

CPAG in Scotland Response to Glasgow City Council Consultation on Breakfast Club Provision in Primary Schools

1. CPAG in Scotland appreciate that the local authority is coming under increasing financial pressure. However, we believe Glasgow City Council should look beyond the education budget if cuts are to be made. In particular, we do not feel savings should be made by reducing funding for initiatives, such as breakfast clubs, which are aimed at improving the wellbeing and educational attainment of children, particularly those from low income families.

2. To date, Glasgow City Council has been at the forefront of local action to reduce poverty and to mitigate its impact on children and families. Initiatives such as the Poverty Leadership Panel have demonstrated Glasgow's commitment and innovative approach to poverty reduction. There is, however, a real risk that cutting funding for breakfast clubs will undermine the stated objectives and actions of the **Poverty Leadership Panel** (as laid out in its 2014-15 Action Planⁱ) which include commitments to:

- 'Poverty proof' the school day from a child's perspective to eliminate stigma and financial barriers that may impede attainment.
- Ensure fewer families are living in poverty
- Consider poverty impact on families in service plans by the public sector
- Develop shared objectives and targets amongst family support, child care and employability services

3. Adequate consideration has not been given to how the options laid out in the current consultation paper will undermine these objectives. This is unacceptable given that child poverty is set to increase dramatically. According to the latest official statistics, over 1 in 5 children in Scotland are living in poverty. In Glasgow, rates are even higher, with approximately 33% of children living in poverty, with wards such as Springburn experiencing levels as high as 46%ⁱⁱ.

4. The Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) has forecast that by 2020 up to 100,000 **more** children in Scotland could be living in poverty than in 2011/12ⁱⁱⁱ. The impact of increased poverty on access to food and nutrition is clear, particularly given that use of Trussell Trust Food Banks in Scotland rose from 14,332 in 2011/12 to 117,689 per year in 2014/15^{iv}.

5. It is also clear that increased poverty will increasingly undermine the health and wellbeing of children across Scotland. Evidence clearly shows the link between poverty and chronic illness, low attainment and a raft of other wellbeing indicators^v.

6. For this reason, we believe Glasgow City Council should invest in maximising uptake of breakfast clubs, which can reduce pressure on family income, increase consumption of healthy foods, improve educational attainment, promote punctuality and provide a source of affordable childcare^{vi}.

7. Cost of the School Day is a [Glasgow Poverty Leadership Panel](#) project, hosted by the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland and inspired by the success of [Poverty Proofing the School Day](#) from Children North East. The project is working in eight Glasgow schools to develop practical solutions to the problems of poverty related stigma and exclusion. Findings from this project and wider research suggest that many children from low income families would benefit from improved access to breakfast clubs. For example:

- One teacher told us, "*I think when some of the kids are coming in hungry, they've not had breakfast, or they'll tell you that they've not had dinner. You know then that there's not much money at home and parents can't afford food for them.*" Others teachers say they have given children left over toast and fruit to stop them going hungry.

- There also concern amongst school staff about the nutritional value of the food many children are consuming. One teacher said, *"I think one of the things that concerns me ...is the lack of good nutrition and the impact that has on development, what that does to them physically... unfortunately you can see the physical impact of malnutrition in kids."*

- Wider research with low income families as part of the Early Warning System also highlighted a concern amongst parents that they were not always able to provide their children with nutritious meals. One parent of a disabled child told us: *"I'd love to have fruit and veg every day... and chicken, instead of junk and junk and junk. Like I say, you get five packets of biscuits for £1, what you pay for a melon. So it's just easier but it's not good for your health'.*

- Early Warning System findings also suggests that some families are struggling to balance childcare responsibilities while they are at work or looking for a job. This can be a particular problem for parents in jobs with irregular hours and those who may be given little notice of when they are expected to work. One parent told us that the biggest barrier to employment was *'Just the childcare, and the hours, and trying to get childcare to fit the hours"*

Do you agree that breakfast clubs should continue to be operated by Glasgow Council?

Yes. Strongly agree.

It costs Glasgow City Council £2million per year to operate all primary school breakfast clubs. Do you agree that Glasgow City Council should continue to fund breakfast clubs?

