



eis

The Educational
Institute of Scotland

STANDING UP TO POVERTY

**Anti-Poverty Advice
for the Classroom**



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For the last five years, I have been encouraging all manner of professional groups who work with children to learn from what EIS advocated to its members through “Face up to child poverty”. Since then, our children and their families have endured a cost-of-living crisis that will have made everyday life poorer for many who were previously comfortable and even tougher for those already in need. Teachers and other professionals working in schools have been mitigating the impact of poverty throughout this time. It is a disgrace that the education – and wider lives – of many of our children continue to be blighted by poverty. I applaud the work of teachers throughout Scotland whose everyday actions are tackling poverty in our schools. And, I will continue to encourage anyone else who will listen to take the lead of the EIS whose “Standing up in the classroom” demonstrates what actions professionals can – and must – undertake to tackle the scourge of child poverty in Scotland.

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Professor John McKendrick

Co-director of the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University

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WE DON'T GIVE UP AND WE NEVER WILL GIVE UP



NICOLA FISHER, EIS EQUALITY CONVENER

It's more than concerning that in one of the richest countries in the world, the EIS is issuing yet more advice to members on the impact of poverty on young people's education.

It's deeply distressing that more than a quarter of children in Scotland are still living in poverty, and even more troubling that two thirds of those children live in households where at least one adult is working.

The reality that tens and tens of thousands of children in Scotland continue to go out to school in the morning with nothing in their stomachs because there's no food for a breakfast in the fridge, and that when they come home at the end of the school day, there's not enough food in the cupboards to feed them, their siblings and their parents, in a country that is awash with wealth, is appalling.

Who wouldn't feel desolate that thousands of children in Scotland are now being treated for malnutrition?

Who wouldn't be dismayed to learn that the thousands and thousands of children in Scotland who don't have enough food, clothes, or heat to nurture their growth continue to be at an immediate disadvantage when they go to school?

We might be tempted to give up and simply concede that poverty's inevitable and that there's nothing that any of us can do about it.

We might...but we don't. We don't give up and we never will give up. The EIS doesn't accept that poverty is inevitable. We relentlessly protest it as a political choice, using every means possible.

And while we keep up our political campaigning, we encourage our members, working together, to do what they reasonably can in their schools and other education settings, to mitigate the impact of poverty on young people's education.

This new publication 'Standing Up to Poverty' is intended to help our members do this. The advice within it has been created using the insights of teachers who are working hard every single day to support young people whose family incomes are low and who might, as a result, suffer further stigma, social and educational exclusion if anti-poverty policies and practices were not in place in their schools.

As Convener of the EIS Equality Committee, I'm proud of the contributions that have led to the publication of this latest anti-poverty advice but look forward to a day when it will not be needed because poverty will be a thing of the past.

The EIS doesn't accept that poverty is inevitable. We relentlessly protest it as a political choice, using every means possible.



CHILD POVERTY IN SCOTLAND

...260,000 (26%)
children – the equivalent
of over 11,000 Scottish primary
school classes – were trapped
in relative poverty in Scotland
between 2022-23.

Despite living in one of the wealthiest and most resourced nations in the world, poverty continues to blight the lives of hundreds of thousands of people. Distressingly, over one million people in Scotland are living in poverty – more than a quarter of which are children.

The number of children living in absolute poverty has risen by its highest rate in 30 years across the whole UK. In Scotland, the Scottish Government's own recent child poverty data shows the numbers of children living in poverty has gone up by 20,000 in the last year with 260,000 children – the equivalent of over 11,000 Scottish primary school classes – trapped in relative poverty in Scotland between 2022-23¹.

Between the late 1990s and 2013, relative child poverty had been slightly falling in Scotland². However the number of people living in deep poverty has been increasing over the twenty years since³, and worryingly, the depths of that poverty has worsened too⁴.

The combination of the 2007 financial crash, the ensuing recession, more than a decade of austerity-driven policies, stagnant wages and persistent low pay, precarious and insecure work, the chronic underfunding of public services, and an insufficient social security system; coupled with exorbitant

housing, food, childcare, transport and fuel costs, and the recent cost of living crisis brought about by corporate greed, soaring high inflation, and depressed wage growth – have significantly contributed to the rise of child poverty over the last decade, resulting in the unacceptably bleak reality that 1 in 4 of Scotland's children remain in relative poverty in 2024.

Schools and teachers alone cannot end poverty or even significantly reduce its impact, and nor should they be expected to. However, as the number of children experiencing poverty increases in Scotland and the nature of that poverty intensifies, the significant role that schools and teachers play in mitigating the worst consequences of poverty has never been more important.

IN-WORK POVERTY

The number of children living in poverty where at least one person in their household is in full or part-time work has also increased over the past decade. More than two thirds⁶ (69%) of children and young people living in poverty live in working households. This is the highest level of in-work poverty ever recorded since 1996 when this data began to be routinely collected.⁷

Clearly, work is not paying sufficiently well to keep workers in Scotland and their children out of poverty, meaning that many working parents require other



More than a quarter of a million children – that's 1 in 4 – are living in poverty in Scotland.

supports to compensate for the fact that their wages are simply not enough to cover basic living costs.

POVERTY AND FOODBANKS

Food prices have also been soaring during the cost of living crisis which has seen the highest levels of need ever in food banks across the Scottish Trussell Trust network.⁸ Food banks in the Trussell Trust network in Scotland distributed 259,44 emergency food parcels between 1 April 2022 to 31st March 2023, including 7,968 parcels for children. This is the highest number of parcels that the network in Scotland has ever distributed in a financial year and represents a 30% increase from the same period in 2021/22.⁹

POVERTY AND INTERSECTIONAL DISADVANTAGE

Poverty also disproportionately affects certain households. The most recent figures from the Scottish Government show that children who live alongside 3 or more other children in the household, those with a disabled household member, minority ethnic households, and single parent households are all at a greater risk of living in relative poverty.

More than two thirds of children in poverty live in working households.⁵

HIDDEN POVERTY

It should be borne in mind that poverty and hunger are not confined to children and young people living in areas of high deprivation or within families known to be struggling financially. Children, young people, and their families, who often may not appear to be struggling financially or to keep themselves fed, are frequently seeking to hide the reality of their circumstances to others out of embarrassment or fear of unwanted service intervention.

POVERTY: THE LEGAL AND CHILDREN'S RIGHTS LANDSCAPE

The Scottish Government has committed to make tackling child poverty a 'national mission'. As part of this commitment, several legislative acts and frameworks have been introduced in the last few years.

CHILD POVERTY (SCOTLAND) ACT 2017

Context

The Child Poverty Act 2010 placed a legal duty upon both the UK and Scottish Government to take action to substantially reduce child poverty. However, In July 2015, the UK Government announced its intention to repeal parts of the Child Poverty Act 2010 via what eventually became the Welfare Reform and Work Act 2016. The UK Government proposed to replace the four income-based targets with measures on worklessness and educational attainment; to remove the child poverty aspects of the Social Mobility and Child Poverty Commission's remit; and to rename the legislation the 'Life Chances Act'. The Scottish Government disagreed with this approach, requested an opt-out, and subsequently the Scottish Parliament overwhelmingly passed the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act¹⁰ in November 2017.

Aim of the Act

The Act places a legal obligation upon and sets statutory targets for the Scottish Government to significantly reduce the number of children experiencing poverty in Scotland by 2030¹¹. This means that the Government and local authorities are legally bound to tell us what the child poverty targets are for Scotland, and how the Scottish Government and councils will meet them.

National and Local Duties to Report on and Take Action to Tackling Poverty

The Act places a legal duty on all local authorities and health boards in Scotland to report annually on activity and action they are taking to reduce child poverty locally. The Act also places a legal duty on Scottish Ministers to publish national child poverty delivery plans in 2018, 2022, and 2026, and report on the progress of these plans annually.

