

Moray Cost of the School Day conference summary

This paper provides a summary of discussions and identified actions at the Moray Cost of the School Day Conference in February 2019.

Delegates were asked to consider the following questions in workshop groups:

- What are the costs of your school day? Where do problems or barriers arise for children and young people from low income households?
- What do you do right now to reduce costs and support children and families on low incomes?
- What else needs to be done across Moray? Where do we want to get to and what actions will support this?

Their responses gathered here offer an overview of the barriers and challenges facing children, families and schools across Moray, current impactful practice which can be shared amongst schools across the authority and the actions which delegates feel should be taken to address the cost of the school day and better support the participation and learning of children and young people from low income households.

1. The school day: barriers, practice and actions



07:00 Getting dressed for school – uniform

“We want uniform that is affordable for all and helps to support confident and happy young people.”

“We want parents on board with inclusive uniform policies and young people who consider the pressures they put on each other.”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range of clothes required - uniform, outdoor shoes, gym shoes, bags, PE kit, clothes for outdoor learning. In a rural area, children often travel a long way to school and need sturdy shoes, coats, waterproofs, wellies, hats, gloves • Uniform costs are causing stress for parents financially and the clothing grant for those who qualify is too low to cover what is needed across the whole year • Increasing numbers of pupils without enough uniform items or inappropriate uniform • Once at school children often lose or misplace clothes which can be hugely expensive for parents. • Children grow – need many items across a year • Children get their clothes dirty – if don't have enough then can lead to increased stigma • Families may struggle to afford toiletries, sanitary products and hot water which could impact a child's personal hygiene and increase stigma • Branded shoes and bags can place pressure on children 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Uniform simplified – no logo • One school refreshed their school uniform policy by reducing the cost of branded uniform and making it one colour to keep costs down • Free school ties for all given out at S1 and S4 • Schools paying for uniform if a family needs it or referring them to a school clothes bank • School uniform available at school for pupils who turn up without items • Second hand uniform available • Lost property box open to all at the end of term • Lost property recycled into clothing bin and offered to families • PE kits for each class paid for through PEF 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Audit cost to families of different items of clothing asked for and review • Use PEF money to purchase uniform and PE kits where needed • Increase awareness in schools of Moray School Bank and the referral process • School policy – ‘no designer wear’ • Increase uptake of clothing grant • Split the clothing grant over a year instead of one instalment • Automate clothing grants as in other local authorities • Change attitudes towards swapping or recycling uniform

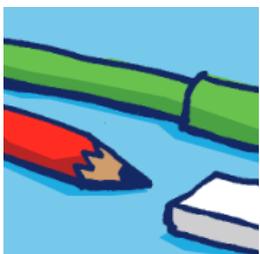
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficult in a rural area to go out and buy something for the next day if child loses or needs something. It's expensive and time consuming to drive to the shops • Not having the right uniform can cause difficulties– standing out leading to isolation and bullying or to sanctions from staff 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iron on badges • Tesco donates uniform, food and stationery to schools • Kids being consulted! This has resulted in changes in uniform when problems have been highlighted 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review uniform policies and consider removing school logos • Give parents and children and young people a voice so they can input on how to deal with this
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08:00 Travelling to school

“Every child must be able to travel to school regardless of cost”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty meeting transport costs can lead to children not attending school and missing out on learning • Schools are often far away and so require various methods of transport buses, taxis, cars, car shares which can be very costly • Bus travel is expensive and not always available – some children miss school on days when parents can't take them to school • If children live out of a catchment area, which can happen for many reasons, there is no support for transport costs • Missing buses or not being able to afford the bus means walking long distances • It can be stressful travelling to school if you need to catch buses on time, cross roads, travel long distances • If breakfast provision is provided before school but buses don't get there until class starts children will miss breakfasts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport funded for study club after school (one day a week) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is nothing more critical to learning than being able to get to school – we need to talk with bus companies and work out a system where children on low incomes are subsidised or can travel for free



08:45 Learning at school

“We want every child to have the resources for learning that they need and access to the same opportunities at school.”

