



The Cost of the School Day Parent and Carer Consultation Report – June 2016

Barbara Adzajlic, Health Improvement Team, Glasgow Social Health and Care Partnership North East Locality. Correspondence to:
Barbara.Adzajlic@ggc.scot.nhs.uk

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Executive Summary

Intro/Background

The Cost of the School Day is a Poverty Leadership Panel project, delivered by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland in partnership with Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). Work took place during 2014-15 in eight primary and secondary schools in Glasgow, speaking to children and staff to look at the impact of cost on children's experiences of education and ability to participate in school life. A report, *The Cost of the School Day* (October 2015)¹ was published including findings from the participating schools and changes those schools had made in order to 'poverty proof' their establishments.

Between February and May 2016 work took place with parents to find out their views on the costs associated with sending their children to school. This report highlights the findings from this research.

Objectives

The research took *The Cost of the School Day* report as a starting point. The intention was to ask parents and carers their views on the findings to see how the cost of the school day impacted on them and their children, whether the issues for parents and carers were the same as the ones identified by the children and to explore whether there are other areas where schools and local authorities could review what they do.

Methodology

56 parents and carers were interviewed through a series of five focus groups and other opportunities that took place from April to May 2016. These took place in a library; two primary schools; a church and a women's centre. Participants were invited by professionals at these venues: some of these were random and/or opportunistic (for example, an informal coffee morning and a pre-entrant event at a primary school), while others were targeted at specific groups (kinship carers and refugee/asylum seeking women).

A workshop was devised (see appendix I) however due to the opportunistic nature of some of the groups this was sometimes used as intended and at other times as a guide. Conversations were audio recorded and photographs were taken of the initial coins and faces exercise (see appendix I).

Findings

Findings have been grouped into themes, some of which reflect the areas identified in *The Cost of The School Day* report and others which were newly identified through the conversations with parents and carers.

¹ <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/cost-school-day-report-and-executive-summary>

1. School Uniform

Many of the participants agreed that the concept of a school uniform was good in that it ensures children are all at the same level, or at least more so than if it were left to their own devices to decide what to wear. Parents also like to see children in their uniforms and understand the necessity of being able to recognise pupils when they are outside school at lunchtime or on school trips. However several issues were highlighted:

“Branded” school uniform

- The cost of the ‘official’, badged school uniform is very high and the quality not necessarily as good as that found in high street shops and supermarkets. However there is some pressure on parents/carers to buy the ‘official’ uniform. Young children at primary school are often initially keen to have this and, depending on the school and how much this is encouraged, this may continue as they get older. Some report feeling like the odd one out if they don’t have the school badge on their uniform. There was a feeling among some participants that they did not have enough information about what is allowed.
- At many secondary schools it has become compulsory to wear the badged uniform including a blazer, and there is no cheaper alternative. Pupils have been sent home for not wearing a blazer, a tie or the official badged polo shirt. Pupils had been refused entry to school, or to the fuel zone, without a tie or official polo shirt. At one school every item has to be bought from a specific shop:

‘...the blazer costs £95, the skirt costs £45 and you can not buy that blazer in any other shop, it’s only one shop, it’s a designer shop, Men’s World, and the skirt is £45 and I have two daughters, it’s very expensive for me.’

Location of uniform suppliers

- The location of the school uniform shop can also be a barrier for those with transport or mobility issues.

‘I’m getting a cardigan for £5 and it’s £10 for a cardigan, at the school shop... my mum took me up to the school shop, and I don’t drive, so what if I, if I don’t drive how dae I get to the school shop, so I go to Asda.’

- Supermarkets tend to sell the more common school uniform colours such as black, grey, green and navy. Light blue and other less common colours are harder to find so the only option is going to the school shop.

Dress code enforcement

- There was also talk of PE kit being compulsory and children either having to sit out or being sent home if they did not have it. Spare PE kit was described as often being ‘manky’ so that pupils did not want to wear it.

Uniform and peer pressure

- One woman described her daughter's sadness at not having expensive Lelly Kelly school shoes like her friends. It was felt that schools should insist on children wearing the same kind of shoes to prevent this.