Scottish Poverty and Inequality Commission

The Act set out a specific requirement for the establishment of a Scottish Commission in relation to child poverty¹². The Poverty and Inequality Commission was established from 1 July 2019. It is an advisory non-departmental public body which provides independent advice and scrutiny to Scottish Ministers on poverty and inequality.¹³

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The Commission also carries out research, develops guidance, and develops its own work in relation to scrutinising the Scottish Governments progress and actions on child poverty.

TACKLING CHILD POVERTY DELIVERY PLAN 2022 TO 2026

Best Start, Bright Future – Scottish Government Delivery Plan

As well as publishing annual plans and data around child poverty in Scotland, the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 means that the Scottish Government must publish a strategic delivery plan every four years on how they aim to tackle poverty and reduce child poverty by 2030. The “Best Start, Bright Futures” delivery plan outlines how the Scottish Government aims to tackle child poverty between the period of 2022 – 2026¹⁴. It outlines the actions the Scottish Government intend to take to meet their own child poverty targets and reduce child poverty. The current delivery plan is the second Tackling Child Poverty delivery plan since the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 implementation and follows on from the first Scottish child poverty delivery plan, “Every Child, Every Chance”¹⁵.

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UNITED NATIONS RIGHTS OF THE CHILD (UNCRC)

Context

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) is the base standard for children's rights and sets out the fundamental rights of all children. The UNCRC is the most widely ratified human rights treaty in the world and sets out the specific rights including relating to education, leisure and play, health, fair and equal treatment, protection from exploitation and the right to be heard. The UK ratified the UNCRC in 1991, although ratified, the UNCRC was not incorporated in the UK, meaning that children's rights in the UK had no legal power.

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act 2024

On the 7 of December 2023, the Scottish Parliament unanimously passed the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill for the second time. The Bill received Royal Assent on 16 January 2024 and is now the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Act. Scotland is the first country in the UK and devolved nation in the world, to incorporate the UNCRC into domestic law. The Act is a landmark piece of legislation that incorporates the UNCRC into Scots law – providing children legal power to uphold the UNCRC. The Act follows policy developments that have been aiming to advance the furthering and protection of children's rights across various legislation, policy and practice in Scotland,

such as GIRFEC, the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014, Scottish Government's 2018-21 Action Plan, and the Children (Scotland) Act 2020.

Child Poverty in Scotland and the UNCRC

Poverty is one of the most significant human rights issues facing children and young people in Scotland. The existence of child poverty is a deep violation of children's rights. It is the EIS's view that the continued existence of, and unacceptability high levels of child poverty in Scotland, undermines the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), which is now enshrined in Scots law.

Article 27 of the UNCRC states that every child has the right to a standard of living that allows them to develop physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially.

However, living in poverty too often means children's basic human rights are deeply and negatively impacted – the right to:

- life and survival, and to develop to their maximum potential (Article 6 UNCRC);
- an adequate standard of living, adequate food, clothing and housing (Article 27 UNCRC);
- the highest attainable standard of mental and physical health (Article 24 UNCRC);
- education (Article 28 UNCRC);

- participate in forums and spaces to influence decisions (Article 12);
- play and enjoy recreational activities and culture (Article 31 UNCRC);
- essential services without discrimination (Article 2 UNCRC).

Many children experiencing poverty will have their rights unrealised, and face greater barriers both to accessing and fulfilling their rights. The impacts of poverty often touch every aspect of a child's life, including their education, health, family, relationships, happiness, and opportunities.

Tackling child poverty is a human rights issue and cannot be viewed in isolation to promoting and protecting children's rights – failure from governments to tackle child poverty is a breach of children's rights and in contrary to commitments to the UNCRC.

Every child has the right to a standard of living that allows them to develop physically, mentally, spiritually, and socially.

UNCRC Article 27



POVERTY-RELATED STIGMA

CAUSES

The primary cause of poverty-related stigma is deep societal inequality that's underpinned by the belief that the lives of some human beings are worth less than others and that those human beings are less entitled to dignity, respect, opportunity, wealth and quality of life.

All-pervasive and powerful media interests both within traditional and social media perpetuate myths of 'success' and 'goodness' and 'failure' and 'badness' of human beings in terms of their wealth or lack of it, respectively. Wealth and poverty in many ways have become proxies for good and failed, even 'bad' human beings, who have simply made the wrong choices in life, the psychosocial impacts of which are significant.

Those with vested political interests in maintaining the status quo – the beneficiaries of unequal wealth distribution – also articulate these beliefs in their political rhetoric and in the design of government policy, the implementation of which further reinforces both attitudes to and actual, socio-economic disadvantage.

Media and social media commercial advertising encourages consumerism in pursuit of happiness and as an expression of personal worth, encouraging self-aggrandisement of those who can afford to purchase goods and products, contrasted by a sense of relative failure and worthlessness among those for whom promoted products are unaffordable and out of reach.

Some politicians, celebrities and business leaders prioritise wealth and status, and identify these within their public appearances and other communication, as markers of human worth and success, which for those who have neither, because the system is structured to favour a minority, reinforces the sense of their relative unimportance and 'success' as human beings.

There is a tendency for some within those groups to perpetuate something like the myth that is the American Dream – that if only individuals tried/strived/worked hard enough, then they would 'make it' and success in the form of wealth (and status) would come their way, the corollary being that lack of wealth is a consequence of personal failings and inadequacies.

Associated with this kind of myth-peddling can be a distorted focus on exceptional cases where individuals who have grown up in poverty and who acquire wealth later in life, are held up as examples to suggest that if they can 'achieve success' like this, then anyone can if only they had high enough aspirations and worked hard enough to achieve them.

Children and young people are very impressionable to this kind of false narrative about poverty and wealth, success and failure, this not only shaping their views potentially of themselves, but of their parents, other adult family members and adults in their wider communities.

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Education services risk contributing to poverty-related stigma if the staff working within those services are not sufficiently supported to develop/enhance their awareness of the nature, actual causes and real consequences of poverty for people forced to live with it; and if the service overall doesn't enable and encourage service delivery in such a way as to reduce stigma.

IMPACT OF STIGMA

The impact of stigma on young people's wellbeing can't be underestimated. Research involving people who have lived experience of poverty shows that the associated stigma arising from prejudice and stereotyping is damaging to their wellbeing.

Much of the 'povertyist' propaganda that's evident in media portrayals and political rhetoric, is quite deliberately engineered by think tanks and media experts who wish to other and scapegoat people living in poverty.

Those who are the target of this callous stereotyping and shaming, experience embarrassment, humiliation, stress and low self-esteem. Many experience social exclusion as a result of others' attitudes; many others are socially excluded by their own withdrawal from and avoidance of, social situations that risk further shaming.



THE ROLE OF EDUCATION

Poverty and stigma can have a considerable emotional as well as physical impact on children and young people which can in turn affect their ability to participate fully in education. This advice considers some of the main the causes and multifaceted impacts of poverty on the children and young people who experience it, whilst also highlighting how they can be best supported through their education.

Clearly, the current socio-economic context in Scotland has significant implications for the classroom and the wider school setting. While it is understood that education is not the panacea to poverty, and that teachers and lecturers cannot be expected to banish its effects from the lives of their pupils and students, education policy and practice must seek to address it.

This advice contains some advice that EIS members may wish to consider in relation to poverty and how it affects a child's day-to-day experience of school and their educational achievements in both the short and long term.

Included within the advice are practical examples provided by members of the Equality Committee of how schools continue to respond to rising levels of socio-economic deprivation with 'poverty proofing' measures to try to mitigate the impact of low income on the education of their students.

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HUNGER

Whilst hunger and undernourishment are a human rights issue in themselves, they also conspire to impact on children and young people's learning – how they engage in it and in terms of the outcomes from it, both in the short and the long term.

