

Education, Children and Families

10am, Tuesday, 24 May 2016

1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Edinburgh

Item number	7.10
Report number	
Executive/routine	
Wards	

Executive Summary

Over 20% of children in Edinburgh live in poverty and every ward in the city registers a child poverty rate of at least 10% after housing costs. The 1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Edinburgh project was set up in response to this in order to improve the understanding of the causes and impact of child poverty, and to begin to look at what changes schools could make to better support children from low-income families, especially in terms of reducing school-related costs. This report describes the work of the project, and appendix 1 (the report from the project) proposes a number of recommendations for change.

Links

Coalition Pledges	P1 , P5 , P7
Council Priorities	CO1 , CO2 , CO3 , CO4 , CO5 , CO6
Single Outcome Agreement	SO3

1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Edinburgh

1. Recommendations

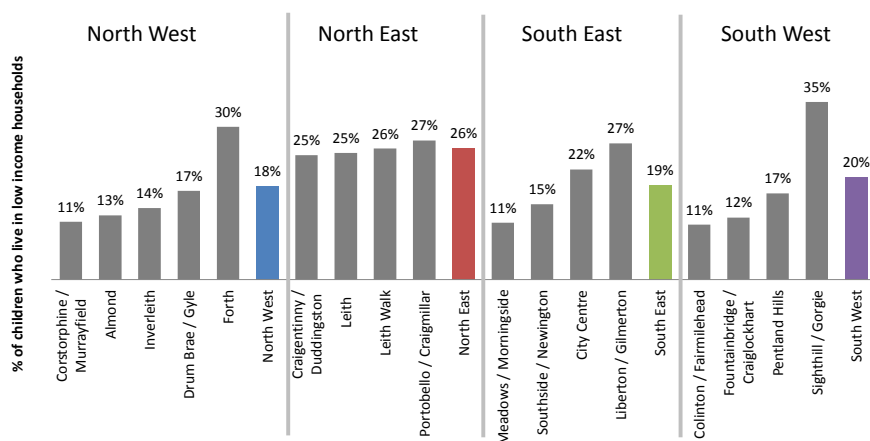
- 1.1 Endorse and support the recommendations in the report at Appendix 1, to be taken forward by the Children's Partnership;
- 1.2 Approve the wider 'roll out' of the 1 in 5 project.

2. Background

- 2.1 Just over 20% of children in Edinburgh live in poverty, equating to about 20,000 children. This figure is projected to rise significantly by 2020 (Institute for Fiscal Studies, 2015). Whilst there are well-documented concentrated areas of poverty in Edinburgh, it should be noted that every Ward registers a child poverty rate, after housing costs, of over 10%. This is therefore an issue that affects every school in the city.

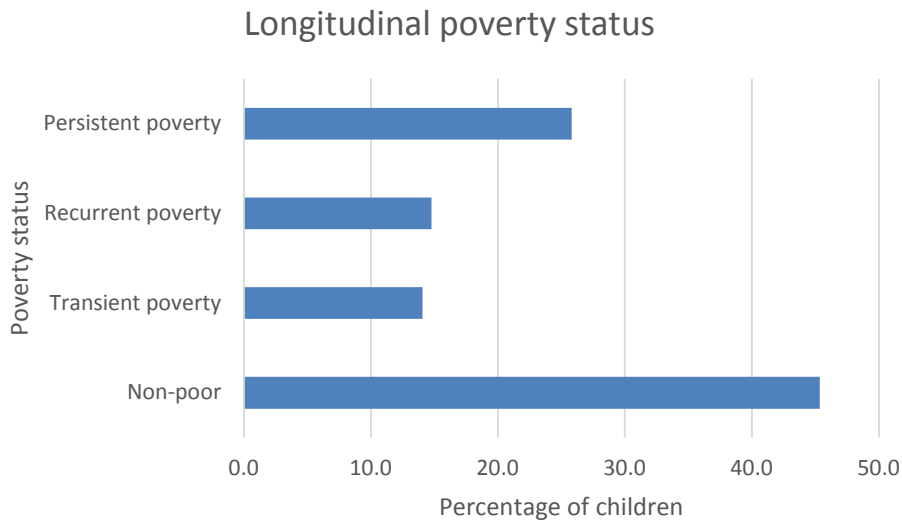
Business Intelligence modelled estimates

CHILD POVERTY IN EDINBURGH BY WARD AND LOCALITY, 2013/14



- 2.2 However, longitudinal studies across seven years of data show that approximately 55% of all children will experience at least one year of poverty. This means that although just over 20% of children currently experience persistent poverty, an additional 30% or more experience transient or recurrent poverty, as the graph below illustrates.