Clothing grants

- The current grant of £47 is nowhere near enough, especially in cases where the official, expensive uniform is compulsory. Children grow during the year and ruin their clothes playing outside or painting, and items get lost. It can cost over £100 per child to provide full school uniform for a year.
- Some parents and carers reported that applying for grants was easy, and in some cases the school staff had been very helpful in supporting them to apply. In some cases at pre-entrant level if the school management was aware the family may be eligible for the grant, help was provided to complete the form. Grant application forms are sometimes displayed alongside the uniform at pre-entrant events (however this was not the case at the events that formed part of the research as these took place in May and the forms for the next academic year only became available in June).

Some said that after the first few times it was easy to continue completing the application process. However other parents and carers did not know where information on grants would be found should they need it. The information tends to be highlighted at pre-entrant level so families falling into financial difficulty after this, and not discussing it with the school, may have difficulty accessing help.

What works

- Some schools were reported to be gifting ties, homework bags and even blazers to children at transition which was much appreciated by parents both financially and as a way of helping children feel a part of the school community.
- Some participants were aware that their school operated a system where they could return used uniform which could then be sold at a low cost, or given, to families in need. However participants from the same schools were not always aware of this and felt more information should be available on how to donate and possibly how to access this. Some schools seemed to operate a discretionary system where items could be handed to a child in class, or to a parent or carer at parents' night.

Points for consideration

- Could schools go back to selling the school badge for parents and carers to sew or iron on, rather than expensive, pre-badged uniform?

- Can school uniforms stick to common colours to ensure alternatives can be purchased cheaply?
- Although most school handbooks provide information on acceptable school uniform, perhaps there could be a reminder at the end of each school year before the new uniform is bought.
- Schools or the local authority should review policies around allowing entry on the basis of wearing uniform.
- Some schools have a stock of new uniform to give to children who need it. Could schools have a universal discretionary fund for this? Fundraising could support this.
- The local authority should review its current uniform grant.
- Schools should send regular reminders to parents and carers about available grants and offer to help with accessing these. Forms could be placed beside uniform displays.

2. School Trips

School trips were a source of great unhappiness according to the coins and faces exercise (see appendix II). These can be divided into two categories: regular, local class trips, pantomimes and whole-school end-of-year trips; and bigger residential trips either to outdoor centres or abroad.

In the first category there was a range of experiences. In some schools every class trip is free (in some schools there were complaints that there are no trips either for the school or for some classes – it was unclear whether this was due to cost or a lack of interest by teachers). In other schools there were complaints about the seemingly random cost of some trips. Parents and carers could not understand why in some cases despite a free venue, free bus service and children bringing their own lunch, there was still a cost of £7. In one school the previous year's summer trip was reported to have cost £20 per child, and some parents and carers had raised complaints about this.

With trips in this category children are usually included even if they do not pay (although in some cases children were allowed to 'opt out' of summer trips and spend the day in school with the remaining staff). The main issue for parents and carers was that in some schools they do not know when trips are coming up so find it difficult to plan financially, especially if they have more than one child at the school. There was also a lack of clarity about what the money went towards, as mentioned above.

The second category included class trips for P7s and sometimes P6s to residential outdoor centres such as Blairvadach. Once children reach secondary school there are more residential trips on offer such as skiing trips, and educational trips to European countries or New York. Costs for these were reported as being up to £800 and for some trips, additional outdoor or specialised clothing is required such as ski clothes. Spending money is also required. Another parent reported spending over £1000 in one school year sending two children on separate trips.

Every focus group spent time discussing these trips and the main points were:

Expensive trips put pressure on families

- The high cost of some of the trips, especially those that are not deemed 'educational'. Children become very upset at being the only one in a group of friends not able to go, and put a lot of pressure on parents and carers to go and in some cases families that struggle with these costs make sacrifices - such as a family holiday or paying rent and bills - to allow their children to go. Participants said they were surprised at how many children even in schools in deprived areas were able to go on these trips and so assumed there was a lot of pressure on parents and carers and a lot of this type of sacrifice. When children do not get to go it can be very upsetting for the whole family:

'...sometimes [we] cannot afford to pay for them and they keep on saying, 'it's not fair', all their friends are going and sometimes it's they choose the children who are well behaved, who are working well in class and it comes sometimes that one of your children is amongst them who have that offer but then you cannot afford to pay for her, and it upsets them... they can cry... all day... making life difficult.'

Communication between home and school

- Again, the lack of information at the start of the year was a cause for concern. One parent that spent £1000 on two trips said that the information about the trips had come in at different times so that only after agreeing to the first trip did she realise there was a second trip.
- There was a feeling that some of the more expensive trips were not as 'educational' as they claimed to be and that equally valuable learning experiences could be gained by visiting places in Scotland without causing financial difficulty and leaving children out. There were also concerns about the idea of sending children abroad on a plane.