Yes. We strongly believe that Glasgow City Council should continue to fund breakfast clubs. We further believe that no decision should be made to 'cluster' clubs, discontinue clubs or increased the costs met by parents until more comprehensive information is available about:

- Why uptake of breakfast clubs is low in Glasgow when compared to other areas. In Wales, uptake amongst eligible children is 21.9%^{vii}.
- Why uptake varies from school to school within the same of similar areas (from 2% to 32% according to the current consultation document)
- The barriers or perceived barriers that exist which prevent children or parents from using available breakfast club places.

Considerations that ought to be taken into account by Glasgow City Council include:

- **The cost.** While breakfasts are provided free of charge to families on the very lowest incomes in Glasgow, it is likely that many families in low wage employment are still struggling to afford the necessary £1 a day. In work poverty is a growing problem and in 2012/13, 59 per cent of children in poverty in Scotland were living in households with at least one adult in employment^{viii}. One teacher participating in the Cost of A School Day Project told us, *"You might just be on the fringes so you don't get a free school meal, so you've got your lunch, then you've got another pound [for breakfast club], and that can add up to about £5 a day and a lot of families just don't have that."*

- **Administrative concerns relating to registering entitlement.** There is a concern that some families may not be aware of how to register for free school meals and breakfast club entitlement. This issue was illustrated in relation to free school meals through the Cost of the School Day Project.

Teacher 1 *I've got children [in my class] and I wonder why they've not got a free ticket*
Teacher 2 *I don't know why they're not on free tickets.*
Teacher 3 *The parents can't fill in forms--*
Teacher 1 *You do have to take them away and you have to post them. If you're chaotic and stressed—*

-Perception/Stigma: There appears to be a perception amongst some children and parents that breakfast club is primarily intended to provide childcare for children whose parents work. This might prove particularly off-putting for children from low income families. Research relating to the uptake of school meals also suggests that means testing for items (such as breakfast clubs and school meals) can reduce uptake amongst the lowest income groups as a result of stigma and unwillingness to differentiate oneself from one's peers^{ix}.

- Travel to and from the club: There is a need to explore whether school transport (and where relevant public transport) is available early enough to allow children to take advantage of breakfast club. Anecdotal evidence suggests that school buses do not tend to arrive at many schools until shortly before 9am.

- Attractiveness to pupils and parents: Changes to how and by whom breakfast clubs are delivered can have a huge impact on uptake. This has recently been demonstrated in Dalrnock where PEEK (Possibilities for Each and Every Kid) has been working since the beginning of February 2015 to make breakfast club more interesting and stimulating for children. Anecdotal evidence suggests uptake has increased dramatically and we would urge Glasgow City Council to consider how examples of good practice can be shared across the city before making a decision as to reducing funding.

It is essential that in making decision about saving money, Glasgow City Council consider the knock-on, consequential costs that will arise from a decision to limit provision. These might include:

- increase in children lacking supervision before school
- poorer attainment amongst children unable to concentrate and engage at school because they are hungry
- health problems amongst children not having their most basic nutritional needs met.

To achieve best value and to ensure Council resources are targeted at those most in need which option or options do you think the council should implement?

As stated above, we don't believe any action should be taken until there is wider evidence available about why rates of take up are low. There is also a clear need for further information to be made available on where uptake is highest and lowest in relation to level of deprivation and poverty. The current consultation documents only states that,

"Analysis of the attendance and income generated from cash breakfasts has been conducted and the SIMD category of the schools with the highest gross unit costs and lowest attendance rates identified"

We believe this information should be shared to ensure that an informed decision can be made about changes to delivery of breakfast clubs.

In your opinion is it reasonable to expect children to attend a breakfast club in another local school?

No. We believe that such an arrangement would be difficult to manage given that children would need to be transported between the breakfast club and their school.

We are also keen to keep provision as convenient and straightforward as possible for parents. Requiring parents to drop their children off at a school further away from their home is likely to create further barriers and difficulties for parents.

The current cost to the Council for breakfast per child per pay is around £3 and the current charge is £1 per breakfast. What do you think is a reasonable charging framework for breakfast clubs would be for those able to pay?