Figure 1 Longitudinal poverty status across seven years of data



Source: Growing Up in Scotland sweeps 1 – 7

Weighted by longitudinal weight from sweep 7

- 2.3 Children are currently defined as living in poverty if their equivalised household income is 60% or less of the national median income. This is an international measure which allows comparisons between countries. Presently, two thirds of all children in poverty live in households in which at least one adult works.
- 2.4 Despite popular perceptions, and stereotypes perpetuated by the media and some politicians, there is no evidence to suggest that poverty is caused by personal factors like addiction or being 'workshy'. All the evidence supports poverty being the result of structural issues such as unemployment and underemployment, inadequate levels of benefits (especially in the current context of Welfare Reform), low pay, and insecure terms and conditions of employment such as zero hours contracts. These factors are compounded by the very high cost of housing and childcare. Neither is there any evidence to suggest that poor families are not aspirational for their children. The difficulties poor families face are often rooted in lower levels of economic, social and cultural capital which make it much harder to realise aspirations. It is also important not to equate being poor with being a poor parent; there is no correlation between the two. Likewise, people living in poverty are not poor at budget management. The issue is lack of money, not the ability to manage it.
- 2.5 14% of children in Scotland experience combined low income (after housing costs) and material deprivation, a trend which continues to increase (Scottish Government, 2015). This means that these families often struggle to meet the most basic material needs of their children.

- 2.6 As a consequence of current child poverty rates and trends, one of the many areas that affected families struggle to afford is the range of costs associated with school. This is a main focus of the 1 in 5 Project.

3. Main report

- 3.1 The 1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Edinburgh project was set up in August 2015. It had three main aims:
- 1) Raise awareness of the impact of poverty, and the stigmatisation on children living in poverty;
 - 2) Identify and understand the range of costs involved in the school day from different perspectives (school staff, parents, children/young people);
 - 3) Make recommendations and propose actions that schools can take forward.
- 3.2 Six pilot schools were selected to take part: five primary schools (Royal High, Dalry, Gracemount, Hillwood and Sciennes) and Broughton High School. The schools were chosen to represent a wide social mix. In the case of the primary schools, they all have at least 50 pupils eligible for free school meals. Broughton High School has one of the highest numbers of pupils eligible for free school meals (175). The primary schools in the Craigroyston cluster were also consulted.
- 3.3 The project had several different strands. The first of these was an awareness-raising session delivered to all staff in each pilot school. This session aimed to enhance staff understanding of the causes and impact of child poverty, and to initiate discussion about what changes could be introduced, and actions taken, in schools to better support children living in poverty. Following this session, interested staff were asked to meet again as a focus group to look in more depth at the actions and changes to be considered. The same session was run with interested parents and, in a different format, with groups of school pupils. The awareness-raising session was universally well-received by all who took part.
- 3.4 In order to successfully involve the children in this work, it was important to come at it from an angle that engaged their interest and stimulated their learning. We chose to do this by running two competitions in the primary schools. The first was, following the awareness-raising sessions and a short talk at school assemblies, to ask them to design a poster about how children in poverty might feel. An artist was employed to work with the groups of children to help them develop their ideas. Each school submitted its entries and an overall winner and runner-up were chosen. These were then made into professional-quality posters for distribution to every school in the city.
- 3.5 The second activity in the primary schools was a Making a Difference Award. Groups of children in each project school were asked to come up with ideas that they thought would help children affected by poverty in their school. A winner was

- chosen from each school and they received a sum of money to put their idea into action.
- 3.6 The pupils in the high school were asked to make a short video about child poverty. A professional video company was hired to work with the young people, and the intention is to include this video in a pack of training materials about child poverty which will be sent to all schools in Edinburgh.
 - 3.7 The final activity the project schools undertook was called 'Hungry for Books'. Pupils from each school asked for donations of books that could be distributed via local networks to children in low-income families. This proved hugely successful.
 - 3.8 The findings of the project were launched at a conference at the Faith Mission on 22 March 2016. Attended by about 150 people (including many head teachers), the conference celebrated the work of the 1 in 5 project. Speakers at the conference were Councillor Cathy Fullerton (Vice Convener of Education, Children and Families); Naomi Eisenstadt (the Scottish Government's Independent Advisor on Poverty and Inequality); Euan Page (Equalities and Human Rights Commission); Chris Kilkenny (a child poverty campaigner and young person with first-hand experience of extreme poverty); and Dr. Morag Treanor (Lecturer in Quantitative Social Policy at Edinburgh University and advisor to the Child Poverty Action Group). The children who had won the various awards mentioned above also discussed their ideas, and head teachers from the participating schools talked about the impact the work had had in their schools. The young people from Broughton High School showed the video they had made. A 'Top Tips' leaflet (appendix 2) of ideas all schools can introduce was included in the delegates pack. This has also been sent to every teacher in Edinburgh. Finally, some of the recommendations in the project report (appendix 1) were presented.
 - 3.9 Appendix 1 makes 30 recommendations which have resulted from this work and its engagement with schools, parents and pupils. These recommendations are grouped under eight headings: raising awareness; school uniforms; food and drink; curriculum materials and homework; trips and after school activities; events and fundraising; inclusion funds; and, benefit advice and support. This list is not exhaustive and work will continue to identify further areas where change could be made to better support children from low income families.
 - 3.10 The 'Top Tips' leaflet (appendix 2) provides a list of ideas for school staff to consider. The ideas emerged from the focus groups with over 1000 staff, parents and pupils, and have been sent to every teacher and early years practitioner in the city.
 - 3.11 The 1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Edinburgh project has proved to be both successful and influential. All the schools which took part in the initial phase have found it to be a hugely worthwhile and valuable piece of work. Indeed, some of the pilot schools have stated that this work has 'changed the culture' of their school, such has been its impact. The challenge now is to offer this work to every school and early years setting in the city.

