

Cost of the School Day Seminar Report 4 November 2014



“My hope is that this project will make a real difference to the children at risk of missing out.” (Teacher)

“I think that while we do really well we need to keep asking what we could do better.” (DHT)

“I’ve learned today that small things could make a big difference.” (QIO)

Cost of the School Day is a Glasgow [Poverty Leadership Panel](#) project, hosted by the [Child Poverty Action Group \(CPAG\) in Scotland](#), working with Glasgow Education Services and inspired by the success of [Poverty Proofing the School Day](#) from Children North East.

Cost of the School Day is working with children and staff in eight Glasgow schools to identify poverty-related barriers to participation and develop practical ways to overcome them. As well as identifying barriers, a key focus of the project will be uncovering effective approaches to tackling them which are already taking place and sharing these city-wide.

Participating schools are from the Smithycroft Learning Community (Smithycroft Secondary School, Ashcraig School, Avenue End Primary School and Royston Primary School) and Cleveden Learning Community (Cleveden Secondary School, Abercorn Secondary, Caldercuilt Primary and Kelvindale Primary).

Cost of the School Day schools, elected members, Education Services and voluntary sector staff came together recently at a seminar to discuss the project and consider its implications. This report summarises the presentations from the day and highlights the main discussion points.

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1. Introductions

1.1 Welcome - Maureen McKenna, Executive Director of Education, Glasgow City Council

Maureen opened the event by speaking about the responsibility which senior leaders in the council have to understand and tackle poverty. Her challenge to herself and other senior leaders is to ask themselves whether any of their actions might be contributing to poverty in the city. Cost of the School Day is about us reflecting on whether there are there things we are doing which are inadvertently causing hardship for children and young people.

“I’m delighted you’re here. I’m really excited about and really interested in the engagement of you all and about engagement with our young people to hear their views... The important thing is to really know what needs to change to keep more of our young people in school, to support our families better and to keep poverty at bay.”

1.2 Introduction - Sara Spencer, Project Manager of Cost of the School Day

Sara gave an overview of the project and spoke about the passion and recognition which she has heard when speaking with staff about poverty in their schools. She stressed that this is why we shouldn’t characterise the project as one which is only looking for problems – Glasgow schools are no strangers to dealing with poverty so we need to learn what is already working and share this more widely. She also acknowledged that while there are no limitless budgets to implement changes there will be many things we can do which will make a difference for children from low income households.

“We are where we are economically- it would be foolish to suggest otherwise. But where we are is also a place where poorer children in Glasgow are more likely to have poorer outcomes both educationally and in life. That’s not something that’s going away in a hurry. So I hope that when we move into the next stage of the project and look at our findings from children and from staff we can do that in the spirit of ‘yes, we are where we are but what can we do?’”

2. Context for the project

2.1 Child Poverty in Scotland - John Dickie, Director, Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland

John opened by emphasising that poverty is not only about income levels but also about the ability to participate in your own society. People experience poverty when they *“lack the resources to obtain the types of diet, participate in the activities and have the living conditions which are customary, or at least widely encouraged and approved, in the societies in which they belong.”* (Townsend, 1979).

The 2010 Child Poverty Act enshrined a 2020 target to eradicate child poverty in the UK. Low income is defined as below 60% median income, an internationally accepted measure used by the EU and the OECD. This is lower than the Minimum

Income Standard, which is what the general public believes to be sufficient income for a minimum standard of living.

Current levels of child poverty in Scotland and in Glasgow

22% of children are living in poverty in Scotland (220 000) and well over half (59%) are living in families where someone is working. Some children are at greater risk of poverty: a third of families in which someone is disabled and nearly half of lone parent families live in poverty.

“There’ve been times when I’ve said to my child, “Tonight, we’ll light candles, and we’ll get our books in bed”. And it’s because I’ve no electric. And when I’ve run out of gas and there’s no hot water we’ll boil kettles for the bath. I don’t tell Mike - who’s only 12 - because I don’t want him panicking and thinking “Oh my god my mum hasn’t got any money.” (Claire)

Although child poverty rates vary across different local authorities, poverty affects families all across Scotland¹. Glasgow has the highest child poverty rate in Scotland with 33% of children living in poverty (Glasgow Central 41%, Glasgow East 32%, Glasgow North 29%, Glasgow NE 37%, Glasgow NW 31%, Glasgow South 28%, Glasgow SW 33%).

Impact of child poverty

Low income puts families under pressure and children face the stigma and stress that comes with not having enough money to participate in society.

