

# Education, Children and Families Committee

**10.00am, Tuesday, 6 March 2018**

## **Child Poverty - School Uniform Grant**

**Item number** 7.6  
**Report number**  
**Executive/routine**  
**Wards**  
**Council Commitments** [45](#)

### **Executive Summary**

This report is in response to a motion submitted by Councillor Arthur at the Education, Children and Families Committee's meeting on 10 October 2017 requesting a report on Child Poverty and School Uniform Grants.

There are 22% of children in Edinburgh live who in poverty (defined as living in households where the income is 60% or less of the national median income).

Independent studies predict child poverty will continue to rise as a consequence of low wages, insecure work contracts and changes to the social security system.

Families experiencing poverty often lack the money to pay for essential items such as school equipment and uniforms, school trips or extra materials to use in certain subjects. This can be of particular challenge for families with more than one child.

Current figures indicate that 5,900 pupils in Edinburgh are eligible for a School Clothing Grant. This stands at £43 and £50 for primary and secondary school children respectively which is below the National average.

This report sets out the financial options for increasing the School Clothing Grant and how transaction applications can be streamlined and information processed to ensure that no eligible family misses out on the clothing grants and free school meals they are entitled to.

## Child Poverty - School Uniform Grant

### 1. Recommendations

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- 1.1 Note the contents of this report
- 1.2 Commend the excellent work outlined in Sections 3.1 & 3.9
- 1.3 Agree to streamline the criteria for entitlement to a Clothing Grant by aligning it with eligibility for Free School Meals status, making the application process easier for families and ensuring a further 450 – 500 pupils access support
- 1.4 Agree that the primary school pupil entitlement is the same as the secondary school entitlement which will result in more efficient administrative processes and will provide additional support to around 3,600 families of primary school children
- 1.6 Agree to increase the clothing grant for all eligible pupils taking account of the financial options presented at 5.
- 1.7 Agree to implementation of a new transactions system which will allow us to use housing benefits and council tax reduction data to identify eligible pupils and automatically make an award to families reducing the burden for parents/carers to go through duplicate application and verification processes (subject to information governance guidelines)

### 2. Background

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- 2.1 There are 22% 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%.
- 2.2 Families experiencing poverty often lack the money to pay for essential items such as school equipment and uniforms. This can be a particular challenge for families with more than one child and can greatly impact on children's learning, experiences and outcomes in school.
- 2.3 The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) estimate that the cost of a school uniform is £129.50. School clothing grants across different local authorities range from £20 to £110. The School Clothing Grant provided by City of Edinburgh Council (CEC) is £43 and £50 for primary and secondary school children respectively which is below the average (£60.47). The Scottish Government proposed that the School Clothing Grant level should be set at £70. However, no nationwide minimum level has been set.

- 2.4 Current projections estimate that 5900 pupils (3600 primary and 2300 secondary) in Edinburgh are eligible for a School Clothing Grant.
- 2.5 The 1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Edinburgh project has raised awareness and understanding of child poverty amongst school and other staff, and has provided schools with a wide range of practical suggestions for reducing the cost of the school day, many of which have been implemented.
- 2.6 This report provides the financial options for increasing the School Clothing Grant.

### 3. Main report

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- 3.1 The City of Edinburgh council does recognise that child poverty is rising in Edinburgh and in response to this since 2015 developed the 1 in 5: Raising Awareness of Child Poverty in Edinburgh project which has been rolled out to 80 schools. It has developed a range of training, programme and resources to explore raising awareness, reducing stigma and poverty proofing the cost of the school day. In addition, to training, the following have been developed.
- 3.2 1 in 5 'Top Tips' resource, distributed to all schools in the city, includes recommendations for schools including allowing uniform to be accessed from a range of suppliers and not insisting on the need for a logo, holding second-hand uniform flash sales and providing gym kit for children who need it in a non-stigmatising way.
- 3.4 Making School Equal for All- Edinburgh's Equity Framework also has guidance on what schools should be doing to minimise school uniform costs and highlights that schools should never be profiting from sales of uniform. In addition it states that staff should presume that children who lack mandatory school uniform items require financial support or assistance and support the family to access School Clothing Grant and other sources of support.
- 3.5 The '1 in 5: Financial Support and Information' booklet distributed to all Services for Schools and Communities staff contains information on how to support families to maximise income and access the Edinburgh School Uniform Bank, Edinburgh Police Fund for Children, and others.
- 3.3 Current projections estimate that 5900 pupils (3600 primary and 2300 secondary) are eligible for School Clothing Grants. The budget for clothing grants is £241,848.00. Current approved applications/spend (year to date) totals £220,402.00 Current budget - £241,848.00. Applications can be received until 31 March 2018 and more are expected. The increase in approved applications from previous years is likely as a result of the move from a voucher scheme (which needed redemption) to direct payment into bank accounts.
- 3.4 The Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) & Cost of the School Day Reports (as cited in the Glasgow Centre for Population Health – see reference below) estimated that the cost of a school uniform is £129.50.