Hunger impacts directly on a young person's ability to concentrate and associated dips in blood sugar can also influence behaviour. Young people who are hungry will often appear withdrawn or will exhibit challenging behaviour as their brains react to the physical impacts of insufficient food intake.

MALNUTRITION

In September 2022, The Herald* newspaper reported that thousands of children in Scotland were being treated for malnutrition. It is worth bearing in mind that the United Kingdom is one of the richest countries in the world.

In August 2023 The Times* newspaper reported growing prevalence of rickets in Scotland – 700% more cases than in England. Rickets is caused by Vitamin D deficiency. It was a common disease in the Victorian era among people forced to live in poverty, in slum living conditions and with rare access to Vitamin D-rich foods like eggs, oily fish and red meat. In 21st century Scotland, there is no shortage of nutritious food to go around, yet tens of thousands of children – and their parents – are going hungry and undernourished every day.

IMPACT ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S WELLBEING

Over time, where insufficiency of healthy food is a chronic issue, young people are likely to experience the longer-term effects of undernourishment.

Lack of key nutrients and vitamins damages both physical and mental wellbeing. This can manifest in young people's weight, pallor, proneness to illness caused by weakened immune systems, frequency of headaches; in energy levels – low energy and fatigue, and/or hyperactivity; brain development, especially in younger children, and brain function, and general emotional state.

Lack of a sufficient, healthy diet won't always present in terms of weight loss in young people. Sometimes, it will be evident in weight gain and obesity due to the cost and other barriers that there are in the way of access for families on low income, to healthy, nutritious foods and the ability to prepare healthy, balanced meals.

Research carried out by Imperial College London (published in the Lancet) examined the average height of school aged children across 200 countries between 1985 and 2019.¹⁶ They found that in 1985, British boys and girls ranked 69 out of 200 countries for average height aged five. At the time they were on average 111.4cm and 111cm tall respectively. But by 2019, British boys were 102nd and girls 96th, with the average five-year-old boy measuring 112.5cm and the average girl, 111.7cm. In Bulgaria, the average height for a five-year-old boy in 2019 was 121cm and a girl, 118cm.¹⁷ Professor Majid Ezzati,

* www.heraldsotland.com/news/homenews/21671126.hundreds-scots-children-diagnosed-malnutrition

* www.thetimes.com/uk/healthcare/article/rise-of-rickets-in-scotland-fuels-fears-over-poverty-and-diet-h6902tzj3


senior author of the study from Imperial's School of Public Health said: "Children in some countries grow healthily to five years, but fall behind in school years. This shows that there is an imbalance between investment in improving nutrition in pre-schoolers, and in school-aged children and adolescents."¹⁸

Professor Tim Cole, an expert in child growth rates at the Great Ormond Street Institute of Child Health, University College London said, "Austerity has clobbered the height of children in the UK. It's quite clear we are falling behind, relative to Europe."¹⁹

FOOD INSECURITY

Public Health Scotland defines food insecurity as 'the inability to acquire or consume an adequate or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so'. By this definition, the EIS is clear that food insecurity affects large numbers of children and young people who attend our educational establishments.

EIS concerns in this regard are borne out by data held by leading national and third sector organisations with expertise on food insecurity. Current reporting in Scotland shows that thousands of children have been treated for malnutrition in recent years.²⁰ This evidence highlights the urgent need for universal free school meal provision for all school age learners.



Hunger impacts directly on a young person's ability to concentrate and associated dips in blood sugar can also influence behaviour.

For many who are not covered at all by free meal entitlement, hunger and poor nutrition may be ever-present.

Research published by the Food Foundation found that more than 4 million children in the UK live in households that would struggle to afford to buy enough fruit, vegetables, fish and other healthy foods to meet the official nutrition guidelines – a figure that is only increasing.²¹

Parents and young people with very little amounts of money to spend on food are therefore left with little choice but to buy cheaper foods that are often faster to prepare but that are laden with sugar and fat and low on nutritional value, with resultant negative impacts on health. Coupled with this, there is the anxiety that children and young people experience when they are aware that their parents/carers are struggling financially. This can be acute when there's a lack of food at home and ongoing uncertainty as to how the family will be able to eat from one day to the next.

Both in the short and the longer-term, hunger, undernourishment and the stress and trauma that arise from food insecurity, erode physical, emotional and mental health, and undermine a young person's ability to learn and therefore to benefit from their school education.

FREE SCHOOL MEALS (FSM)

Free school meals are another essential support for children whose families are struggling as a result of low incomes and high living costs, to buy enough food. The EIS welcomed the extension of the universal free school meals offer to children in P4

and P5 during academic session 2021-22. Universal free school meals provision is a longstanding EIS campaigning objective.

The Union supports universal provision because:

- It increases uptake of school meals and therefore the numbers of children receiving at least one healthy meal during each school day, by removing the need for families to apply. Sometimes the bureaucracy of the current means-tested approach can be onerous, especially where families face challenges with adult literacy or where English is an additional language. The stigma of applying, perhaps by design, is off-putting for many.
- Means-testing also results in unsuccessful applications by families whose incomes are low but not quite low enough to meet the threshold of entitlement. The result for them is ongoing struggle to consistently provide nutritious food for their children. Universalism would help mitigate these challenges.
- Universal provision also increases uptake by removing the stigma that many young people experience in taking a free meal. (The issue of stigma is dealt with more fully later in this briefing.)

Although there have been positive developments over the course of this Scottish Parliamentary term so far, the EIS has become increasingly concerned



about the delays to the manifesto-promised expansion of free school meals provision for all Primary pupils. The Scottish Government originally committed to providing free school meals for all P6 and P7 by August 2022. This was first delayed until August 2024, then August 2026 and most recently the Scottish Government has announced that it does not plan to extend universal provision to P6 and P7. Meanwhile thousands of children continue to be hungry at school and to suffer stigma; and their parents remain without the additional £400 per child per year that free school meals would save them, amidst the continuing cost of living crisis.

The decision to scrap the full implementation of the manifesto commitment to give free school meals to all Primary pupils and that the Scottish Government continues to have no plans to extend universal provision to Secondary[1]aged pupils has prompted further campaigning by the EIS and others in the trade union movement towards securing access to free school meals for all children across all stages of school.

In between free school lunches many children and young people who receive them will be underfed, with the problem being particularly acute at weekends and during school holiday periods. For many who are not covered at all by free meal entitlement, hunger and poor nutrition may be ever-present.

SUPPORTING ACCESS TO FSM ENTITLEMENTS

As campaigning continues, it's important to try to ensure that all families who have children in P6-S6 who might be eligible, are supported as necessary to apply for free school meals. Members are encouraged through their EIS Branch to raise the matter with the appropriate members of the school management team with a view to ensuring that effective processes are in place to make families aware, with due sensitivity, of their entitlements and to support them with applications as necessary.

In the context of increasingly diverse school communities, it's important to ensure that associated communication with families and young people from minority ethnic backgrounds is underpinned by an understanding of the intersectional disadvantage that many within BAME communities experience – discrimination and disadvantage on the grounds of race or ethnicity, resulting in greater risk of socio-economic disadvantage and associated stigma.

Additionally, it's important that all relevant advice for families, whether written or verbal, is available in the range of languages that are spoken within the school community. Some parents will have literacy difficulties regardless of the main language spoken and may require additional support in accessing the relevant information about FSM entitlements.

Consideration should also be given to the school's approach should it become clear that a young person who may be entitled to free school meals is not included in the provision. This should be with a view to ensuring that there is a clear and sensitive, including culturally sensitive, means of referring and addressing such a wellbeing concern.

FOODBANK AND OTHER CHARITY COLLECTIONS OF FOOD

Many schools collect items for donation to local foodbanks at various points in the year and/or organise collections of food to donate as a way of marking Harvest-time and Christmas.