4. Measures of success

- 4.1 Outcomes for children in poverty improve against a range of indicators

5. Financial impact

- 5.1 The initial project work was covered by a £10k grant from the Social Justice Fund and this will cover activities until June 2016.
- 5.2 A new grant funding application has been submitted for a further £10k to help support the work from June 2016 - March 2017.
- 5.3 The delivery of this work is being undertaken by staff in their current roles within Schools and Lifelong Learning and this section is under review.
- 5.4 It is important that the review considers staffing both to support the 1 in 5 work in the future and to lead on taking forward any agreed recommendations outlined in Appendix 1.

6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact

- 6.1 There are no adverse impacts arising from this report

7. Equalities impact

- 7.1 Improved outcomes for, and greater inclusion of, children living in poverty

8. Sustainability impact

- 8.1 Improved outcomes for children in poverty contributes to a range of sustainability indicators

9. Consultation and engagement

- 9.1 This work detailed in this report is the result of extensive and in-depth consultation and engagement with staff, parents and pupils. This will continue.

Alistair Gaw

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10. Links

Coalition Pledges	<p>P1 Increase support for vulnerable children, including help for families so that fewer go into care</p> <p>P5 Seek to ensure the smooth introduction of the Curriculum for Excellence and that management structures within our schools support the new curriculum</p> <p>P7 Further develop the Edinburgh Guarantee to improve work prospects for school leavers</p>
Council Priorities	<p>CO1 Our children have the best start in life, are able to make and sustain relationships and are ready to succeed</p> <p>CO2 Our children and young people are successful learners, confident individuals and responsible citizens making a positive contribution to their communities</p> <p>CO3 Our children and young people at risk, or with a disability, have improved life chances</p> <p>CO4 Our children and young people are physically and emotionally healthy</p> <p>CO5 Our children and young people are safe from harm or fear of harm, and do not harm others within their communities</p> <p>CO6 Our children's and young people's outcomes are not undermined by poverty and inequality</p>
Single Outcome Agreement	<p>SO3 Edinburgh's children and young people enjoy their childhood and fulfil their potential</p>
Appendices	<p>Appendix 1 - 1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty</p> <p>Appendix 2 - Top Tips for Schools</p>

1^{IN}5

**RAISING
AWARENESS
OF CHILD
POVERTY**

•EDINBURGH•
THE CITY OF EDINBURGH COUNCIL

“Poverty affects every area of a child’s life and this is no different for school.”

(The Children’s Society 2014)

National Picture

More than 22% of children in Scotland (212,000) live in poverty. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) forecasts that this will increase by 100,000 to over one in four children by 2020. The impact of poverty on children’s lives is pervasive. The gap in outcomes remains wide in terms of standard of living, quality of life, health, opportunities and educational attainment.

Recent Scottish Government policy and investment has focused on closing the attainment gap between children from high and low income households in order to reduce current inequalities in educational outcomes. Integral to this agenda must be supporting schools to consider their policies and practices to ensure that financial difficulties are not barriers to children’s right to learn and achieve.

Local Picture

In Edinburgh, the child poverty rate matches the national average and affects 1 in 5 pupils. According to recent City of Edinburgh Council figures, that means 20,474 children live in poverty in the capital (after housing costs are taken into consideration). Although considered an affluent capital city, every single Ward across Edinburgh registers child poverty rates of over 10% after housing costs.

‘1 in 5’ Child Poverty Work in Edinburgh

The 1 in 5 project began in August 2015 and is centred on a programme of work to: raise awareness and understanding of child poverty and its impact on educational outcomes; explore the cost of the school day; and, examine the impact of poverty-related stigma.

Six pilot schools took part in the project which involved training and focus group sessions with staff, parents/carers, and children and young people in order to:

- a) Raise awareness of the impact of stigmatisation on children living in poverty;
- b) Identify and understand the range of costs involved in the school day from different perspectives;
- c) Make recommendations and propose actions for schools to take forward.