“There must be no financial barriers to pupils accessing the curriculum”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many cost implications to accessing the core curriculum – subjects costs, basic equipment, gym kit, trainers... • Some children opt out of subjects because of their costs which leads to their education pathway changing, being excluded from subject choices • Different subject costs at different schools - could influence where you choose to go to school • Potential sanctions for not bringing in resources or charges – risk of becoming disengaged, frustrated and less likely to learn • Children may not have correct PE kit and so miss out on that class which has numerous repercussions • Music lesson fees have recently increased so children from low income families are less likely to take part • Issues around resources get in the way of children straightforwardly learning • Isn't education supposed to be free? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No expectation that child brings equipment in my room – all provided • Parent Council at one school is looking at ways to keep music costs at the same price so the fee increase does not affect families 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide what is required to learn without cost to individual pupils • Remove all additional costs for classes • Spend PEF on removing learning costs • Ensure all teachers mindful of cost implications of lessons planned • Raise awareness of the issue to whole school communities • Audit all costs and plan timing better if asking for payments



10:25 Friendships at school

“Everyone should have the friends they want without income differences being an issue.”

“We need no stigma and no shame.”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Obvious differences e.g. standing out in different clothes, no snack or money to buy snack and having to make excuses for why that was• Whole range of trends/ interests/ hobbies that children can be excluded and isolated from if they don't have e.g. right phone, access to social media, gaming, latest games, equipment, transport, meeting up, affording drinks, parties, gifts• Friends coming home for tea could cause embarrassment or parents can't afford it• Difficulties joining in with conversations about what they did last night or in the holidays or on school trips• May be unable to choose certain subjects that your friends choose because of costs.• All these things could impact a child's self-esteem, confidence, mental health, making them feel 'less than'. They could exclude themselves or be actively excluded• Children may end up making poor choices because they want to be part of something rather than nothing		<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Policies about toys, mobile phones, football cards, fidget spinners etc which minimise potential for obvious income differences• Playground mediators, play leaders and rotas• Comments/worry/suggestion boxes where children can highlight difficulties in a discrete way



11:00 School trips

“We need equal access to all trips for all young people”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hidden costs alongside cost of trip itself – lunch, spending money, casual clothes, special clothes e.g. waterproofs, passports, luggage, activity costs • High cost ‘elite’ trips in some schools • Costs for trips associated with the curriculum in some schools • Potential stigma around accessing funds from school rather than paying yourself • Risk of debt or something else not being paid for if family chooses to pay for the trip it can’t afford • Parents may be unaware that there is support from the school or who to ask – embarrassing to ask for support • Activity days – children want to take part in the more expensive activities rather than the free ones – they vote with their feet and stay off • When there are school trips children who are on FSM are given their lunch in a brown paper bag which singles them out from the peers. • Missing out on trips means missing out on learning opportunities, being set apart from their peers, family conflict if children are upset with their parents and disenfranchisement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No-one pays for school trips • One trip per session – only cost if bus needed • Walking trips • Having organisations and theatre groups come into school • Residential trips paid for in instalments over 10 months • No child pays for a school trip or P7 residential –fundraise out of school i.e. bag pack at Tesco • School enrichment fund supports families – it is stated that there is support available on every letter • PEF used to support school trips so everyone can do everything 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider what is realistic for school community when planning trips • Authority position statement on what trips are and aren’t acceptable • Whole school fundraising rather than all costs being met directly by parents • Widespread understanding of additional costs – e.g. clothing, spending money • Bank of resources (e.g. sleeping bags, waterproofs) across the local authority that can be shared • Inclusive payment methods e.g. realistic instalments



13:10 Eating at school

“We want all children In Moray to have access to a breakfast club.”

“All families should have support in accessing and applying for Free School Meals.”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<p>Breakfast and snack</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast club provision is inconsistent across Moray • Not having a breakfast or enough to eat throughout the day has a significant impact on ability to learn and concentrate • Stigma around attending school breakfast club if children have to come in early for it • If breakfast clubs don't cater for dietary requirements some children may not be able to benefit. • In Moray the school morning is now longer so break time snack is important and many children won't have this 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Breakfast club run by School Link Workers and supported by Moray Food Bank. Runs every day and open to all pupils • Breakfast club using PEF with Tesco/ Fare Share/ Foodbank • Free breakfast club funded by Tesco, Lidl and Parent Council • Snacks throughout the day for children who need it • 10p scones and pancakes from canteen • Parent breakfast club which helps parents feel more connected to the school and each other • Free fresh fruit Fridays 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Morning clubs/ breakfast clubs – ‘morning club’ name helps to remove stigma • Free fresh fruit in all schools • Support from Moray foodbank, Tesco fare share and local businesses • Raising awareness to all school staff about the importance of breakfast (Quick win) • Working in partnership with third sector to help fund breakfast clubs e.g. Children's 1st • Ask for support from school staff to help run the breakfast club and start building relationships with pupils who may need it
<p>Lunch</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Free school meal (FSM) money often not available until after break so children can't buy anything - if it is available then buying snack means not enough money for full lunch. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnership with food bank to provide milk – every child gets milk with their school dinner, no charge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising awareness to parents about the eligibility of FSM – letters and leaflets • Offering support to complete FSM applications and the school ICT