“I had to go and pick him up from the school one day because he had been sick. Just before lunchtime. He never had any dinner money left. And I said to him ‘what’s happening? What’s going on?’ and he said ‘I’m getting bullied because I’m poor and I’ve not got any money for a bacon roll’” (Fiona)

“The school is always coming up with wee trips and things like that and then you’re caught out. And maybe it’s only two or three pound and they don’t really see that two and three pounds is a big issue, but when you’re struggling it is.” (Luke)

Health and wellbeing	Educational attainment and life chances
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Poorer childrens’ health is compromised from birth - average birth weight significantly lower (ECP, 2008) • More likely to have chronic illness as toddlers (ECP, 2008) • More likely to suffer mental distress (CPAG, <i>Poverty in Scotland 2011</i>) • Long term health problems and poor general health increases as deprivation increases (NHS Health Scotland, March 2013) • Greater risk of problems with psychosocial health and language (GUS, 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children in poverty nine months behind in terms of “school readiness” by age three (Centre for Longitudinal Studies, 2008) • By age 5, 13-month gap in vocabulary development (JRF, 2014), a gap which widens as go through school (CPAG, 2007) • At S2, pupils in areas of low deprivation more than twice as likely to be assessed as performing well than those in areas of high deprivation. (JRF, 2014) • School leavers from areas of high deprivation have lower attainment tarriff scores - half that of the least deprived and are less likely to enter positive destinations – 22% don’t, compared to 5% of the least deprived (Scottish Government 2012)

¹ See local child poverty map for more detail: www.endchildpoverty.org.uk

Challenges ahead: rising levels of child poverty in Scotland

John reminded us that there is nothing inevitable about these levels of poverty. Many other countries already have fewer than 10% of children living in poverty – Finland, Denmark, Iceland and others. Progress has been made - between 1997 and 2010/11 there has been a reduction of 160 000 fewer children in poverty in Scotland due to investment in child benefit and tax credits, childcare, employment and income maximisation.

However, barriers exist to further progress due to £22billion UK cuts in welfare, £2bn of these in Scotland. Cuts like these hit the poorest families hardest. The IFS have forecast significant growth in levels of child poverty as a result of current government policy, estimating that up to 100 000 more children will be pushed into poverty by 2020 in Scotland alone.

Tackling poverty and the effects of poverty

Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland believes that families need to have adequate incomes. At a UK level, tax, benefit and labour market policies must be rethought. In Scotland we need to invest in advice and information to ensure families are receiving the financial support they are entitled to, we need to build on Living Wage to tackle low pay and, crucially, we need to invest in early years and childcare to remove barriers to work and give *all* children high quality early learning opportunities.

Importantly though, while so many families have inadequate incomes we must also be acting to reduce costs and remove barriers in life for children living in poverty, particularly at school. As such, CPAG Scotland is delighted to be hosting the Cost of the School Day project.

2.2 Learning Lessons: young people's views on poverty and education

Cathy Begley, Participation and Education Officer, Office of Scotland's Commissioner for Children and Young People

While there is increasing attention given to understanding and addressing the stark gap in educational attainment between young people living in poverty and their peers, little is known about young people's views on poverty and education. SCCYP and Save the Children decided to fill this gap with Learning Lessons, a study of young people's views on how poverty impacts on their opportunities to learn.

Nearly 1000 secondary school pupils aged 11-18 took part, through a survey in twelve schools across Aberdeen, Edinburgh, Fife, Glasgow, North Ayrshire and West Dunbartonshire and through focus groups in six schools which were facilitated by six young researchers trained in research methods and ethics.

Key findings

Young people believe that education is important and they value the relationships they have with adults at school and the support they receive. However, they think that poverty has an impact on their experiences and opportunities to learn at school, at home and in the community. They were concerned about:

1. **The costs of school** - classroom, subjects, uniforms, trips and meals). These costs add up and put pressure on family budgets. Even small costs have an impact e.g. cost of non-uniform day, resources for of Home Economics or Craft and Design or £3 for football after school. The impact that these little costs have on the family budget over the week meant that young people were having to make choices about what they could and couldn't do
2. **Accessing resources at home that support learning** – meeting basic needs, books, internet, computers and tablets. Young people spoke about the price of printing, of ink and paper and about not having access to computers at library or once school is closed
3. **The pressures and stresses of poverty that lead to barriers to receiving support from the family at home**, particularly regarding homework. This doesn't mean that parents don't want to support them, but many might have two jobs or be doing shift work
4. **Participating in activities outside of school and other opportunities to learn and socialise** (as well as the wider community environment). Most activities that cost money are not available to young people with less money

Young people believe that poverty = lack of access to resources + lack of opportunity + more limited support at home. They are concerned that living in poverty can mean limited access to key resources at school and at home, missing out on opportunities, having choices limited, feeling left out and excluded, being bullied and being unfairly penalised through classroom practices, unable to take up the opportunities that school offers.