What works

- Costs are sometimes reduced for those in poverty, however this usually means those on benefits. The full cost for the P7 residential was reported to be around £170 while the reduced cost was around £70 - still beyond the means of many families. There was a feeling that those who are working but on a low income were caught in the middle - unable to afford it and unable to access funding.
- Participants said they would be happy to fundraise for trips as long as they knew where the money was going.
- Some said it was a useful learning experience for children to understand that if they cannot afford something, they cannot have it.

Points for consideration

- Information should be provided to all families at the start of the school year on what trips will be available, to whom, a rough idea of the cost and information on hardship grants and other help.
- The cost of the more expensive trips should be spread across the year to make it easier for families to pay.
- The Local Authority should review whether trips costing several hundred pounds are necessary or educational, or whether costs can be reduced by travelling somewhere more local and using cheaper forms of transport. Should a trip be deemed 'educational' if some pupils are unable to afford to go, and if it is, is there justification for providing it to some children and not to others? How do we justify providing a trip as a reward for good behaviour, but only for those who can afford it? Should 'non-educational' trips such as ski trips be provided by the school leading to some families prioritising this over their family holiday?
- The Local Authority should review whether children can be left behind on class trips or end of term school trips, due to inability to pay.
- Primary school trips should have a spending limit, or not include a visit to a shop.

3. Breakfasts and Lunches

Accessing the breakfast club

The breakfast club was discussed by some of the groups but less of an issue for others. The benefits of attending breakfast club were recognised, from the social aspect to one parent who said her son attends because she has an eating disorder and sending her son to breakfast club ensures that he will eat a healthy breakfast.

Some participants said the recent price increase (from £1 to £2 per child, with a family discount of £1 per subsequent child), had affected them and was changing what they did in the morning. At one of the groups there were reports that many families had stopped using the service:

'How many kids were going to that breakfast club and getting a meal, and now they're not getting it.'

One parent said she had reorganised her shifts at work to accommodate the later drop-off time and another said her family were walking to school to fill in the time and allow her to get to work on time. Here again the price increase had affected those on a low wage who cannot access free meals but cannot afford to pay for children to attend on a daily basis, again leading to a feeling that working parents were being penalised. There was also a lack of understanding among many of the participants about the reason for the higher price, with participants complaining that they were paying £2 for a slice of toast.

Cost of school lunches

Similar issues were raised for school lunches, with those on a low income but not entitled to free school meals struggling to pay the cost. This meant some children did not get a school meal, raising issues about those with packed lunches having to eat separately in some schools, affecting friendships. It was also felt there was less monitoring of packed lunches to ensure children ate their food.

There were also complaints about the quality of school meals and the fact that if children do not get their preferred option they come home hungry. Examples were given of children reaching the end of the queue and being allowed to buy six cookies because their preferred option had run out. At schools without cooking kitchens, the food was reported to sometimes be cold, raising health and safety issues.

Parents and carers with children at secondary school agreed they would prefer their children to stay within the school at lunch times from a safety point of view, and because the lunches they buy elsewhere are more expensive, however they understood that there was peer pressure to go outside with friends, and that children forced to eat school meals faced stigma.

Stigma around school lunches

On the question of stigma it was suggested that this was not really an issue at primary school, whether or not an electronic card system was in place. However at secondary school it was felt this was more of an issue, and that a return to the ticket system (or the new card system) would help:

'It's older kids that are embarrassed. I know kids at high school that won't go 'cos they're embarrassed. Nobody knew [when I was at school], you were all using the same thing.'

What works

There is evidence that universal free school meals for children in Primary 1-3 reduces the stigma for that age group and ensures all children can access this – however the comment above would suggest stigma is more of an issue for older children.

Points for consideration

- How do schools promote free school meals? Are all parents and carers given information about how to access this?

4. Travel to school

The question of transport raised many issues, particularly in terms of placing requests and for families with children at both primary and secondary school. A bus service is provided to those living more than either 1.2 or 2.2 miles from the nearest primary or secondary school respectively, by the recognised safe shortest walking route. However there was a perception in one group that the definition was 'two miles as the crow flies'.