CPAG has a preference for universal free provision of breakfast clubs. This is due to the fact that many families not entitled to free school meals or breakfast clubs are living in poverty. In 2011/12, for instance, 20% of children were officially recognised as living in poverty (a figure which has since increased to 22%), but statistics from that time show that only 14.1% of pupils were receiving a free school meal.^x

Evidence relating to free school meals also suggests that universal provision boosts take-up even amongst those who were already entitled. The Scottish government's pilot trials of universal provision of free school meals to all P1 to P3 pupils in 2007/8 demonstrated a substantial effect on take up of school meals, increasing overall take up by 22 percentage points from 53% to 75%. Furthermore, amongst children already entitled to free school meals take - up rose by 4.4 percentage points, and in some areas up to 8.5 percentage points^{xi}.

If universal provision is not currently feasible we believe that costs to parents should be kept as low as possible. This is particularly important given that families are coming under increasing financial pressure. Research conducted by CPAG has found that the minimum necessary cost for raising a child in the UK rose by 4 per cent in 2013, while the minimum wage rose by only 1.8 per cent. In the same period average earnings rose by only 1.5 per cent, benefits for families and children by just 1 per cent, and child benefit did not rise at all^{xii}. This means that many families can no longer afford the items essential for a basic standard of living and that increasing the cost of breakfast clubs will have a disproportionately negative impact on families with the lowest incomes.

- **Do you agree that families with more than one child attending breakfast club should get a discount for the 2nd, 3rd child etc.**

Yes.

- **In your opinion which of the following criteria should the council consider if implementing an attendance threshold below which a breakfast club would be discontinued?**

We do not believe that breakfast clubs should be discontinued in any area until efforts have been made to remove barriers to access and increase uptake. Furthermore, discontinuing breakfast clubs on the suggested grounds could result in arbitrary decisions being made resulting in the most vulnerable children being denied a much needed services. While some areas have much higher incidence of poverty than others, there is no council ward in Glasgow (indeed in the whole of Scotland) where child poverty does not exist^{xiii}.

- **The average subsidy the Council provides per child per day is just over £3 per breakfast. In your opinion what is the maximum subsidy the council should provide above which a breakfast club would be discontinued?**

We do not believe breakfast clubs should be discontinued.

For more information please contact **Hanna McCulloch, Policy and Parliamentary Officer, Child Poverty Action Group 0141 611 7090, hmcculloch@cpagscotland.org.uk**

ⁱ <http://povertyleadershippanel.org.uk/sites/povertyleadershippanel.org.uk/files/PovertyLeadershipPanel-update-11August14.pdf>

ⁱⁱ Local figures on child poverty rates are available from: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area>

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.ifs.org.uk/comms/r78.pdf>

^{iv} For Trussell Trusts' latest figures for Scotland and the UK see <http://www.trusselltrust.org/stats>

^v See, for example,

http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/files/Health_consequences_of_Poverty_for_children.pdf

^{vi} http://www.childrensfoodtrust.org.uk/assets/research-reports/sft_breakfast_club_findings_dec08.pdf;

<http://www.esrc.ac.uk/news-and-events/features-casestudies/case-studies/30108/the-breakfast-effect-on->

[school-performance.aspx](#) ;

http://www.kelloggs.co.uk/content/dam/newton/images/masterbrand/UK/R5_Kelloggs%20Breakfast%20Club%20Audit%20APSE.pdf

^{vii} http://www.kelloggs.co.uk/content/dam/newton/images/masterbrand/UK/R5_Kelloggs%20Breakfast%20Club%20Audit%20APSE.pdf

^{viii} <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/0045/00454875.pdf> Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2012/13, July 2014; A National Statistics Publication for Scotland

^{ix} <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/10/02082551>

^x Total number of pupils 666 264 (extrapolated from <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/7503/6>. 20% all children live in poverty AHC (see <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2013/06/2493/6>). Estimate for school pupils in poverty 20% of 666264 is 133250. (email from Scottish Government statistician confirms proportion of school pupils in poverty BHC is same as overall proportion of children - we assume same for AHC

^{xi} <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/News/Releases/2008/10/02082551>

^{xii} Child Poverty Action Group: The Cost of A Child in 2013; Donald Hirsch; 2013;

<http://www.cpag.org.uk/sites/default/files/CPAG-cost-child-2013-0813.pdf>

^{xiii} Local figures on child poverty rates are available from: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/poverty-in-your-area>