Pupils from the schools have also been involved in a number of other initiatives to help raise awareness of child poverty, and these are detailed later in the report.

'1 in 5' Child Poverty Work in Edinburgh

The schools selected were deliberately chosen to represent a wide social mix; in some cases this may mean that, for schools with a high intake of more affluent students, the pupils and parents affected by poverty experience more stigma and difficulties with the cost of the school day because this is not a barrier for their peers. The five primary schools had at least 50 pupils (or over 30%) eligible for free school meals (Sciennes, Hillwood, Gracemount, Dalry and Royal High). Broughton High School, also selected, has one of the highest numbers of pupils (175) eligible for free school meals. Positive action schools were not included as these schools are already aware of the impact of poverty on outcomes for children and receive additional funding for this purpose.

The impact of the project is highlighted in some of the feedback below.

'I have learned that things cost a lot of money and Alex's story and it must be hard for their parents to bring him up. We should try many ways to help people like Alex.' (Primary pupil)

'I was very surprised at just how ignorant I was about the many causes of child poverty!' 'Addressing poverty will have a positive effect on all areas of a child's development.' (Parents)

'It was hard listening, thought provoking and challenging. It makes me want to make a difference – particularly in my role as a teacher.' (Class Teacher)

"The project has had a significant impact on the life of our school and the decisions we make. The children and families in our school community face real challenges. It is our job to equip them with the skills and aspirations to overcome these. More than that though, as a school we have social responsibility to ensure opportunities are for all and that they are inclusive. A good example of the impact of this project is when we planned for our whole school community outing at Christmas. We spoke about the way we charged for it in the past and this year we have a price structure that means bigger families pay less. It is these small things that make a difference. Small changes in our approaches make for big changes in our children's lives." (Head teacher)

Key Messages

- Edinburgh has 1 in 5 pupils living on or below the poverty line (consistent with the national average).
- In terms of the scale of child poverty, Scotland ranks about equal with Estonia, Hungary and Portugal and below Poland and the Czech Republic ¹. In Edinburgh in 2014, only six children from the poorest families gained three 'A's at Higher. This compares to 290 young people from the wealthiest families who achieved this standard.
- Two thirds of children in poverty live in families in which at least one adult works.²
- Two-parent families with children are also managing the highest levels of household debt, which has risen by 42% since 2013 ³
- Contrary to popular stereotypes, 93% of people receiving out of work benefits are not dependent on drugs or alcohol.⁴ All the evidence supports the analysis that the causes of poverty are structural. Principal causes include unemployment/underemployment, inadequate levels of benefits (compounded by recent Welfare Reform policies), low wages, and insecure terms and conditions of employment, such as zero hours contracts.
- A recent report estimated that the average cost of school per year is approximately £800 per child.⁵
- This report found that 71% of parents said they had struggled with the cost of school. These costs can include, for example, buying uniforms and other essential equipment (e.g. stationery), paying for school trips and one-off events like school proms, or affording subject choices that have material costs.⁶
- The same report found that 55% of children have avoided asking their parents or carers for something school-related because they thought they would struggle to afford it.

¹ Fanjul, G (2014) 'Children of the Recession: The impact of the economic crisis on child well-being in rich countries' Innocenti Report Card 12, UNICEF Office of Research

² Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland in 2013/14, Table A7, In-work poverty (relative AHC) in Scotland 1998/99 to 2013/14 www.gov.scot/Publications/2015/06/7453/16

³ Aviva (2016) Family Finances Report

⁴ Harkness S, Gregg P and Macmillan L (2012) *Poverty the role of Institutions, Behaviours and Cultures* Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁵ Children's Society (2014) *At What Cost? Exposing the Impact of Poverty on School Life*, Through Young Eyes, The Children's Commission on Poverty http://www.childrensociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/At_What_Cost_Exposing_the_impact_of_poverty_on_school_life-Full_Report.pdf

⁶ As above

Introduction to the Report

Clearly, the most effective response to child poverty will involve a wide range of agencies and services including schools, housing, health, economic development, welfare rights and local, community-based organisations working together.

However, this report highlights 30 main recommendations for change which can be taken forward by Communities and Families. These have been developed in response to the eight principal issues raised in the training and focus groups undertaken by the project team with nearly 400 children, families and staff. A further 700 pupils took part in assemblies.

1. Raising Awareness

'I find it shocking that only 6 people from the poorest families got 3 'As' at higher . That will affect like their whole future life and prospects'. (S4 pupil)

One of the most powerful pieces of feedback received from staff, pupils and families has been the impact of the training and focus groups, both in terms of content and quality and how this has changed attitudes and perspectives. Many staff, pupils and families were surprised that 1 in 5 children are living in poverty in Edinburgh and concerned about the implications of this on both a personal and public level.