Accessing Free school transport

Participants argues that no-one's route to school is a straight line so other forms of transport have to be used, and that walking can sometimes be dangerous, particularly on winter nights after attending an after-school club. Families unable to accommodate travel to their preferred school (in some cases a denominational school) were opting instead for the more local school. Some families also reported that placing requests had been granted for one child but not their siblings, meaning children in the same family were attending different primary schools, and having to work out transport arrangements for both. In addition, school closures had resulted in some children being provided with free transport to the new school, however this was not provided to subsequent siblings.

Transport outside the school catchment area

Placing requests were a big issue for kinship carers. This could be because children had started school before they became cared for, and wanted to continue at that school, something the kinship carers felt was important for stability. There were also issues with transport being provided for those living on one side of a street but not to those on the other side.

This was also raised by the refugee and asylum seeking mothers who have to accept school and housing placements offered to them by the council. Because housing situations are not permanent, families can move out of the catchment area of the school their children attend, causing either more upheaval as they change schools, or high transport costs:

'You see... if... the council locates your child the school then you qualify for the free transport. But they've forgotten that we sometimes keep moving because the houses are not permanent so does it mean every time you move your child has to move school... my daughter she doesn't want to change her school... she refused to, to change her school, so I had to pay for her transport for the, almost two and a half years... because I wrote to [the council] so many times and they refused... when [the citizens advice bureau] wrote to them, then they granted that child... but because the other one joined I wanted both of them to go to the same school... I applied for that school and she was accepted... but now I have to pay for both of them for the school transport.'

'the kids don't want to [change schools], they think that's where we started, friends they're used to it, the teacher they're used to it.'

Participants questioned why more use is not made of Cordia cars rather than what was perceived as being more expensive black cabs, and why there was often only one child in a taxi.

Points for consideration

- Transport entitlements should be considered alongside placing requests to ensure children can have stability and continuity.

5. Fun events

Frequency of fundraising events

Dress-down days were a source of much discussion. The frequency of these and the way they are managed seems to vary from school to school with some schools holding dress-down days once or twice a year and others holding them almost every Friday. Payment (usually of £1) for the right to dress down (or up) may be optional although at some schools those who do not pay must wear full school uniform and face questioning by their peers

'They don't appreciate... When a child comes with uniform, his friends will tell him... you can't afford a pound... and the kid will come back sadly and say, because... I went in my uniform to school the kids are telling me I can't afford one pound. So it creates division.'

At the school where dress-down day takes place almost weekly, children are also under social pressure to wear a new dressing-up costume each time.

Communication with home and school

Other participants said they got very last-minute information about dress-down days, such as a text message the afternoon before. This meant they had to buy whatever costume they could with no time to shop around or make one. A member of a parent council said their school was 'terrible' at giving information, and that parent council members would remind the school to send a text about World Book Day:

'...and we know and we remind them to send a text out and then the text you get is at half-two – for the next day... It's always at the last minute.'

Examples at other schools included being asked to wear red or wear a kilt, in a text message the day before.

Cost as barrier to participation

One participant mentioned an event at a primary school where pupils were presenting and singing. In order to enter the hall to watch pupils had to pay one pound. Those who did not pay had to stay behind in the classroom.

Where does the money go?

Participants at some schools were unclear on where the money went for such events. There was a feeling that parents and carers would be happy to contribute towards school funds or the cost of trips through fundraising, as long as it was not too frequent and did not exclude anyone. Some felt that there was too much emphasis on raising money for charity and not enough awareness of people struggling in the school community.

On the subject of fundraising, one parent said she had received a bill from Cordia for a week's worth of school dinners, despite having provided her daughter with the correct money each day. It was discovered that the child had been putting the

money in a charity collection box every day. The group felt it was wrong for schools to have charity donation boxes in view of young children.

Points for Consideration

- Could schools or the local authority agree on limits on fundraising appeals, and on a system whereby no-one is stigmatised because of inability to pay?
- Could all schools agree on the timing of charity events at the beginning of the year, and provide this information to parents and carers so they can plan outfits and costumes?
- Could schools offer ideas to parents and carers on costumes that can be easily and cheaply put together for events such as World Book Day?
- All schools should inform the school community of where any money raised goes to.