In light of the widespread use of foodbanks in Scotland and of the fact that thousands of children receive food aid from them, it's important to be sensitive to the fact that some families within the school community are likely to be dependent on foodbanks or other charity donations of food for their own survival. Many will therefore be unable to donate items and are likely to feel the associated stigma of being unable to contribute, as well as the stigma that could arise from the school's focus on foodbanks generally.


Schools' approaches to supporting local foodbanks and organising other charitable donations of food should be carefully considered with these things in mind. A starting point for the relevant collegiate discussion would be whether it is appropriate at all for the school to be setting up such a charity drive.

If the collegiate decision is to proceed, then very careful planning is required to ensure that no child experiences stigma in the course of the school's charity activity in this area.

Hunger: what you and your colleagues can do

Seek to ensure:

- the availability of whole school advice on how to make a referral when hunger is identified in a child by a member of staff as a concern
- that staff feel confident in identifying and raising any associated issues
- that there is a systemic approach to providing food for children and young people who present with hunger outwith established school meal times
- that processes are in place to support families to access any free school meal entitlements and that associated communication is sensitive, inclusive and accessible to parents/ carers with literacy difficulties and/or for whom English is an additional language
- that children who may be at risk of hunger are included within any breakfast club provision; or where there is none, to begin collegiate discussion of how this might be made possible using school resources

- 
- that school lunches, breakfast clubs and snacks are fully inclusive of the dietary requirements of all children and young people, such as those fulfilling religious/cultural observance; who have needs associated with being neurodivergent; or who have any health-related dietary requirements
 - that families are advised of, or referred to, outside agencies that can offer support in the form of food-aid or advice on matters such as income maximisation
 - that associated communication is sensitive, inclusive and accessible to those with low literacy, literacy difficulties and/or for whom English is an additional language
 - that information about such provision to address low income and resultant hunger and food insecurity is available to all students, e.g., via school noticeboards, websites or PSHE lessons to help reduce stigma and increase uptake
 - sensitive consideration of plans for any charity efforts in support of local foodbanks or other charitable donations of food to avoid poverty-related stigma.

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SCHOOL UNIFORM

Policy on uniform varies from school to school, as does opinion more widely on the merits of uniform. One argument often cited in support of school policy which insists on the wearing of uniform is that it eradicates obvious differences between children and young people arising from socio-economic inequalities, in terms of their outward appearances. In some schools, therefore, uniform is seen as a means of mitigating some of the effects of poverty for children and young people who experience it.

There are complexities to the issue, however. School uniform can be costly, and disproportionately so for families struggling on low incomes, or families with 3 or more children in the household, as highlighted by Scottish Government research.

CLOTHING GRANTS

While clothing grants are available to some families for the purchase of school uniform, these do not always sufficiently cover the cost of uniform expenses throughout the year.

- Primary aged pupils whose families are entitled to a clothing grant receive a minimum of £120.
- Secondary aged pupils whose families are entitled to a clothing grant receive a minimum of £150.

Local Authorities may provide more than the statutory minimums.

Children and young people grow out of shoes and clothes, sometimes within months, leaving parents with the burden of the additional cost of replacement items. Sometimes, and particularly in the current socio-economic context, families are simply unable to purchase replacement items in the middle of the school year, meaning that children and young people have no option but to come to school wearing alternative items of clothing and/or footwear.

Furthermore, some families living on low incomes fall just below the threshold of entitlement to clothing grants and have to meet the full cost of school uniforms themselves, often for more than one child at a time.

This can be further compounded by the child benefit changes brought in, in 2017 which prevent parents from claiming child tax credit or universal credit for any third or subsequent child born after April 2017. This policy, introduced by the former chancellor George Osborne as part of the Conservative Government's austerity drive, has affected an estimated 1.5 million children, and research has shown that the policy has impoverished families rather than increasing employment as it was claimed to have been designed to do.

Children in larger families are also at increasing risk of poverty even where all adults are in full-time work, and despite increases in parents' employment rates. These trends reflect successive cuts to social security support over the past 10 years.²²



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EXTRA SCHOOL CLOTHING AND LAUNDRY

Again, for many families living in low-income poverty, the family budget just cannot stretch to the purchase of additional items of school clothing to allow for mid-week changes in the event that an item of clothing requires to be washed. This includes PE kit.

Furthermore, it should be remembered that parents within low-income families are often required to work long hours and at evenings and weekends, often in two or three jobs, to make ends meet. Time to do laundry of school uniform and items of PE kit between the end of one school day and the beginning of the next, is not always available due to demanding shift patterns.

A further issue is the cost of fuel which is prohibitive for many families. In some households, gas and electricity for cooking, heating and powering appliances is unaffordable, making regular washing and drying of clothes problematic, if not impossible, in some cases. The problem may be particularly acute for families, including asylum seekers, who are living in temporary accommodation.

INABILITY TO COMPLY WITH UNIFORM POLICY

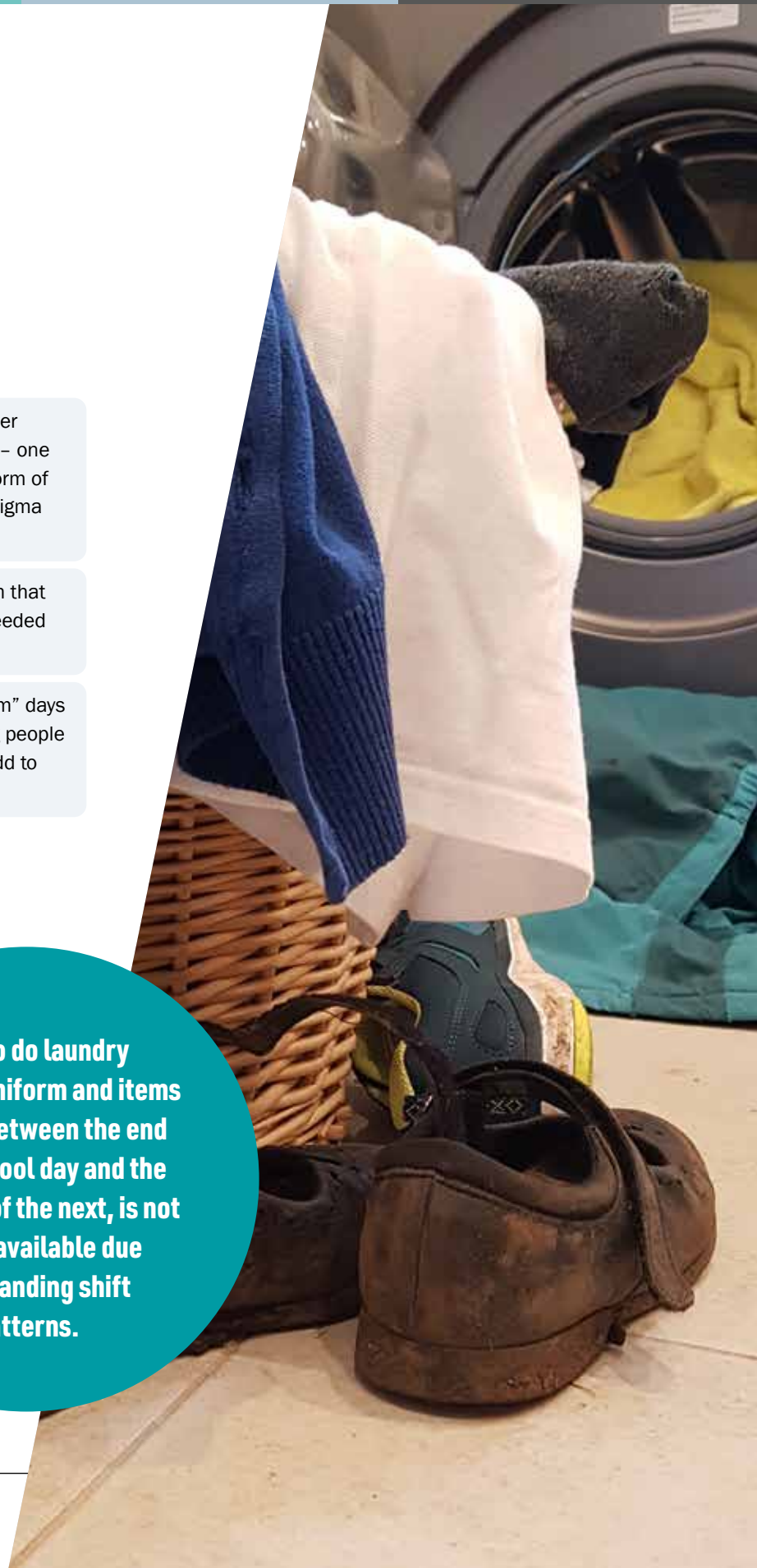
As a consequence of difficulties such as these, children and young people from families on low incomes will be forced to come to school, at times, not wearing school uniform as outlined in the school policy, and, in trying to avoid humiliation, may not always wish to give the real reason for this.