Conclusions

We need an increased focus on eliminating the financial/barriers costs of school and breaking the link between poverty and education. Not everything will cost money – some changes we can make in schools will be small but very effective

Teachers, school leaders and policy-makers need to listen to what young people have to say about these issues and better understand how poverty impacts on them day to day. We need to put participation and children's rights at the centre of what we do - young people themselves are keen to know how they can influence policy makers, talk to the council and create a level playing field in their schools.

3. Learning from other schools' experiences

3.1 Poverty Proofing the School Day: Parkview School, Durham – Sara Spencer on behalf of Kim Cowie, DHT

Cost of the School Day was inspired by Poverty Proofing the School Day, a Children North East project. Sara presented feedback from a school which took part in this project and implemented policy and practice changes based on findings from their whole school community.

Parkview School was motivated to take action due to growing concerns about poverty and a desire to make sure they weren't making anything worse for their children. Their challenge as a school is to ensure that everyone was supported and not isolated by poverty. Taking part was "*enlightening and humbling*" as they realised that despite their best efforts there still remained many issues for their students.

The project made them think differently about children and families in poverty and think carefully about all new policies in school and their impact on poorer children. Some of the changes made so far are as follows:

1. Spent significant funds on a cashless catering system
2. Sourced cheaper options for parents to buy uniform
3. Built more trips into the PSHE programme and sought funding for them
4. Made better use of their Parent Support Officer to reach out to vulnerable families
5. Greater support for families to complete clothing grant and free school meal forms
6. 'Poverty proofed' the English faculty and hope this will continue to other faculties.

Parkview School advised Glasgow Cost of the School Day schools to make use of external professionals coming in as they bring an extra dimension that schools don't have, and to "*utilise the students as they know better than anyone else what this feels like for them and their families – this is a really powerful project for them to be involved in.*"

3.2 Poverty Proofing the School Day - Steve Crosthwaite, Learning and Equalities Champion, Hotspur Primary School, Newcastle

"Some of the most obvious things don't actually cost money, it was just that they just hadn't occurred to us before."

Hotspur Primary in Newcastle has a socio-economically mixed population of children. The school took part in Poverty Proofing the School Day because they were aware of poverty in their school and of the poverty attainment gap which exists in Newcastle. They liked the project because it involved the whole school community and promised to highlight issues they hadn't thought about while also showing what they were doing well.

Children North East came to speak with children and with parents and there was an audit tool online for teachers and governors. They held staff and governor training sessions where they challenged myths and gave up to date information on child poverty. There has been a findings feedback session for the school to explore and discuss the findings. Hotspur Primary now know what the issues are in their school, they have made some preliminary changes (see below) and are planning next steps.

Measures already in place to tackle poverty in school

- Good relationships between children and staff and a high level of additional support offered through Pastoral Care and Family Support Officer
- Good awareness of anti bullying policy and procedures amongst children
- Targeted holiday support for families who may be less likely get out and experience things during the holidays – trips to cultural venues etc
- Free breakfast club to set children up for the school day
- All basic resources provided free of charge – pencil-cases and stationery

Issues identified and solutions put in place

Issues identified	Solutions in Hotspur Primary
<p>Cost of some extended services during summer holidays, such as drama and sports camps, were prohibitive.</p>	<p>Used Pupil Premium money and knowledge of their families circumstances to target and pay for children they thought would most benefit</p>
<p>Extracurricular activities required additional resources – shin-guards for football club, trainers for running club – <i>“some children only have one pair of trainers and they’re wearing them all day and they’re not appropriate.”</i></p>	<p>Fundraising to buy resources – now got box of shinguards and a big box of trainers donated by Sports Direct.</p>
<p>Easter Bonnet competition and Green Day where ask families to create a costume from recycled good – some families don’t have those resources and children feel excluded if they’re unable to take part.</p>	<p>Activities that we used to ask children to do at home are now done in the school with basic resources bought by us. Example of Family Week where children and parents made cupcakes together in school.</p>
<p>Working families on low incomes felt unsure whether they could approach the school for financial support for trips.</p>	<p>Rewrote Parents and Carers handbook and put information on website to make explicit about who to approach for support and how.</p>
<p>Awareness of poverty across staff team is variable</p>	<p>More training to build awareness</p>
<p>Children were feeling uncomfortable after holidays when asked what they got from Christmas or where they’ve been on holiday: <i>“A huge proportion of our children don’t go on holiday and it’s just not something that should be asked.”</i></p>	<p>Communication to staff team</p>
<p>Communication with parents is increasingly via social media - parents with no online access missing out on messages.</p>	<p>Revised comms policy and surveyed parents about best ways to communicate with them.</p>

4. Discussion

Participants discussed both the topics covered by speakers and their own involvement in the project. A selection of comments, questions and ideas are listed below.