6. Home learning

Access to ICT

Internet access was the main issue discussed in relation to home learning. At primary school this was not usually necessary although in some cases children had been told to hand in work on a memory stick, or use the internet to find information. This was more likely to happen at secondary level with young people without internet access at home needing to visit their local library. A primary teacher was present at one group and reported that her school had a fairly new policy whereby children should not be expected to hand in homework on memory sticks, however this was not followed by all staff.

Some said their children had been upset and embarrassed when they were unable to hand in printed work or to provide information for which internet access, or access to particular books, was required.

Home tuition

Some of the refugee and asylum seeker women reported that their children's teachers had told them their children were behind in some subjects, and had recommended tuition costing £150 per week. Financial help is available for this but one woman on benefits did not qualify. The women wanted to support their children's education but felt that they themselves were unable because of their own lack of education:

'I want to support my kids to give them a good education but I can't afford the money.'

'...us foreign mothers we need help, we have no education to help our children at home so we need to get help from elsewhere, we need to pay.'

Points for consideration

- Should children at primary school be asked to complete work at home that requires the use of a computer and/or internet access?

- Could secondary schools provide access to IT suites so that homework requiring IT access can be completed? IT can also be accessed at libraries – could teachers remind pupils of this regularly?
- Could pupils email work to their teacher rather than having to print it themselves?
- What provision is there for pupils who fall behind due to language barriers or whose parents are unable to help them with homework? Is there learning provision for parents and carers to enable them to support their children’s learning?

7. After school clubs

On the whole parents and carers were happy with the cost of after-school clubs and in many cases stated that those provided by the school were free of charge. The main issue here was around transport. For those who would normally get a school bus home, this was not available later in the day, meaning children had to walk home (not always safe), parents had to collect them (not always possible due to work commitments and having other children), wait in the school (allowed but no room for all parents), or simply not attend.

8. School photographs and other mementos

The high cost of official school photographs was discussed by two of the groups. Children were described as asking year after year to be able to buy their photographs and being told each year by parents that they could not afford them. Participants questioned whether schools could buy in their own equipment and take photographs themselves at a reduced cost.

The leaver’s yearbook was raised as another costly item for senior pupils – in one case a copy cost around £50. Finally the school prom and associated costs, including dress or kilt hire or purchase, limousines and hair styling etc. It was felt there was great pressure on pupils, and therefore on parents and carers to go all-out on these to ensure they had the full experience. This was even the case at primary school where one parent reported she had gone into debt to hire her daughter’s dress. However other parents at the school felt they should be allowed to make a big fuss – despite the fact that this is a relatively new phenomenon. Other issues associated with this were children being left out because they did not belong to a friendship group that was hiring a limousine, and concerns about children feeling pressure to look like film stars.

Points for consideration

- Is there any practical way to reduce the cost of school photographs?
- Leavers’ proms for high school has come to be expected along with the high costs associated. This is now reaching primary school – is it necessary for children of this age to feel this pressure? Could primary schools agree that leaver events be limited in terms of potential expense to families (e.g. no limousines?)

9. Golden Time and bringing possessions into school

Again there was some variation in how Golden Time (free time given to primary school children at the end of the week to engage in play and other activities, often dependent on behaviour) was managed. In some schools activities were organised by the staff and all materials provided by the school. In others, children were allowed to choose from a range of toys and games to play with. In other schools children were often bringing in their own toys, and this was a cause for concern. It was felt that children were under pressure from peers to bring in expensive items and electronic devices. This led to a worry about items being lost, damaged or stolen, and also about the pressure on children to have things that their friends had.

This led on to a discussion about mobile phones. Most primary schools remove these from pupils and return them at the end of the day. However on transition visits to high school, P7 pupils were described as seeing their peers with expensive devices, increasing the peer pressure to own these themselves. It was accepted though that there is probably no practical way of preventing this.

Points for consideration:

- Could all schools ask pupils not to bring in their own equipment, and organise Golden Time around resources and activities that the school provides?

10. Additional issues

Many participants in the kinship carers group spoke of the difficulties they have when they and the children they care for are faced with costs such as those listed above. Given the chaotic and difficult start in life many of these children have had and the ongoing emotional and developmental problems they face, carers often feel they need to make allowances, which may mean paying for things they would not otherwise have been willing to pay for. They also feel very strongly that given the disadvantages these children face already, they want to protect them from the further stigma of being seen to be too poor to afford everything their peers have:

'You want them the same as everybody else, you don't want them [different]'

'We get told to pick we're battles... right so if you've got a kid that's wanting such and such 'cos somebody else has it... I'm not just saying you give in to them but we need to pick we're battles with these kids 'cos you don't just turn round and say no, 'cos they kick off if you just say no... so it can be quite stressful.'