- 3.5 Currently, in Edinburgh, primary school pupils receive £43 and secondary school pupils receive £50 (although on the CPAG website it indicates that £50 is the flat rate for Edinburgh) <http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/school-clothing-grants-scotland-0> This listing details the clothing grants available per local authority which ranges from £110 in West Lothian to £20 in Angus. Based on this information (which may not be accurate), out of 32 local authorities the average clothing grant is £60.47. The Scottish Government back in 2009 proposed the School Clothing Grant level should be set at £70. However, no nationwide minimum level has yet been set.
- 3.6 It would greatly streamline the administration process and reduce margin of error if there was a single rate of payment for both primary and secondary children.
- 3.7 There is also an anomaly in the eligibility criteria for Free School Meals (FSM) and Clothing Grant (CG) which means that children may qualify for FSM but not CG. If all children who received FSM were automatically given clothing grants, a further 450-500 children would benefit from clothing grants and would ease administration. This would bring the total numbers of pupils as eligible for clothing grants to 6400. (This would obviously not apply in the case of blanket FSM programmes i.e. all P1-P3 pupils FSM funded by Scottish Government and FSM for all St Crispins and Oaklands pupils funded by the CEC).
- 3.8 Within the transactions team, a new system could allow the assessment for CG and FSM to be made alongside housing benefits and council tax reduction (subject to information governance guidelines). This data matching would enable us to identify eligible pupils and make an award to families automatically reducing the burden for parents and carers to complete duplicate application forms and verification processes. Furthermore, this system will enable us to proactively identify families that are not claiming grants that they are entitled to and support them to do so.
- 3.9 This aligns with consideration could be given to Communities and Families supporting more income maximisation work. Through the 1 in 5 work, we are supporting a *Financial Advice and Support Service*, which is a partnership between NHS Lothian, CHAI and CEC, to pilot the co-location of a welfare advisor (approx. cost £29k) into schools in the Tynecastle Cluster and two special schools- Rowanfield and Pilrig Park. Since August 2017, 43 families have been supported and have gained a total of £113,755 in income (average increase £2645 per family).

#### **4. Measures of success**

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- 4.1 Around 450 – 500 additional families can access clothing grant support as a result of streamlining the process and aligning eligibility with FME.
- 4.2 Around 3,600 families of primary school pupils benefit from the uplift in the primary clothing grant to be the same as secondary school pupils.
- 4.3 All 6400 pupils in Edinburgh benefit from an increase in their School Clothing Grant.
- 4.4 Streamlined transactions information and data matching ensures that no eligible family misses out on clothing grants and free school meals they are entitled to.

## 5. Financial impact

	Options	Numbers of children benefiting	Clothing Grant Entitlement	Budget required*
1	Maintain the Status Quo	5,900	£43 - Primary £50 - Secondary	£241,848
2	Align the criteria for clothing grant entitlement to be same as FME (but with no uplift in amount)	6,400	£43 - Primary £50 - Secondary	£266,848
3	Align the criteria for clothing grant entitlement to be same as FME <u>and</u> increase primary pupil entitlement to match secondary school entitlement	6,400	£50 - both sectors	£295,000
4	Increase Clothing Grant for all eligible pupils (aligned with FME) to be in line with Scottish Government Recommendation*	6,400	£70 – both sectors	£448,000
5	Increase Clothing Grant for all eligible pupils (aligned with FME) to same amount as highest local authority*	6400	£110 – both sectors	£704,000
6	Increase Clothing Grant for all eligible pupils (aligned with FME) to be in line with CPAG recommendations*	6400	£129.50 – both sectors	£828,800

\*This would not apply in the case of blanket FSM programmes i.e. all P1-P3 pupils FSM funded by Scottish Government and FSM for all St Crispins and Oaklands pupils funded by CEC.

There is efficiency in the proposed streamlining by the Transactions team of the various different application processes (Housing Benefits, Council Tax Reduction, and FSM & CG) into one. The systems that would enable us to do this are already in place and it would reduce administrative time for families as well as staff.

## **6. Risk, policy, compliance and governance impact**

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- 6.1 There are no adverse impacts arising from this report.

## **7. Equalities impact**

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

## **8. Sustainability impact**

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

## **9. Consultation and engagement**

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- 9.1 The 1 in 5 resources are the result of extensive and in-depth consultation with school staff, pupils, parents, academics and specialists in the field of child poverty

## **10. Background reading/external references**

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- 10.1 Details of CEC application form and eligibility criteria for food and clothing grants  
[http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20183/food\\_and\\_clothing/392/free\\_school\\_meals\\_and\\_help\\_with\\_schoolwear](http://www.edinburgh.gov.uk/info/20183/food_and_clothing/392/free_school_meals_and_help_with_schoolwear)
- 10.2 CPAG Website – School Clothing Grants in Scotland  
<http://www.cpag.org.uk/content/school-clothing-grants-scotland-0>
- 10.3 School Uniform Grants Still Unequal <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-40889900>
- 10.4 Learning from the Cost of the School Day Project (CPAG & GCPH) (p.g 9)  
[http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6096/Briefing\\_paper\\_BP49\\_cost\\_of\\_school\\_day\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6096/Briefing_paper_BP49_cost_of_school_day_WEB.pdf)
- 10.5 The Wrong Blazer: Time for Action on School Costs  
<https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/the-wrong-blazer-time-for-action-on-school-uniform-costs>  
[http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6096/Briefing\\_paper\\_BP49\\_cost\\_of\\_school\\_day\\_WEB.pdf](http://www.gcph.co.uk/assets/0000/6096/Briefing_paper_BP49_cost_of_school_day_WEB.pdf)

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## **11. Appendices**

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