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School lunch may be a young person’s only hot meal of the day so if they have to miss it for any reason may have a large impact on their day • Friends leaving school to go for lunch elsewhere can leave children having to make a choice between FSM and friendships – stigma to being unable to go out to the chip shop or ASDA with friends • Some families on low incomes don’t qualify for free meals – may be just above the threshold but still struggling • Those eligible are not necessarily claiming FSMs - this is often because parents aren’t aware of it or don’t know how to claim it • Chasing up lunch money means that children get singled out and embarrassed • Young people budgeting their money often pick healthier options because they are cheaper or choose to save the money so they can do something with friends • What happens during the school holiday when children aren’t getting a FSM? 		<p>facilities to families to use internet/ computers to fill in applications</p>
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14:00 Fun events

“Every child should be able to access every event.”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many fun school activities involve costs e.g. dress down days, cake sales, World Book Day, discos, parties, activity days, Scholastic Book Fairs, drama productions and fundraising events 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced the number of fundraiser and dress down days • No fundraising done with pupils • Options other than costumes for dress down days • Donation bucket rather than ticket prices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No donation amount needing to be given for events and shows • No entry fee for events - or pay as you feel • Every teacher clarifying that everyone can participate without donating and that nobody will be left out

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Costs can place pressures on parents adding to stress and distancing them from schools • Not doing the same things as everyone else can affect peer relationships • They will not be having fun while everyone else is and this could lead to absences. Non participation makes children feel embarrassed, excluded, disappointed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Discos and school events – no set cost, can put a donation in the box if they are able. Same for parents at coffee mornings • No cost to watch school shows • Only one fundraiser done a term • Events with parents held at start or end of school day to avoid travel costs • Free options on activity days 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reducing numbers of dress down days or stopping altogether for alternatives • Free activities which are creative and inclusive • Whole school fundraising approaches • Where fundraising happens, partially keep for school fund • Involving pupils in fundraising - mechanisms for integrated working between kids, community groups and parents – empowering young people
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15:40 Clubs and activities

“We want all cost barriers to clubs and activities to be removed.”

“We need the same opportunities for all of our children.”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Equipment, clothing, footwear and snacks often required – inappropriate or missing items can lead to stigma • Staying after school may require paying for transport • Walking home after school can be unsafe • Cost if parents have one child staying after school and are having to entertain additional children while waiting • Families may already be paying for childcare, e.g. childminder pre-paid • Clubs that ask for parental involvement – confidence barriers for parents, can I manage this? Possible stigma of not taking part 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • One school has 22 lunchtime clubs and 4 after school which are all free • School review of costs for clubs • PEF used to fund taxis for after school clubs • Offering free activities on school activity days • Foodbank supporting after school clubs through provision of food 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • PEF should be used wherever necessary for these wider achievement opportunities • Lunchtime clubs to avoid travel costs after school • Parent volunteers leading clubs at school • Access to free music tuition • Joint activities with other schools • Ensuring Active Schools provision is free as it is meant to be

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Limited opportunities in local areas don't make up for what may be missing at school Additional costs and challenges may mean that it becomes too difficult to participate. Not being able to participate can lead to embarrassment, missed friendships, missed wider achievement and social opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some schools have the Active Schools programme which is subsidised but you still have to pay a fee After school club funded for 8 weeks for all children each year No-one pays for skills groups e.g. cooking 2 school bikes and helmets so everyone can take part in Bikeability 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Links with the local business community to fund clubs and activities Use eco argument as a way to encourage families to recycle clothes and equipment
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19:00 Learning at home

“Every child and home should have appropriate resources for home learning to be possible and stress free.”

“We want pupils to be able to complete homework with no barriers in the way.”