Some of the refugee and asylum seeker women felt that the language barrier prevented them being able to express themselves to staff at school.

A theme that emerged strongly in every group was the lack of help available to working families on a low income. Parents and carers who start working expect that life will get easier but then find that because they are no longer entitled to grants, their costs are higher, and feel they are being penalised. Children were also described as having an expectation that, because parents were in work, they could

afford things like going out for lunch, and could not understand it if their friends had the money and they did not.

Attitudes towards poverty

Finally, the researcher noted that some of the parents and carers who were consulted did not have very sympathetic attitudes towards those who struggled to afford the costs associated with school. *'Don't have three kids'* was one comment, while others mentioned children whose families appeared not to be able to afford basics like school uniform but who wore designer trainers or whose mothers spent their money at the Bingo. Some of these parents were on their parent council and therefore seen as representing other parents and carers at the school. While these views are not uncommon it was felt that they were potentially damaging in that they might prevent those in poverty from seeking help.

Conclusions

The concerns raised by parents and carers were similar to those already raised in the Cost of the School Day report. However the suggestions showed there are alternative ways of doing things, as well as discussions to be had at school and local authority level to ensure families are not put under unnecessary pressure. The report also points to issues for particular groups of parents and carers where the stigma of being poor is compounded by other issues such as being a refugee or being cared for with all the additional challenges these bring.

The report points to the value in consulting with parents and carers on this topic. Throughout the research they identified good practise as well as their own ideas for overcoming the barriers costs present. They also identified areas where there was a lack of clarity about the way things work or why changes have been made, pointing to the need to involve this group more in order to develop solutions.

Recommendations

- The points for consideration from each section of the report have been collated into the table that follows and turned into recommendations for schools and the local authority. It is recommended that the Cost of the School Day steering group reviews these and uses them as the basis of its own set of recommendations.
- There is a need for awareness raising for parent council members and possibly other parents/carers
- Further information may be needed to find out why families do not access uniform grants, hardship grants and free school meals when they are entitled to them and what would make them more likely to access these.

Recommendations for schools, the local authority and parent councils

Topic	Recommendations for schools	Recommendations for the Local Authority	Recommendations for parent councils
School uniform	Schools could explore selling the school badge for parents and carers to sew or iron on, rather than expensive, pre-badged uniform?	The local authority could support schools to demand this service from suppliers.	Parent councils can push their schools and local suppliers to make this possible.
	When considering changes to the uniform, stick to common colours to ensure alternatives can be purchased cheaply		Parent councils should be consulted about school uniform changes and can use this opportunity to ensure cheaper alternatives are available.
	Issue reminders about uniform grants, and offer help accessing these, at the end of each school year before the new uniform is bought, and make grant forms available alongside uniform displays.	Review current uniform grant value.	Members can ensure they are informed about access to grants so they can discuss and support parents and carers.
	Work with the parent council to have a discretionary fund for new uniform stock. Ensure all staff are aware of how to use this.	Review whether any pupil can be sent home or excluded from any activity on the basis of wearing uniform.	Parent councils can be involved in fundraising for new uniforms and in encouraging the school community to donate pre-used items.
School trips	Information should be provided to all families at the start of the school year on what trips will be available, to whom, a rough idea of the cost and information on hardship grants and	Review whether trips costing several hundred pounds are necessary or educational, or whether costs can be reduced by travelling somewhere more local and using cheaper forms of	Parent councils can question whether expensive trips have enough educational value to justify the cost, and if so how all pupils can be included. There may be an awareness-raising role to ensure hardship

	other help. The cost of the more expensive trips should be spread across the year to make it easier for families to pay.	transport. Review whether children can be left behind on class trips or end of term school trips, due to inability to pay.	grants are utilised, and a fundraising role if this needs to be 'topped up'.
	Primary school trips should have a spending limit, or not include a visit to a shop.		
Breakfasts and lunches	Schools should regularly provide information on available grants and family discounts.		
Travel to school		Transport entitlements should be considered alongside placing requests to ensure children can have stability and continuity.	
Fun events	Consider placing limits on fundraising appeals, and agree on a system whereby no-one is stigmatised because of inability to pay.		Parent councils, while playing a role in asking the community to help with fundraising, should look at ways of doing this that do not exclude or put unnecessary pressure on those who cannot contribute.
	Plan the timing of charity events at the beginning of the year, and give this information to parents and carers so they can plan outfits, costumes and payment.		Plan the timing of charity events at the beginning of the year, and give this information to parents and carers so they can plan outfits, costumes and payment.
	Offer ideas to parents and carers		Offer ideas to parents and carers on