School uniform: what you and your colleagues can do

- Give consideration to the cost of school uniforms when revising or updating existing school uniform policy.
- Bear in mind that tartan, braiding on blazers and additional school-branded badges almost always cost families more – these should not be requirements of any school uniform policy.
- Calculate the total cost of the required school uniform and weigh this against the amount made available to families through clothing grants. If the cost exceeds the amount issued by your Local Authority, then changes should be made to the policy to make school uniform affordable for all.
- Consider ways that uniform could be made fully inclusive, including cultural appropriateness, and less expensive for all families, for example by allowing parents to buy all, or most of the school uniform on the high street which is often considerably cheaper than branded items from named suppliers.
- Consider appropriate responses to apparent 'breaches' of the uniform code and/or bringing of PE kit. These will often be linked to the fact that a child is living in poverty. Punitive responses will further stigmatise and exclude young people who already experience stigma as a result of poverty and are therefore not appropriate.

- Consider setting up “swap shops” and other such systems can help, handled with tact – one approach may be to promote these as a form of environmentalism, thus challenging the stigma of second-hand clothing.
- Recycling of lost property/items of uniform that have been outgrown/uniform no longer needed by P7s or Secondary school leavers.
- Avoid asking for donations for “non-uniform” days as this may stigmatise children and young people who are unable to contribute and could add to school absences.

Time to do laundry of school uniform and items of PE kit between the end of one school day and the beginning of the next, is not always available due to demanding shift patterns.



EQUIPMENT FOR LEARNING

As highlighted throughout this advice, thousands of households are struggling to provide even the bare necessities needed to support their families. Whilst basic equipment such as pens, pencils and paper for school may seem to be inexpensive, many are reliant on this equipment being provided in class.

Survey data from our members has highlighted that many teachers provide this equipment themselves to ensure that their pupils do not go without. Similarly, many are also reporting to us that they are not as able to subsidise their classrooms due to their own money worries as a result of inflation and the cost of living crisis.

A recent EIS member survey highlighted that coming to school without equipment such as stationery, books or bags was reported by over 70% of members to be increasing. Around 60% also noted an increase in the number of children coming to school without appropriate clothing or footwear for P.E. lessons or school trips.²³

School rules that require young people to bring separate PE kit in order to participate in PE lessons and activities are very problematic. Where young people are denied the opportunity to participate in PE lessons, they are being excluded from essential learning as part of their education. Also concerning is that many young people living in poverty who cannot bring or consistently bring separate PE kit to school, are the same young people at risk of obesity because their families struggle to provide healthy food that is more expensive and have to rely

on cheaper foods that are laden with fat and sugar. Access to regular exercise for those young people, is critical.

Some members have also reported that fewer pupils are taking up instrumental music tuition within their schools. In order to continue their participation in these lessons, more children and young people are becoming reliant on school provided instruments, and members report that many drop out because of the cost of owning or maintaining an instrument as well as the travel costs associated with attending band or orchestra practices.²⁴

DIGITAL POVERTY AND EXCLUSION

For some time, the EIS has raised concerns about the unequal access among school pupils to devices and internet connectivity, and in terms of digital literacy skills, to enable full participation in digital-based learning. The EIS has also highlighted that aside from lack of access to digital devices at home, many young people living in poverty don't have a place where they can sit down to concentrate on schoolwork because of overcrowding and lack of space in the home and/or the absence of furniture such as a table, desk or chair. In these circumstances, even with access to a tablet or a laptop, young people continue to be digitally excluded.

The 2019 Scottish Household Survey highlighted that whilst 96% of households in the 20% least deprived areas had access to the internet, only 82%

of households in the 20% most deprived areas had access. This inequality is even more stark when examined on the basis of income. 65% of families with an income of less than £10,000 per year had internet access – that leaves over a third of households in that income bracket with no access at all. When it comes to those earning more than £40,000 per year, nearly all (99%) have access. Between those two extremes, there are also the scenarios that see sharing of devices and broadband/data between siblings and/or between children and parents. This clearly has implications for young people's school experiences.

During the school closures as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, 64% of members responding to an EIS survey said that pupils having no access to technology was a barrier to home learning. Most said that their highest attaining students were engaging better with online learning than the lowest attaining.²⁵

...the EIS has raised concerns about the unequal access among school pupils to devices and internet connectivity...



For many living in the poorest households, lack of access to the internet intersects with fuel poverty.

DIGITAL EXCLUSION AND FUEL POVERTY

In seeking to address the digital poverty gap, it's important to bear in mind that devices and internet access are dependent on electricity to run.

For many living in the poorest households, lack of access to the internet intersects with fuel poverty.

The definition of fuel poverty in Scotland is if a household spends more than 10% of its income on fuel costs and if the remaining household income is insufficient to maintain an adequate standard of living.

The pressure is likely to have worsened as a result of the poverty impact of the withdrawal of the £20 per week Universal Credit uplift by the UK Government provided during the pandemic.

The Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) highlights that while £20 per week 'may seem inconsequential to those who've been fortunate enough to retain a steady income throughout the pandemic ... for families struggling with rising living costs and hits to income wrought by a loss of job or hours, it can be the difference between buying sufficient food or going without, turning on the heating or sitting in the cold.'

JRF also evidences the fact that people living on the lowest incomes frequently pay the highest costs for electricity, being more likely to have to pay for electricity by expensive pre-payment meters and

being less likely to switch users (partly since the ability to do this is frequently dependent on internet access).

For many families for whom the choice between heating and eating is a very real one, so too is scarcity of electricity to constantly power computers, laptops, tablets and smart phones.

Therefore, even if a young person living in poverty has their own device or has been supplied one by the school/local authority, and been provided data, it can't be assumed that the family income will stretch to keeping the device fully charge.

Equipment for learning: what you and your colleagues can do

- Never assume that all families can afford to buy even the most basic of resources such as pens and pencils.
- Make classroom resources available on a daily basis for all children and young people to use.
- Design activities involving resources that all pupils/students can access.
- Respond in non-punitive ways when children and young people come to class without the necessary resources, including PE kit, as a possible consequence of their poverty.

- Consider all internet-based/digital learning activities with due sensitivity to income-related inequalities to avoid stigma.
- Issue school devices to young people/families who don't have them.
- Consider ongoing technical support, repair and data supply which are also needed to help reduce digital exclusion.
- Enable young people to charge their phones/tablets while in school buildings in stigma-free ways.
- Schedule internet-based learning during class time, using the school's WiFi.
- Look at how resources might be allocated to support parents with digital literacy skills.

Consider all internet-based/digital learning activities with due sensitivity to income-related inequalities to avoid stigma.



