Tackling financial barriers to learning and poverty stigma in schools

Kate Anstey

ABOUT COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY

- Working with school communities to understand where difficulties lie for children and families on low incomes
- Helping schools and local authorities to take action which will support children and young people's participation and wellbeing and support families on low incomes.

- Direct work in schools
- Advice, support and training
- Resources for schools
- Practice gathering and sharing

- Cost of the School Day activity now in most local authorities in Scotland

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY TOOLKIT

Resources to promote equity and reduce financial barriers to participation at school

CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP IN SCOTLAND

COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY

BACKGROUND

2014–2017 Glasgow Poverty Leadership Panel commissions action research into financial barriers to participation at school

2016-17 Teacher training, resource development, education services guidance for Glasgow schools

2015 onwards Projects springing up across Scotland – Edinburgh, D&G, Midlothian, Stirling, Fife…

2016-17 Cost of the School Day recommended in Scottish Government Fairer Scotland Action Plan and as PEF Intervention for Equity

2017-2019
- Dundee City Council commit to a city wide approach
- Advice, training and resources provided to local authorities and schools
- Cost of the School Day toolkit developed
- Good practice gathered and shared
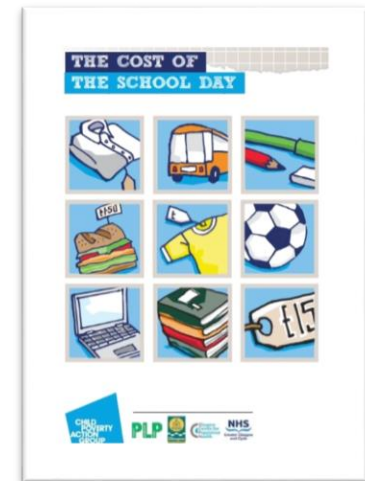
COST BARRIERS TO LEARNING AND PARTICIPATION

Travel

"Sometimes we get phone calls - not every single week, but occasionally - to say that they've not been at school because they've no money for bus fare." (Staff)

School trips

"My mum felt guilty that I couldn't go… Why do we have costly trips then? It puts people under pressure and it makes people embarrassed and disappointed if they can't go." (P7)

Homework

"I don't have the Office stuff that you need to use, like spreadsheets and that, because I've no paid for it and you need to pay for it, it's extra, and I was like I don't have it, say if I don't finish this how will I do it and she [teacher] was like, 'I don't know, you'll find a way somehow.'" (S4)

School clubs

"We used to get told we had to bring… old trainers to wear on the pitch. But everyone didn't have trainers." (P7)

Learning

"Aye. I didnae want to pay 50 pence on Home Eccies. I didn't want to pay that because I couldn't be bothered because then that takes money off my lunch money, and I was like, nah." (S4)

Fun events

"You see one or two [at charity coffee mornings], you know, if they don't have it… 'Got fifty pence?'. 'No, no, it's okay. I don't want cakes.' And that breaks my heart. Because that's maybe their defence." (Staff)
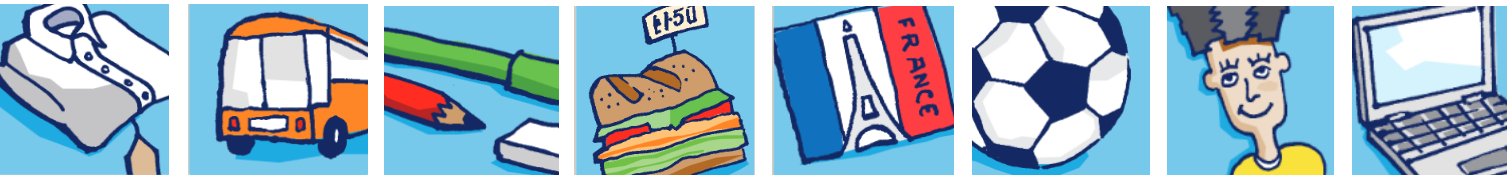
POVERTY SHAME AND STIGMA

Friendships

"A lot of people, I think, that have maybe got a lower income, round about the school, seem to be isolated and they've no got a lot of friends." (S4)

School trips

"I think my grandad put some in, and my mum put some in, and the school put the rest in. And they were alright about that but then I still felt like some of my teachers were looking down on me for that." (S5)

Uniform

"Shoes and bags, that's one of the biggest things. There's some people you get that are nasty and pure heavy cheeky." (S4)

"Some people get paid monthly and cannae even get new shoes until next month, but they expect it the next day." (S4)

Learning

"Children have the embarrassment of us saying 'do you have your money? You can't cook today'" (HE teacher)