'Very thought provoking and sad – a lot of ignorance on my part. Made me think about what I can do and I want to understand more so I can help' (Primary teacher)

The focus groups also raised the issue of 'hidden poverty', which affects pupils and families who may not be entitled to benefits but because of changes in circumstances or factors such as debt management programmes are struggling to get by. Schools have reported increased levels of self reflection and empathy in all parties involved as a result. All schools embraced the idea of reviewing costs associated with the school day which has contributed to the development of training for schools and the recommendations held within this report. The initial pilot for this work took place in six schools but there is also great interest from many other schools to take part in similar training to raise awareness, help with focus groups and conduct similar 'poverty proofing' work in their establishments.

Recommendations

1. There should be ongoing support for the project team to continue the roll-out of training and develop focus group tools in order to continue to raise awareness of the impact of child poverty, reduce stigma and examine the costs of the school day.
2. Send out the 'Top Tips' leaflet to all staff in schools with a covering letter from the Executive Director.
3. Build on the success of the 1 in 5 Child Poverty event in March 2016. This should include organising an annual conference or event to highlight issues around child poverty and sharing good practice.
4. Endorse and support the actions proposed in this report.
5. Many of the recommendations proposed could be addressed in a new Equity Framework or similar which would help support schools to make any changes necessary to enable pupils to take full advantage of the education provided.

2. School Uniforms

'School uniform can be expensive so Alex (case study) might have a problem getting it. But school uniform shouldn't stop you getting a good education.'(Primary Pupil)

The average cost per child on school uniform is estimated to be £159 per year.⁷ In every single school, the families interviewed felt strongly that they should be able to buy school uniform from a store of their choice in order to be able to benefit from cheaper deals. Uniforms already carrying school badges should be optional rather than compulsory, and schools should consider providing badges that parents can buy and sew-on themselves. Some schools had a different uniform for each year and this increased costs.

An internal City of Edinburgh Council report⁸ found that over half of schools (both primary and secondary) were generating income for the school with sales of uniform being channelled through certain suppliers. The obligation that parents have to buy school uniform from certain suppliers could be seen as discriminating against families who as a result of low income are struggling to afford the costs for these and could find uniform cheaper elsewhere.

Families who are eligible for clothing grants (in Edinburgh this is £43 for primary pupils and £50 for secondary pupils per year, which is below the average spend) currently have to collect their vouchers from the City Chambers. Many staff and parents have raised this as an issue and questioned why this could not be distributed by schools or in neighbourhood centres. Furthermore, at present, these vouchers can only be redeemed in BHS, Marks and Spencer, EESLS and Sondico Professionals, or directly with the school.

Recommendations

6. Review information given out to parents on the wearing of school uniform to ensure that all reasonable steps are being taken to support children who are from low income families.
7. The Equity Framework could encourage schools to be flexible in the purchase of school uniform rather than buying exclusively from sole suppliers. Where any income is generated, it could be used for inclusion purposes.
8. Clothing vouchers should be sent to schools to ensure these are more easily accessible to families.
9. Procurement should investigate how these vouchers could be more widely redeemable.

⁷ The Children's Society (2015) *The Wrong Blazer- Time for Action on School Uniform Costs*, Through Young Eyes, The Children's Commission on Poverty http://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/The-Wrong-Blazer_-_Time-for-action-on-school-uniform-costs_-_The-Children%27s-Commission-on-Poverty_The-Children%27s-Society.pdf

⁸ CEC Uniform Report April 2015

3. Food & Drink

'We keep spare fruit for children who come in to school hungry. Some staff have a supply of biscuits they provide for children without snack' (Head teacher)

Free school meals for P1-P3 children have been widely welcomed; however, issues arise from P4 onwards. Research has found that pupils not identified as qualifying for free school meals (but who are just above the poverty threshold) are four times more likely to go hungry.⁹ Staff were aware of these children not having money for snacks, and both staff and families who were interviewed all raised the issue of free milk and fruit. However, they are also aware that this has budgetary implications. The majority of schools offer extended day services to pupils, such as breakfast clubs, after school clubs, (for which a charge can be made) in order to address some of their pupils needs but this is not universally available.

Recommendations

10. Support the implementation and roll out of breakfast clubs in all schools. This work is being led by the Early Years team.
11. Investigate any wider Governmental/NHS programmes around provision of free fruit in schools.
12. Approach large supermarkets and other companies (e.g. farms' 'wonky' vegetable initiatives) to find out whether they would be prepared to support such a programme as part of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR)

⁹ Farthing R (2014) *The Cost of Going to School, From Young People's Perspectives* Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)

4. Curriculum materials and homework

‘We need to be mindful of how teachers deal with late homework, not paying for trips, lack of uniform etc. if this is directly related to poverty!’ Class teacher

‘This has really made me think and also evaluate what a classroom environment is like for a child in poverty and how it COULD be if we put things in place to change attitudes and make provisions’. Class Teacher

According to law, schools must provide free education and cannot charge for any trip or activity (or materials, books, exam entry fees or equipment for use in connection with the activity) which:-

- takes place wholly or mainly during school hours;
- is an essential part of the curriculum or religious education syllabus; or
- is an essential part of the syllabus for a prescribed examination.