HOMework AND OUT OF SCHOOL LEARNING

As with access to equipment and resources, the effects of poverty can weigh heavily on the ability of a pupil/student to complete homework and other less traditional out of school learning activities. Careful consideration of any barriers to participation should be given by EIS members when setting/encouraging independent out of school learning in its various forms: traditional homework tasks, research, library visits, cultural activities, even personal reading.

For example, a craft activity that requires children to make an object that relates to in-class learning may require paper, scissors, glue, colouring pens – none of which a family living in poverty is likely to have in great supply, if at all.

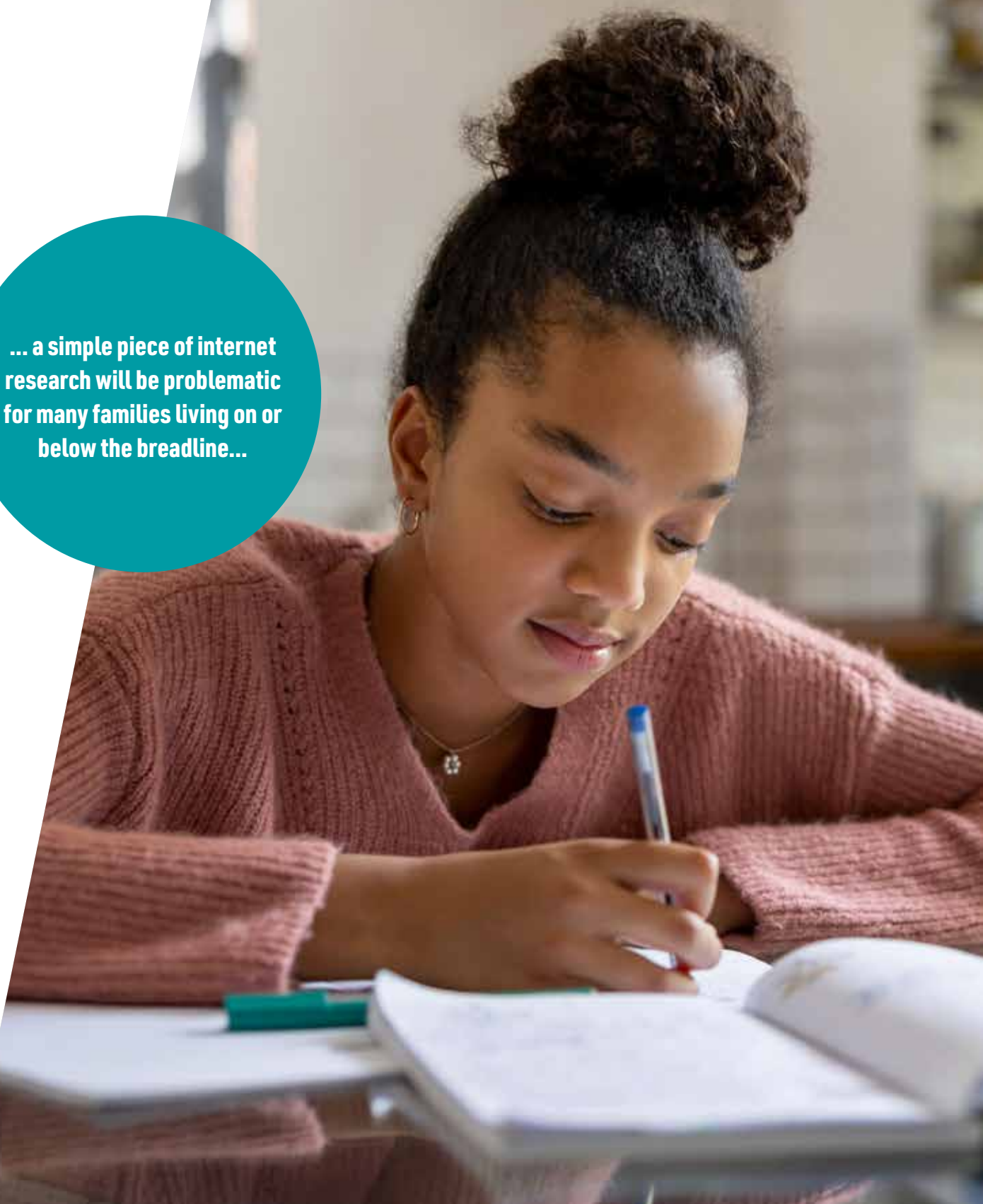
Another example may be learning that is dependent on a visit to a library or a park. For some children/young people this may incur travel costs which cannot be met by the meagre family budget.

Even what on the face of it is a simple piece of internet research will be problematic for many families living on or below the breadline; many pupils/students do not have access to a computer at home or, if they do, access to the internet and/or charging cannot be funded by the family's income.

H& OS: what you and your colleagues can do

- Review homework policy to ensure relevance and necessity of tasks and giving consideration to the ability of all pupils to participate. What's the purpose? Is it necessary? Why? Can all pupils access the intended learning?
- As far as possible, ensure that homework and out of school learning activities are fully inclusive and do not have an associated cost.
- Offer a range of homework activities, allowing pupils/students to opt in to those that they can fully access.
- Provide opportunities to complete any extra out-of-class activities in school.
- Make internet/library access available to all pupils within the school.
- Avoid planning class lessons for which pupil participation is wholly dependent on the completion of homework/out of school learning activities.
- Make packs of relevant materials and resources, including stationery, available for pupils to pick up.
- Provide 'active bags' with maths and language games for pupils to play at home – a less stressful option for both pupils and parents.

... a simple piece of internet research will be problematic for many families living on or below the breadline...



THE COST OF FUN ACTIVITIES

Schools can be very busy with events, activities and outings throughout the course of the year.

Staff planning these together well in advance can help give an overview of all the opportunities that children will be invited to participate in over the course of the school session – the number, timing and any potential costs.

Some questions to ask:

- Are there too many occasions where families might be asked to fund their child's/children's participation in activities?
- Are too many coming close together?
- Is enough notice going to be given of each?
- Would there be particular difficulties for families at even greater risk of poverty – for example, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic families, homes with single parents, with more than 3 children, or where a family member is disabled?
- Are there ways of providing the same or similar experiences, cost-free to all? Or at least to those least able to afford?

As well as looking at any costs associated with individual activities, both up-front and hidden, consideration of how the total cost of all activities combined per child per year, would also be

informative. Where families have more than one child attending the school, this will be even more important as an exercise.

Having looked across the whole year at all likely events, parties, fund-raising activities, staff should then look at how costs can be eliminated or at least reduced, and how even where costs will remain in place, these can be covered in stigma-free ways, for children and young people for whom even relatively low costs, will present a barrier to participation or a hardship.

Asking the Parent Council and/or other groups of parents to look over the plans would be a useful way of getting feedback on affordability. These conversations should be handled with due sensitivity, particularly where the parents being consulted are living on low income themselves. Their views will be especially important.

Overall, the EIS would advise that plans for 'fun' activities should be as cost neutral as possible for all families, and that where payments are being sought, these are kept to a minimum, suitably spaced out, and removed in stigma-free ways for children whose families would otherwise be unable to afford them.

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SCHOOL TRIPS

Costs associated with school trips can be anxiety-inducing for families living on low incomes. Parents who are under pressure to manage meagre finances sufficiently to cover the costs of necessities have little or nothing left over to pay for school outings.

Even when the cost of a school trip is relatively low – only a few pounds – many families are unable to make the weekly income stretch to this, particularly at short notice.

There are often hidden costs on top of the payment that the school might ask for to cover the trip-lunches and snacks, spending money and clothing, for example, all additional expenses commonly associated with school trips. Clothing and more specialist/niche equipment can be particularly costly for residential trips on top of any main charge for the experience.

Where children and young people from low-income families are participating in outings, especially those which may involve lengthy travel and extended periods away from home, there could be issues with this group of pupils/students not having enough money to purchase food while on the trip.