Eating at school

"If your pals are going out at lunch you'll be a loner. It puts you out the group because they're going out and then you're sitting there on your own with a free meal." (S3)
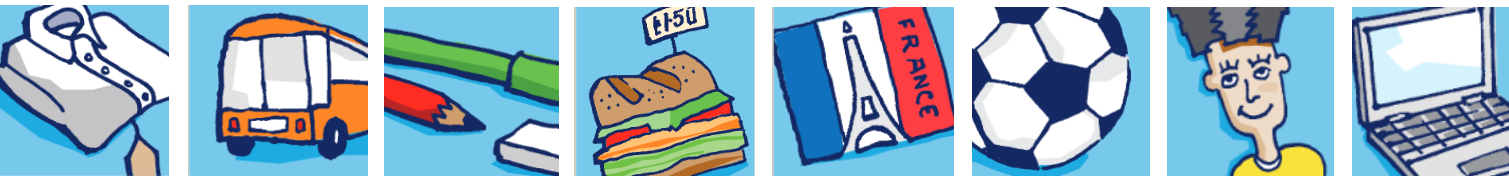
SOLUTIONS FROM CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE

Consistent expectations and practice between staff members on uniform, resources etc.

Making sure families get financial entitlements, e.g. clothing grants, free meals

An affordable school year-spacing events

Lending resources without trouble

Modifying expectations and tasks; support to access ICT

Giving benefit of the doubt – no assumptions about financial situations

Fundraising which doesn't ask families to contribute (e.g. bag-packing) and not asking children for money

Covering costs, subsidising and providing sibling discounts where possible

Rewards and merits unaffected by issues related to finances at home

Greater poverty awareness amongst children

Ensuring costs as affordable as possible and supporting parents to afford it (e.g. flexible instalments for trips)
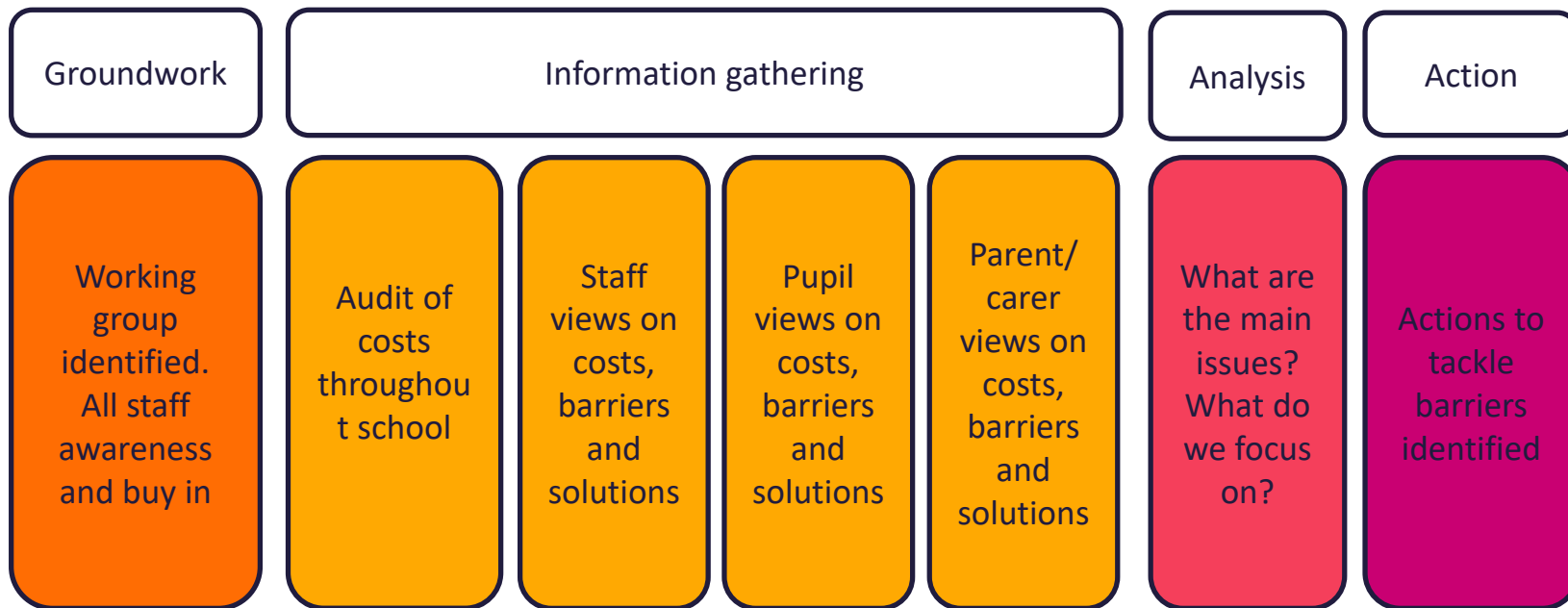
Systems in place where children and young people don't feel embarrassed asking for help or subsidies.

