs for parents on low incomes, to reduce stigma and raise understanding of poverty and its causes.

If other local authorities or schools in Scotland are interested in taking forward a project like Cost of the School Day and are keen to learn about the process behind it then get in touch with Sara Spencer, Cost of the School Day Manager at spencer@cpagscotland.org.uk for an informal chat.

COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY IN THE NEWS

- Just before Christmas, STV Glasgow came along to Smithycroft Secondary to film S5 pupils taking part in a Cost of the School Day workshop – see interviews with the young people [HERE](#) along with a studio interview with Fiona Crawford from Glasgow Centre for Population Health.
- The Evening Times followed up on the project in January this year with an article: [Youngsters help to tackle stigma in new city project](#)
- On the day of the new £100m Scottish Attainment Challenge announcement, Sara Spencer took part in a Scotland 2015 panel discussion on BBC 2 along with Professor Sue Ellis of University of Strathclyde and Councillor Mike Holmes from Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission (film no longer available).
- Just last month, we spoke to the TESS about Cost of the School Day as part of a school costs story: [When the poorest families are priced out of school life.](#)

KEEP IN TOUCH WITH THE PROJECT

Please feel free to circulate this e-newsletter to colleagues who might be interested and would like to keep up to date with the project.

If you have any questions or comments or if you would like to contribute to the project in any way please contact Sara Spencer, Cost of the School Day Manager at sara.spencer@glasgow.gov.uk or sspencer@cpagscotland.org.uk.

RECENT POVERTY AND EDUCATION NEWS FROM ACROSS SCOTLAND

100 MILLION FUND ANNOUNCED TO IMPROVE EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES IN SCOTLAND'S MOST DISADVANTAGED COMMUNITIES

In February, First Minister Nicola Sturgeon announced a new Scottish Attainment Challenge, backed by an Attainment Scotland Fund of more than £100 million over four years.

The Attainment Scotland Fund will be targeted initially at schools in the local authorities with the biggest concentrations of households in deprived areas. It will focus

on improving literacy, numeracy, health and wellbeing in primary schools in these areas, drawing on schemes with proven track records such as the London Challenge.

The first tranche of funding will see £20 million made available this year to support children and young people in a number of Scotland's most disadvantaged communities.

<http://news.scotland.gov.uk/News/Smart-money-on-attainment-15d2.aspx>

STATUTORY DUTY PROPOSED FOR COUNCILS TO NARROW ATTAINMENT GAP

In March, Education Secretary Angela Constance announced that the Education (Scotland) Bill will place a legal duty on local authorities in Scotland to introduce measures which will narrow the poverty attainment gap and to report on their progress.

Launching the bill, Ms Constance said: "Our bill underlines our expectations of local councils in the process of addressing educational inequality."

An additional £1m for councils to buy textbooks was also announced.

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-scotland-politics-32032925>

REDUCING SCHOOL COSTS A PRIORITY, SAYS RENFREWSHIRE TACKLING POVERTY COMMISSION

Renfrewshire Tackling Poverty Commission, the first local commission of its kind in Scotland, has reported on its year-long inquiry. It named closing the poverty attainment gap as a key priority for the Community Planning Partnership and recommended that Renfrewshire Council addresses financial barriers to school education by reviewing the cost of school

day and support available for the cost of uniforms and school meals.

Read more about this and their other recommendations in the full report.

From here, the Commission will develop a strategy to support delivery of the recommendations and recommends the Community Planning Partnership reports annually on its progress for the next five years.

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POVERTY TRUTH COMMISSION FILM ABOUT SCHOOL TRIP COSTS

Commissioners from the Poverty Truth Commission have chosen school costs as one of their key campaigns this year. Take a look at a [1 minute film on Facebook](#), made for the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, in which two mothers on low incomes talk about what school trip costs mean for them and their children.

The Commission brings together Scotland's key decision makers with those living at the sharp end of poverty to ensure that those affected by decisions are central to decision-making.

POVERTY: SEE IT CHANGE IT - NEW YOUTH CAMPAIGN TACKLING THE STIGMA OF POVERTY

POVERTY: See It Change It is a new campaign from the Scottish Youth Parliament, the democratically-elected voice of Scotland's young people aged 12-25. The campaign will engage with children and young people from across Scotland to combat poverty related stigma, raise awareness about child poverty and challenge elected leaders to uphold the UK-wide commitment to tackle child poverty by 2020.

Nairn McDonald, Trustee and Board member of SYP says that "Young people deserve to know that it is their right to live free from poverty and to have the same opportunities

as their peers. This is the basis for part of our POVERTY: See It Change It campaign, and it's an issue close to me heart. I grew up in an area with poverty levels to rival the worst in Scotland and I saw first-hand the effect it has on young people's chance in life. I saw close friends struggle to achieve in school because of the burden and stereotypes poverty put on them, and this broke my heart. Every young person should have the scaffolding needed to succeed and no child or young person should have to do without this basic structure. "

[Find out more about the campaign here.](#)