Although many will be entitled to free school lunches, those from P6-S6 are at risk of feeling stigmatised because of continued means-testing of free school

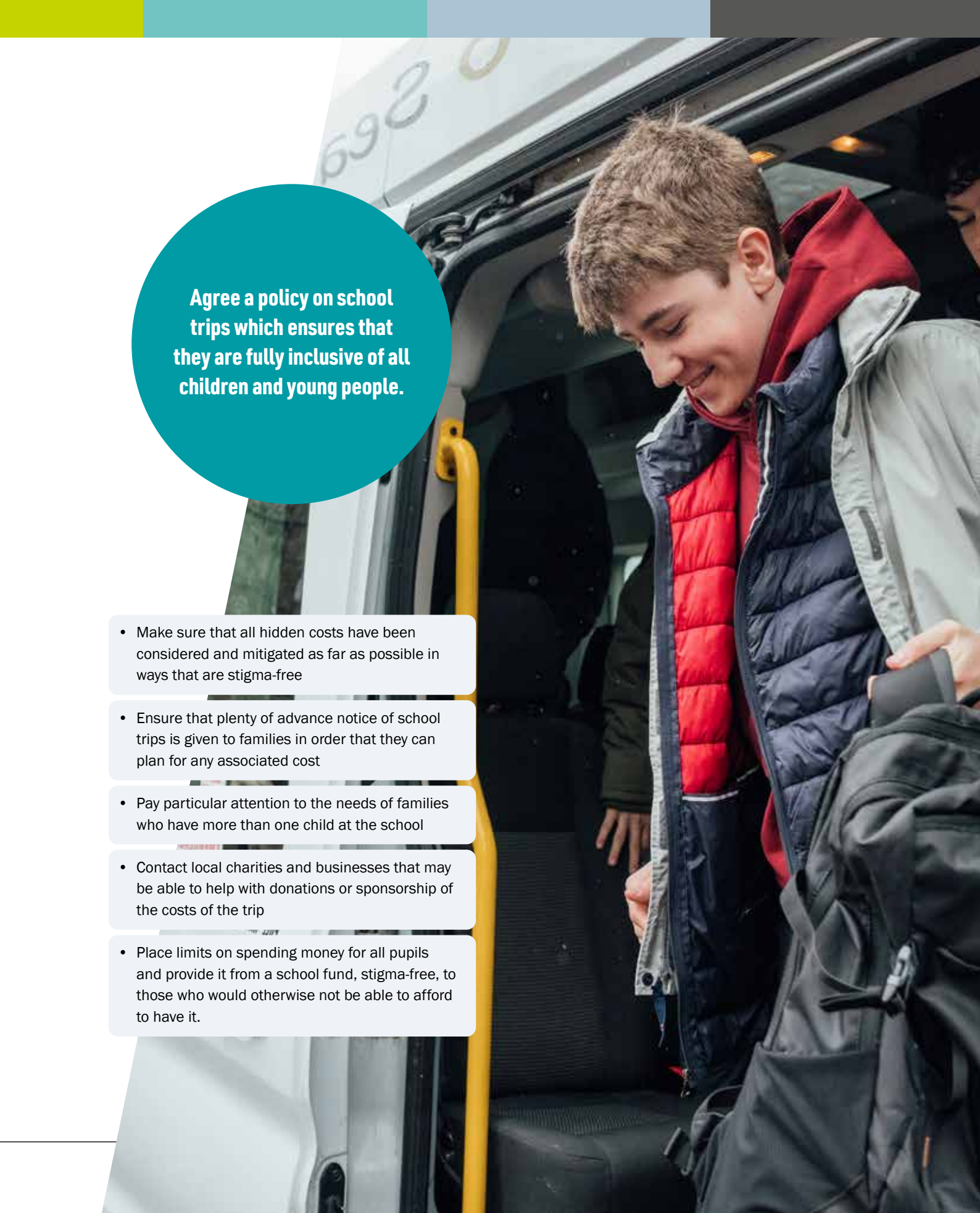
meal entitlement, and may reject the free meal on offer; others who take the free packed lunch may need to eat again before returning home in the event of the trip spanning a whole day or more.

Families with more than one child at school may be being asked to pay for multiple outings at a time, either causing real financial hardship to the family or resulting in the non-participation of children and young people from those families in the outing(s).

Often children and young people from poor families will feign lack of interest in the trip on offer simply because they know that their families will struggle or be unable, to afford the cost, so do not even wish to ask at home for the money.

What you and your colleagues can do

- Agree a policy on school trips which ensures that they are fully inclusive of all children and young people
- Check that local authority funding of school trips, where it existed previously, is being maintained-raise questions where costs are being transferred to schools
- Arrange for the school to retain a special fund to cover the cost of school trips, ideally for all pupils, or at least for pupils whose families cannot afford to pay



Agree a policy on school trips which ensures that they are fully inclusive of all children and young people.

- Make sure that all hidden costs have been considered and mitigated as far as possible in ways that are stigma-free
- Ensure that plenty of advance notice of school trips is given to families in order that they can plan for any associated cost
- Pay particular attention to the needs of families who have more than one child at the school
- Contact local charities and businesses that may be able to help with donations or sponsorship of the costs of the trip
- Place limits on spending money for all pupils and provide it from a school fund, stigma-free, to those who would otherwise not be able to afford to have it.

CHARITY AND FUNDRAISING EVENTS

The EIS continues to advise that no assumption should be made that all children and young people can afford to make even small donations to well-intentioned charity initiatives organised by the school.

The same issues are pertinent here as in the previous section:

- many families simply do not have any additional funds to spare;
- some families have no funds at all when they are subject to harsh benefit sanctions or are in the process of applying for Universal Credit, which can take weeks; and
- thousands are reliant on foodbanks and other charity donations themselves.

In some ways, charity and fundraising activities can be even more stigmatising for children and young people whose families struggle to afford participation. A key report by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) highlights this:

‘...these days regularly involve direct requests for cash...Children reported that donations for charity and fundraising days are often collected in front of them in classrooms by teachers and pupils, making it obvious which of their peers have made a donation.’

The divide between the children and young people who can and can't afford is very obvious too, when the fundraising involves purchasing items such as poppies for Remembrance Day, red noses for Comic Relief and homemade sweets and cakes donated for charity drives such as Children in Need or Macmillan Cancer.

The CPAG research highlights how stigmatising this can be for children and young people:

‘Some people cried because they didn't get one. They just sat there looking at the cakes. They looked sad’. (Pupil, age 10)’

NON-UNIFORM DAYS

A common approach to fund-raising is to organise non-uniform days, which on the face of it, look like good opportunities for young people to ditch their uniforms and to dress up or down in their favourite clothes, in return for a cash donation.

Previous EIS research has found that non-uniform days can present real issues for children and young people from poorer families. Many don't have alternative clothes, shoes and jackets to wear that make them feel socially comfortable amongst their more affluent peers who are likely to be wearing the latest fashions or sought-after brands.

This leaves them with the choice of attending school and feeling out of place and stigmatised, either by wearing uniform or less ‘socially acceptable’ (or more culturally diverse) clothing compared with their

peers; or staying off school altogether. EIS members have previously reported that large numbers of young people from poorer backgrounds opt for the latter, meaning that not only do they miss out on a social experience, they lose valuable learning and teaching time too.

Many of the same issues are likely to be in play where in-school parties are being organised with pupils being allowed not to wear uniform.

DRESS-UP DAYS

Where pupils are encouraged to wear particular kinds of clothes to mark certain days – for example, something red on Show Racism the Red Card's 'Wear Red Day', outfits to look like characters in books for World Book Day or festive jumpers for Christmas Jumper Day – not all families will have the relevant clothing at home and would be under pressure to buy it, commonly leading to non-participation and missing out on key learning and experiences, or further stigmatisation of many children.