Costs and barriers	Some current practice	Actions for future
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Range of resources potentially required at cost - internet access, PC, printer, ink, software, calculator, memory stick, pens, books, materials for models and projects Some parents are not able to or may lack the time or emotional resources required to support their children with home learning Lack of quiet space and desk to concentrate Hunger affects concentration Older young people often have part time jobs after school to make money with impact on time to do homework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homework club that is accessible to all Homework club open at lunchtime so children have access to ICT and help In the process of setting up a homework club with IT access and healthy food choices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assess value of homework and ensure that it is achievable Provide all equipment required to complete homework – offer access to IT Set homework that doesn't rely on adult input No homework relying solely on IT – alternatives offered Supported homework clubs for parents and pupils Set up homework clubs, lunchtime clubs, and opportunities to use the library to create a supportive non stigmatising environment at school Nurture lunches and breakfast clubs with areas to do homework Calm spaces throughout the school with space to do work

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non completion of homework can have an effect on attainment/achievement • Non completion of homework can lead to sanctions as not every teacher will be aware of the barriers to completing homework – embarrassment, frustration, switching off from learning 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Informing pupils and parents about access to local community IT facilities and quiet spaces • Provision of resources required for any homework activity – even down to felt tips and pencils • Avoid highlighting inequalities through home learning e.g. talking about exotic holidays • Support for parents to help their children with homework • More family learning opportunities • Community volunteers to support with homework
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As well as the practice named above, schools identified a range of interventions for families and pupils provided by Home School Link Workers, Family Support Workers and Pastoral Care staff. Also identified were a wide range of activities in the community designed to support families. These included emergency food provision to families through Moray Foodbank, holiday clubs offering activities plus food, a learning bus for Gypsy/Travellers to remove barriers to learning, lunch clubs, referrals to Moray School Bank and signposting to useful services in the community. Suggested actions for the future included improved promotion of Moray Income Maximisation service in schools and creating opportunities for parents to engage with different agencies at school e.g. social work, police, health, food bank, income maximisation.

Other actions spanning the school day included the following:

Children and young people	Parents and Parent Councils
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consultation with children and young people to understand the pressures from their perspectives • Coming up with non-stigmatising language to use with our interventions e.g. ‘need a spare?’ for uniform • Teaching children about money and costs and budgets so that they are aware of what these things mean from an early age • Challenging poverty stigma - action to help children and young people be more considerate of their peers • Addressing these issues as part of Rights Respecting Schools and Pupil Voice committees 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent surveys – what are the needs in Moray and what support do parents want? • Parents need to be on board with changes to school policies and practices • More affluent parents need to be educated in the reality for other pupils and families • Parent have a range of skills – how can we utilise what parents bring in tackling some of these barriers? • Parents are not prepared by schools for costs that occur throughout the year and should be given comprehensive cost calendar at the start of the year • Parents can feel stigma as much as pupils and it’s difficult to ask for support – they need supportive systems in place which are communicated sensitively

2. Actions for Moray Council and Scottish Government

Actions for Moray Council

Authority wide awareness and action

- Training and awareness for school communities on poverty and the Cost of the School Day
- CPD for teaching and other school staff on how to support students on low incomes
- Promote and signpost to Cost of the School Day Toolkit and training
- All Head Teachers and all Parent Council chairs need to be involved in developing this work from here
- Better understanding of poverty across Moray so that interventions aren't just based on FSM uptake – we need to look beyond this SIMD data and actually look at the issues families and children face

Authority wide action on improving uptake of financial entitlements

- Automation of clothing grants and free meals as in other local authorities like Glasgow
- Review of income eligibility criteria to receive entitlements at school – families just outwith the eligibility threshold are struggling to pay for uniform and food – is £16,000 reflective of living costs today?
- Split the clothing grant over a year instead of one instalment

Local guidance on use of PEF

- We need clear guidance from the local authority on what PEF money can be used on – we need explicit permission to use it to overcome these financial barriers
- PEF is invaluable at the moment but what about when it stops? How can we embed effective solutions which are sustainable in the long term?

Standardising good practice

- Need to standardise good practice and effective approaches – if we know a school is doing something that reduces inequalities this needs to be replicated in others

- Standardise effective approaches across all schools

Authority wide funding opportunities

- Schools need clear picture of what local funds are available and how we can access them
- We need to remember the impact on staff of continuous fundraising – it takes time and effort and adds to workload

Wider council action on poverty

- Promote the living wage
- Acknowledge socio economic impact of council budget cuts – e.g. library closures, increased music tuition costs
- This agenda needs to be linked with Local Outcome Improvement Plans and Child Poverty local action plans

Actions for Scottish Government

- Increased and equitable local authority funding for schools – costs in schools exist because there is simply not enough money to do what we need to do
- The Scottish Government need to understand the extent to which education is currently dependent on charity, fundraising or the goodwill of teachers who are providing resources out of their own pockets.