Hopes for the project

- Schools are keen that the project help identify the issues as perceived by the children, rather than what staff assume are the issues for children. We need to focus on doing more of what actually matters to children and young people
- They hope that some things will be identified which the school is not already doing and that changes can be easily implemented within budget. They also hoped that the solutions would not limit opportunities in school – how do we respond if there is a challenge around equality of access due to financial constraints?
- There was interest in the young researchers who took part in Learning Lessons – should young people be used more in schools to explore these issues?
- In general, participants hoped the project would raise awareness of the impact which poverty has on children's lives and that it would help to bring about more positive outcomes for children and their families

Supporting children and families experiencing poverty

- The issues facing children could change depending on the home circumstance and being aware of the changes and their potential impacts can be challenging
- There was a concern that sometimes those families who are only just managing to get by may not get sufficient focus at school - how can we make sure that they are supported too?
- There was reflection on the Family Support Officer role mentioned by our guest speaker from a Newcastle school and how useful it sounded. How could that be replicated here? Do we need to bring in the third sector to fulfil these roles in schools if education services is unable to fully fund them?
- The Access to Education fund is no panacea, even if it is offered annually – will it be?
- Can we negotiate at City policy level for reduced transport costs for poorer children? Would this lead to stigma?
- We need more creative solutions to funding
- How do we get these issues on new teachers' radars – is it something that could be covered in greater detail in ITE and as part of school induction processes?
- Raised awareness amongst staff is key but how do we achieve that? There's CPD but we throw everything in there, is there space?
- After school ICT clubs could help to counteract the digital divide and remove the stigma attached to not having PC or tablet. It would be useful to know more about families' access to technology. How can we work with Glasgow Life on this?
- As professionals, we need to raise awareness of poverty and challenge stereotypes and negative attitudes whether they come from staff, children or the general public. It is these mindsets which will stand in the way of change happening in this project.

5. Participant feedback – learning, feelings, thoughts and actions

Learning	Feeling	Thoughts	Actions
<p>Participants learned more about poverty and gained some ideas from Poverty Proofing the School Day schools.</p>	<p>Participants reported feeling motivated and hopeful for the next stage of the project.</p>	<p>Participants reported a range of thoughts about the next stage of the project and how to take it forward in their own settings.</p>	<p>Participants plan to reflect on the issues, involve others in these issues and take action on project findings.</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - About the importance of the issue of poverty within my school, locally and nationally (School) - About levels of poverty in Scotland (Education Services) - How another school 'poverty proofed' their establishment in terms of benefits and challenges (School) - Strategies used in the poverty proofing school which could be useful in our own establishment (School) - Glasgow schools are aware that these issues are real and already do things to take action – we need to keep awareness high and keep thinking (School) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Motivated to do something to change poverty (Education Services) - Motivated to push some ideas forward (School) - Looking forward to getting the children's views after Sara has worked with them (School) - I understand more about what our aims should be in this project (School) - Relieved that there were no surprises – perhaps we are aware of many of the issues faced by families/children living in poverty and are trying our best to ensure they do feel included (School) - Depressed! But hopeful of change if lessons are learned and new policies implemented (Voluntary sector) - Hopeful for findings out the results from focus groups in our school and implementing changes (School) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - That I am pleased to be involved in this project as it is so important (School) - The views of young people on this are paramount (Education Services) - That it will be interesting to hear about Sara's findings, having spoken to our children (School) - There should be an opportunity for staff within Education Services to reflect on their practice (Education Services) - That we need to incorporate this into our ongoing work and think of how to raise awareness (Education Services) - About how to raise staff awareness, how to use pupils more in research and how to encourage staff to provide ideas for parents (School) - About contacting third sector organisations to link in with our school (School) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Think. Discuss ideas with SLT (School) - Reflect on a way forward to help children and their families out of poverty (Education Services) - Try to implement strategies that don't require money in my class (School) - Explore links between voluntary sector projects I work with and their local schools (Education Services) - We need to look at all of our charity requests of children over the session (School) - Work to raise the profile of the third sector in helping tackle issues such as family support and connecting schools to agencies that can help (Voluntary Sector) - Work with Sara to look at the outcomes of the workshops (School) - Feedback to staff prior to Sara's visit (School) - Act on findings of project (School)