	on costumes that can be easily and cheaply put together for events such as World Book Day.		costumes that can be easily and cheaply put together for events such as World Book Day.
	All schools should inform the school community about where any money raised goes to.		
Home learning	Secondary schools should provide access to IT suites so that homework requiring IT access can be completed, and inform pupils where they can access IT in their local community.	Should children at primary school be asked to complete work at home that requires the use of a computer and/or internet access?	
	Pupils should have the option to email work to their teacher rather than having to print it themselves.	Review provision for pupils who fall behind due to language barriers or whose parents are unable to help them with homework. Is there learning provision for parents and carers to enable them to support their children's learning? How is this promoted and accessed?	
School photographs & other mementos	Consider whether there are ways to reduce the cost of school photographs. Consider whether the school prom is necessary at primary school, or whether P7 leavers can celebrate in other ways.		
Golden time & possessions	Could all schools ask pupils not to bring in their own equipment, and organise Golden Time around resources and activities that the school provides?		
Attitudes	Awareness raising for staff and parent councils on the impact of cost, attitudes towards poverty and how to support families.		

Cost of the School Day - research with parents Focus group outline

Preparation: Prepare the banner so it can be spread across a table when ready. Prepare bundles of pounds and faces for each participant. Ask each participant to complete an equalities monitoring form as they wait.

Materials: banner, flip chart (1 sheet prepared with 'If there was one message...'), post-its, pens, consent forms, equalities monitoring forms.

Time: 60 minutes

1. Introduction	<p>Introduce researchers, welcome participants and thank them for coming. Ask them to introduce themselves and give their children's ages.</p> <p>Introduction to COSD - aims, what has happened so far, need to find out parents' views on findings. Explain what will happen to the information they give. Ask them to sign the consent form at the end of the session.</p> <p>Ask permission to record the session.</p>	Note names & positions	10 mins
2. Banner	<p>Ask participants to look at the banner and explain how the school day has been broken up. Ask them to think about what are the key issues for them at each time of day.</p>		5 mins
3. Posters	<p>Give each participant a bundle of coins and faces. Ask participants to make their way round the banner looking at each picture in turn. They should place coins on each picture according to how much they feel this part of the school day costs them. They should then think about how they feel about this cost:</p> <p><i>Are costs a problem here, does it affect your child's ability to take part in everything at school, is there the chance that people are left out/excluded because of how much money they have?</i></p> <p>They should place a number of faces on the picture to show how much of a problem they think it is, if it is a problem at all.</p> <p><i>Is there anything the school does at the moment that helps?</i></p> <p>Ask them either to write down their thoughts on a post-it or just keep them in their heads so they can discuss later, or tell one of the researchers.</p>		15 mins

4. Whole group discussion	<p>Ask participants to sit down again. Go through each picture in turn picking up on the number of pounds and faces, and reading any comments. Ask the group to discuss the comments for each picture:</p> <p><i>What do the rest of you think about this?</i></p> <p>On uniform and meals, explore access to and uptake of entitlements - <i>How aware are people of help they can get with uniform?</i> <i>What are the systems for hearing about help that is available?</i> <i>Do they work?</i> [If anybody is not taking them or knows anyone else not taking them]: <i>why not?</i> <i>What support would they need?</i> <i>How would they like to hear about the support available?</i></p>		25 mins
5. Conclusion	<p>Thank participants for their contributions so far. Explain again what will happen to their information. Ask them before they go: if there was one message they would like to give the school, or the council, about the cost of the school day, what would it be? Ask them to write or draw this on a post-it and place it on the final flip chart sheet as they leave (or if any would prefer to do this verbally they can give their message to the researcher).</p> <p>If anyone has anything to say that they did not bring up in the group, they can talk to one of the researchers afterwards. If anyone has questions about the project, they can also ask these afterwards.</p> <p>Ask them to complete a consent form if they are happy for the information they have given to be used.</p>		5 mins

Appendix II

Photographs of 'coins and faces' exercise.