There are costs charged for certain courses such as ICT, CDT, HFT which vary from school to school from £0 to £90 per year. There is widespread agreement that this cost may act as a barrier to young people from low income families and prevent them from taking these courses. However, school staff were keen to point out that these courses do carry costs for materials and that this is not centrally funded, unlike free school meals. If there is no budget for these materials to be provided free of charge, schools often have little choice but to charge parents/carers.

Courses adhered to above are often appealing to pupils who are not looking to go to University and interested in developing skills for trade or commerce. Given that over 50% of pupils do not go to University^{10 11} it is important that we maximise pathways and alternatives for the other 50% of children to ensure they are well equipped to enter other positive destinations.

Recommendation

13. An Equity Framework could include explicit guidelines to schools about what can/cannot be charged for including those that relate to subject areas e.g. ICT, CDT, HFT
14. Explore the potential of the private sector to cover some of these costs. For example, large companies and supermarkets could be approached about providing food for hospitality courses across the city as part of their CSR initiatives.
15. Support ongoing initiatives in schools that encourage pupils to explore and move into a range of positive destinations not just academic ones.

¹⁰ Ball C (2014) *Most people in the UK do not go to University- and maybe never will*, The Guardian 4th June 2013, <http://www.theguardian.com/higher-education-network/blog/2013/jun/04/higher-education-participation-data-analysis>

¹¹ Birdwell J, Grist M and Margo J (2011) *The Forgotten Half*, Demos, London

5. Trips and After School Activities

'We want to increase the opportunities for dialogue with children who know their parents may struggle with costs – making it ok to speak about these issues rather than keeping them hidden' (Primary Head teacher)

'At times it feels as though there were letters home every week asking for this or that. Yes then there's the pressure for trading cards and items like penny boards etc that affects them (children) and the finances.' (Parent in '1 in 5' focus group)

As mentioned above, the law states that schools cannot charge for any trip or activity which is an essential part of the curriculum or a prescribed examination. Department of Education Advice for England and Wales (there is no equivalent document for Scotland) states that parents and carers can be asked to make voluntary contributions for board and lodging, transport but the voluntary nature of the contribution must be made clear and state that the children of parents who don't contribute will not be discriminated against. They also state if insufficient voluntary contributions are raised to fund a visit, or the school cannot fund it from some other source, then it must be cancelled.

Schools involved in the 1 in 5 project undertook an activity to audit all the costs requested of parents for their child(ren) to take part in trips, events and other activities in the school. In some cases, including in primary schools, this came to more than £1000 over the school career for just one child. Parents in focus groups stated that at times it felt as though 'there were letters home every week asking for this or that'. Parents stated they would prefer information to be provided at the start of the year for all trips to help plan ahead, some consideration from the schools to better space out events/trips and that perhaps a system of contribution on a weekly basis could be set up that would cover all costs and negate the need for further letters.

Parents and staff related instances of children not sharing letters with information about the costs of trips and activities with their parents because they knew, or worried, that their parents could not afford it.

Recommendations

16. The drawing up of an Equity Framework could set out guidelines for our local authority around activities for which a charge can be made and include information about when charges will not be made, for example, for parents on a low income.
17. Schools should be encouraged to audit how much they ask parents and carers for over the duration of a pupil's career and review the necessity and distribution of these requests.
18. Information requesting money should be emailed or, if given to children to take home, sent out in sealed envelopes

6. Events & Fundraising

‘Even though everyone is encouraged to take part he (case study) might be worried and anxious as he would feel that everyone would know he’s not wearing new clothes’
(Secondary School Pupil)

Parents, pupils and staff all raised the issue of dress down/up charity days (having to pay both for the fundraising activity and the relevant costume) and its impact on attendance and potential stigmatising of certain pupils.

Another issue that was raised was holding book fairs in schools and the subsequent letters they send home to parents (e.g. ‘your child would like X book’) which, according to some parents, causes *‘tantrums every time and huge pressure on us as parents to buy the relevant book’*.

Finally, concerns were also raised about ‘end of school leaver proms’ or similar such events, and the associated competitive and ostentatious spend that often takes place amongst many pupils as a result. Some schools are already addressing this by providing alternatives like a day trip to the beach and a barbecue instead.

Recommendations

19. Review any current contracts or arrangements where private or profit making enterprises are allowed in schools to sell their products e.g. book fairs, and review the methods by which they communicate with parents and carers.
20. An Equity Framework could give guidelines to schools around end of term leaver events so that they can feel confident about issuing advice about these to parents with the backing of the local authority.