Anti bullying alert to income based bullying or stigma

Understanding, listening and sensitive staff – discretion and empathy
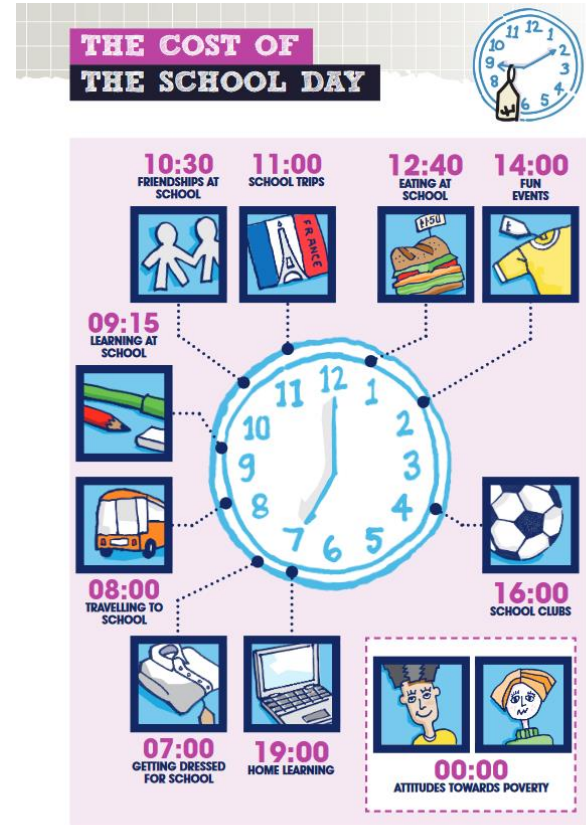
COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY PROCESS

"Children who are unable to participate in the same activities as their peers will very often not feel included and this can have a negative impact on health and wellbeing. The key is finding possible solutions to ensure all children have the same opportunities." (Primary Teacher)

Groundwork	Information gathering				Analysis	Action
Working group identified. All staff awareness and buy in	Audit of costs throughout school	Staff views on costs, barriers and solutions	Pupil views on costs, barriers and solutions	Parent/ carer views on costs, barriers and solutions	What are the main issues? What do we focus on?	Actions to tackle barriers identified

Group work
Task

Please answer the following questions on your cost cards:

1. What costs are involved in this part of the school day?

2. What impact might they have on children and young people?

3. What practice are you aware of that is being done to tackle this financial barrier?

THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY

10:30 FRIENDSHIPS AT SCHOOL

11:00 SCHOOL TRIPS

12:40 EATING AT SCHOOL

14:00 FUN EVENTS

09:15 LEARNING AT SCHOOL

08:00 TRAVELLING TO SCHOOL

16:00 SCHOOL CLUBS

07:00 GETTING DRESSED FOR SCHOOL

19:00 HOME LEARNING

00:00 ATTITUDES TOWARDS POVERTY

CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY EVALUATION

Study sample

IMPACT: PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Direct work in schools (Glasgow and Dundee)

Practice change

- New school policies and practices implemented that a more poverty sensitive e.g. changes to uniform, schools clubs, fun events, learning in school, school trips, subject costs, home learning and transport

Attitudinal change

- Improved understanding of the drivers and consequences of poverty amongst school staff
- Greater awareness amongst staff of the impact of school costs on children and families

Other local authority activity

- Awareness raising and learning cascaded across LAs and to external agencies
- Range of positive changes made to practices and polices
- Increased awareness of poverty amongst school staff

National support and resources

Programme components

- Quality of staff advice and support
- Presentations and training are highly effective
- Practice networks are greatly valued
- Materials and Toolkits "excellent and tackle all areas"

OTHER LOCAL AUTHORITY ACTIVITY EXAMPLES

Dumfries and Galloway - Schools are working together to hold uniform swap shops in public locations, such as banks, libraries or community centres, in order to reduce the stigma of parents being seen at school.

Midlothian - Pilot schools have introduced prepaid travel cards for some children living long distances from school to enable them to travel to school without incurring costs.

Angus - Schools have worked in partnership with Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB), NHS and Active Schools to run a pilot program offering free school meals during school holidays for low income families in targeted areas. This program support 70 children over a two-week period.

Scottish borders - Some schools have completed targeted work to examine which children are attending after school clubs, to assess factors preventing attendance, such as lack of transport.

West Lothian - Schools are holding fewer dress down days, and they are asking for donations for charity events rather than charging a set fee.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

Areas for further development

School staff want:
- More examples and ideas as to what might work in their school
- More resources that can support schools to respond with key messages that tackle attitudes towards poverty
- Checklists to help prompt schools action

Leaders and LAs want:
- More information on how to monitor take-up and progress
- More information and practical suggestions on the messages and comms with parents

National stakeholders want:
- Explicit demonstration of the links between the project and local and national policies e.g. poverty, school equity, inclusion and attainment

- Any questions? kanstey@cpag.org.uk
- All resources and information free on our website: http://www.cpag.org.uk/cost-school-day
- Children North East project http://www.povertyproofing.co.uk/

CHILD
POVERTY
ACTION
GROUP