7. Inclusion Funds

'Depending on the area the school is in, parent councils will contribute more to school trips and resources like new playground equipment. This can lead to inequalities across the city on what schools can provide to pupils depending on the ability of parents to pay directly or contribute to school funds.' (Head teacher)

'Parent councils have money which could be made available to support tackling poverty.' (Class Teacher)

All schools are concerned with supporting pupils to be able to engage with activities equally; however, the way that this was done varied substantially from school to school. Staff, pupils and families all felt there should be an Inclusion Fund to support families facing difficulty with meeting some school-related costs both within the school and centrally. There are some clear examples of children living in poverty not receiving the support they needed unless social work was involved. Some parent councils provided an equivalent of an Inclusion Fund, but many did not. Parents and staff were concerned that some parents did not apply to this fund as it may mean other parents would have access to sensitive or personal information and therefore preferred for this to remain amongst school staff only.

While schools have detailed information about pupils on free school meals, they may be less aware (unless shared by parents) of those families who are affected by issues such as debt management programmes and therefore not eligible for certain benefits. One example was of a family of four, with both parents on a reasonable income but who were on a debt management programme and having to live on £60/week, and therefore not eligible for state support. This is an important reason why schools need to be able to apply discretion and be flexible in responding to children or families facing hardship. Given that 1 in 10 pupils are living in poverty regardless of which electoral Ward they reside in, the issue about inclusion funds applies to all schools.

Recommendations

21. Parent councils should be encouraged to put aside a percentage of their income to be exclusively used for Child Poverty/Inclusion Funds.
22. Any type of application to an Inclusion fund or similar needs to be confidential, and take into consideration issues such as difficulties with literacy that some applicants may have. It may, therefore, be better to be managed by the school rather than the parent council.
23. Develop ways to further strengthen links between schools and teams within the locality who support children and families in need.
24. Make sure that all families are aware of the Scottish Welfare Fund and how to apply. Additionally, consider setting up a separate locality fund to help respond to emergencies that arise within families.
25. Explore with Transport for Edinburgh what affordable travel options might be made available for families on low incomes.
26. Investigate whether existing CEC trust funds could be used to create a central inclusion fund that parents can access to support the cost of trips, education activities, materials and other appropriate school-related costs.
27. Explore how donations to this fund could be enhanced.

8. Benefit Advice & Support

'I spend a lot of time supporting parents to fill in forms for claiming Free School Meals and Clothing Allowance - they are quite complicated and then they need to hand the forms in and collect the funding centrally. I supported one parent who lived in Granton. He then had to walk all the way into town and back to hand in the form as he couldn't afford the bus fare.' (Pupil Support Teacher)

'I would say a really key part of my job is to build relationships with parents- being there in the playground to welcome parents and children, having regular opportunities and events to invite parents in school in an informal, sociable way. That means then when they have difficulties of any kind, including financial problems, they feel more able to come and speak to me about it.' (Head teacher, Positive Action School)

Nearly all the focus groups with parents and staff agreed that more support with benefits advice would be welcome. Schools provided this where they were able to; however, time and capacity meant that this was often limited. Support with this advice is important because research has found that the level of household income is a major determinant in attainment levels. In Scotland, parental socio-economic background has been found to have more influence on children's attainment than the school they attend.^{12 13} Initiatives to help maximise household income should therefore be a priority.

There are (approximately 1000) families whose children are entitled to financial help with school uniforms and free school meals but who do not currently claim this money.

The numbers of people not claiming may be because they are unaware of the support they are entitled to, have difficulties completing the form or, research also found, deterred from claiming benefits they are entitled to, because of the stigma.¹⁴ Feedback from both school staff and parents indicated that there were several different forms and that the process could be simplified and maybe operate on an opt-out basis.

Recommendations

28. Consider whether the number of forms for families on low income could be simplified and reduced.
29. Ensure that all families who are eligible to claim financial assistance, including school clothing grants and free school meals, are encouraged and supported to do so.
30. Schools should organise social events that encourage 'hardly reached' parents to come into school. These should be informal and focused on building relationships between school staff and parents.

¹² OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (2007) 'Quality and equity of schooling in Scotland', <http://browse.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/pdfs/product/9107211e.pdf>

¹³ Cooper K and Stewart K (2013) *Does Money Affect Children's Outcomes. A systematic review.* Joseph Rowntree Foundation

¹⁴ Ben Baumberg, Kate Bell and Declan Gaffney (2012) *Benefits Stigma in Britain* at <https://www.turn2us.org.uk/T2UWebsite/media/Documents/Benefits-Stigma-in-Britain.pdf>

1^{IN}5

**RAISING
AWARENESS
OF CHILD
POVERTY**

TOP TIPS FOR SCHOOLS

1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty

Top Tips for Schools

The following is a list of ideas or things to consider suggested by 390 staff, parents and carers and children and young people who took part in the '1 in 5: Cost of the School Day' focus groups and training in the past 6 months. Some of the things you will already be doing but some may give you food for thought.

SCHOOL CLOTHING



- * 'Be flexible about uniform and allow for purchase from a range of suppliers.'
- * 'Hold regular uniform sales and use positive language (avoid advertising as 'second hand clothing' and instead call sales Pop-up shops, Flash sales or Clothing Recycling Events instead).'
- * 'Link uniform sales into other schools initiatives, eg eco schools and recycling to overcome any perceived stigma.'
- * 'Advise parents that you will recycle all lost property after a certain period of time.'
- * 'Make PE kit available to children who need it without them having to ask every week.'

FOOD & SNACKS

- * 'Provide opportunities for children to eat breakfast before starting school.'
- * 'Save uneaten fruit, yogurts and snack bars from packed lunches and make them available for children who would like them.'
- * 'If someone regularly doesn't have lunch money, discreetly ask about the reasons for this and cover the costs of lunch for an agreed period of time for non FSM pupils whose parents are having financial difficulties.'



IN THE CLASSROOM



- * 'Let parents know what the school will provide for their child (eg stationery) as well as what they need to bring.'
- * 'Have a stationery box at the front of each classroom that all pupils can use at any time.'
- * 'Encourage donations of stationery from the local community to help resource school supplies.'
- * 'Be aware that some children may not be having a party and get cards and presents for their birthday so consider how to ensure children's birthdays are celebrated in class.'

HOMEWORK & OUT OF SCHOOL LEARNING

- * 'Provide a homework club which has appropriate materials and access to online resources and encourage parents to attend and help support children.'
- * 'Bear in mind when setting homework that not all children have access to the internet or money for resources for arts and crafts.'
- * 'Know who your pupils in SIMD 1-3 are and provide extra attention and support, especially with regards to literacy initiatives.'



CHARITY AND FUNDRAISING ACTIVITIES/SPECIAL EVENTS



- * 'Encourage 'show and tell' or golden time activities not to involve electronic toys as this may lead to competition and stigmatisation.'
- * 'Could dress down days be themed days instead? This way a fancy dress box can be provided or opportunities set up for children to make masks or other items in class beforehand.'
- * 'Consider arranging book swaps rather than book fairs which put pressure on parents to buy certain books for their child.'
- * 'Instead of asking families for money, explore how children can support good causes in other ways, such as helping at an event to raise awareness or doing a bag pack.'
- * 'Is there any way of making school photographs more affordable? Can there be a cheaper digital option?'
- * 'Instead of an 'American-style' prom which can become competitive, consider low cost alternatives like a day at the beach or making the event about doing something for the local community.'

SCHOOL TRIPS & ACTIVITIES

- * 'Add up the amount of money requested from parents in all the letters that are sent home during a pupil's time in school and consider spacing things out more.'
- * 'Inform parents at the start of the year how much may be needed for activities so they have plenty of advance warning.'
- * 'Revise any first come (with payment)-first serve policies for activities. This is not fair on parents who cannot produce the money immediately.'



- * 'Encourage parent councils to allocate a proportion of their income raised to a hardship fund for pupils which the school administers for pupils from low income families. This helps keep the families involved anonymous.'
- * 'Reading out the names of those who have not paid for activities can be embarrassing. Make direct contact with the parents and see if you can understand whether there is a reason for non-payment.'
- * 'Letters requesting money should come to parents directly through email or sealed envelopes as children may hide them if they are worried their parents cannot pay.'

OTHER

- * 'Hold high expectations of all pupils but be understanding of the circumstances of each.'
- * 'Use the 1 in 5 training. It's a great way to raise awareness amongst staff.'
- * 'Anti-bullying policies should include clear statements on money-based bullying and staff should be mindful of this.'
- * 'Developing positive relationships with parents is crucial. Staff being in the playground to meet and greet at the start of the school day has made a big difference in some schools.'
- * 'Support parents to claim the benefits they are entitled to by signposting to agencies and other forms of support/advice or hold information events in school.'
- * 'Encourage handmade letters and presents for teachers. Discourage class collections of money for teacher gifts or even consider asking pupils not to buy presents at all.'
- * 'Review reward and merit systems to ensure they are not given for things that could be related to finances at home, such as 'correct' uniform or having a pencil.'

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION:

EIS (2015) Face Up to Poverty part of Child Poverty Campaign http://www.eis.org.uk/Campaigns/Child_poverty.htm

CPAG (2015) Cost of the School Day Report <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/cost-school-day-report-and-executive-summary>

TRAINING REQUESTS?

If you would like your school staff to take part in the **1 in 5 Raising Awareness of Child Poverty Workshop and Focus Groups** please contact childpoverty@edinburgh.gov.uk

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