These impacts are recorded, also, in the CPAG research.

'Some people will ask why you don't have a Christmas jumper.' (Pupil, age 10)

'Yes, I have struggled (with the costs), there have been dress up days where having to buy different items has been an unnecessary expense, especially when you have more than 1 child.' (Parent)

>>>

Non-uniform days...Many don't have alternative clothes, shoes and jackets to wear that make them feel socially comfortable amongst their more affluent peers...



...many of the families who may be asked to donate to charity will themselves be in receipt of charity...

Charity and fundraising events: what you and your colleagues can do

- Bear in mind the intensifying financial struggles of families when planning, communicating and organising charity and fundraising events.
- Ensure due sensitivity and inclusivity when any requests are made of children and young people in the classroom or letters sent home to parents/carers, requesting their support in charity events.
- Bear in mind that in the current socio-economic climate, it is increasingly the case that many of the families who may be asked to donate to charity will themselves be in receipt of charity from food banks and other organisations.
- Where there has been no whole-school discussion of children and young people's experiences of poverty and how this might impact on their participation in fundraising events, raise the matter with the management team within the school as a starting point.
- Consider the number of charity/fundraising activities that the school is involved in per year and look at the overall requests being made of families – could this be causing hardship or stigma?
- Discuss the purpose of any fundraising proposals. For example, is it appropriate to ask families to raise money for school funds, especially in the current economic climate and the rising costs of food, fuel and other essentials whilst the real-terms value of wages and benefits are falling? Is it appropriate to ask families to donate to foodbanks when they might be reliant upon them themselves?
- Where it is collegiately agreed that certain fundraising activities will go ahead, design them so that there is a variety of ways that children and young people can contribute – for example, making things, designing publicity – with these being recognised and valued equally to bringing money from home.
- Find anonymous, stigma-free ways that children can choose to make donations on behalf of their families...or not.
- Think about alternative sources of donations other than children and young people's homes – for example, pupils could participate in bag packing at local supermarkets, car washing, etc. These activities offer benefits in themselves and are an alternative to simply asking for money from home.
- Consider more inclusive alternatives to non-uniform days/occasions and dressing-up days – for example if school funds allow, decorating school-bought plain t-shirts in school.



SCHOOL PARTIES, FAYRES AND CELEBRATIONS

Many of the issues already outlined with regards to clothing are pertinent here too.

Other similar issues can stem from children and young people being asked to bring sweet treats, snacks and drinks from home by way of contribution to parties, fayres or the marking of religious festivals, or often to purchase them from a tuck-shop or stalls during certain types of event.

Stalls might also sell items such as books, toys and gifts, or offer face painting and suchlike for a fee. These are treats that are sadly out of reach for thousands of children.

Entry fees for parties, discos and fayres can also pose difficulty for young people whose families are on low income. The combined costs and unaffordability result in many young people just not being able to take part at all, or to take part in a more limited way – for example, by not being able to buy anything from the tuck-shop or stalls when their friends can – which sets them apart from the rest of their peers, in some cases meaning that they cannot fully participate within the wider school community.

What you and your colleagues can do

- Consider setting up a school fund to cover the cost of parties and celebrations so that they are completely free for all children and young people. This will be especially important at points in the year when families might be celebrating religious and cultural festivals at home, which might already involve additional costs.
- Make entry to all in-school events free.
- Reflect on the purpose of school fayres – often these involve private companies and small businesses selling their goods to pupils. Is this appropriate and inclusive?
- Consider alternative cost-free approaches to school fayres where all stalls are open to all young people and are free – local charities and businesses could be asked to donate/fund or school funds could be used to cover the cost of staging this kind of event.

The combined costs and unaffordability result in many young people just not being able to take part at all...

...it is now common for schools to organise Primary 7 proms and for families to seek to emulate the scale of the spending on senior proms.

SCHOOL PROMS

Over the past two decades, school proms to mark the end of Secondary school for post-16 school leavers, and more recently, Primary 7 leavers, have grown both in popularity and lavishness.

In 2019 The Herald newspaper reported on this phenomenon, highlighting how what might in the past have been a humble school disco in the gym hall to mark the end of school, had evolved to become a much grander affair involving a costly meal and drinks in a hotel; extravagant limousine travel; expensive dresses, suits and kilts; and high-cost hair-cuts, make-up and beauty treatments.

Initially making its way into the culture to mark the leaving of Secondary school, it is now common for schools to organise Primary 7 proms and for families to seek to emulate the scale of the spending on senior proms.

The 2019 Herald article reported that Marion Davis, Head of Policy at One Parent Families Scotland, had called on the Scottish Government to look at ways of 'curbing the excess to ensure that teenagers in the grip of poverty are not frozen out of what has evolved into a new rite of passage.'

More recently, the CPAG Report also underlined the challenges that school proms can create for families on low income, faced with the cost of tickets, transport, outfits, hair and make-up.

Many young people who took part in the CPAG research having attended proms, suggested that the experience 'wasn't worth it' and that alternative ways of celebrating the end of their time at high school would have been better.

'I maybe spent about £200 on stuff for the prom. It wasn't worth it for the event because it wasn't that great.' (Pupil, age 16)

The CPAG research also included a comparison between two nearby schools:

'In one school the leavers' celebration cost some pupils around £245. This comprised £200 for prom outfits, £25 for tickets and £20 for the leavers' hoodies. Whereas in a school nearby, the head teacher capped spending on the prom at £20 and developed a well-stocked prom bank in the months leading up to the event to ensure that pupils did not have to buy costly outfits.'

In the first case, the risk is that young people from lower income families miss out altogether; or attend but feel that they haven't been able to 'keep up' with their peers; and/or attend with their families going into debt or going without essentials, so that that their child doesn't miss out on a seminal social experience.

It is worth bearing in mind that in the context of the rising cost of living, many families are already having to choose daily between heating and eating.



LEAVERS' HOODIES

As well as expensive activities to mark the transition from P7 to S1 or the end of high school, it has become common for schools or Parents' Councils to organise 'leavers' hoodies' for young people to purchase.

At around £20 each, this is a big expense for families on low income.

Many families can't afford the cost and are conspicuous in their poverty when the rest of the class or the year group are wearing the hoodies to school. Others can't afford the cost of the hoodie but go without other essentials at home so that their child won't feel stigma and exclusion at school. Neither of these scenarios is acceptable.

What you and your colleagues can do

- Look at the plans for leavers' celebrations and consider what might be the impact on low and lower income families, especially in light of the cost of living increases.
 - Consider any plans or requests for leavers' hoodies to be printed and sold to pupils. How will families on low income be impacted? How might children be excluded and stigmatised? How could these issues be discussed sensitively with young people and parents? Are there alternatives that are inclusive? If not, how will stigma and exclusion for any young person be avoided?
- Discuss ways of designing leavers' events to limit costs and stigma, and to maximise inclusivity, including of minority ethnic groups. This might involve an alternative to what has become the traditional but very expensive, exclusive prom experience.
 - Look at ways of making leavers' celebrations, including proms, cost-free for students – local charities and businesses might be able to support.
 - Tap into young people's interest in sustainability to set up a prom/party clothes cost-free hire facility, again thinking about ethnic and cultural diversity within your school community.
 - Consult parents and young people on plans, with a particular focus on affordability, in cognisance of the need for sensitivity in approaching these issues, especially with less affluent young people and families.

Many families can't afford the cost and are conspicuous in their poverty when the rest of the class or the year group are wearing the hoodies to school.

PERIOD POVERTY

In 2021, following extensive campaigning by the EIS and many other stakeholders across Scotland, the Period Products (Free Provision) (Scotland) Act was passed. This landmark legislation requires local authorities to provide period products free of charge. This Act of Parliament also stipulates that each education provider must ensure that period products are obtainable free of charge to pupils and students.²⁶

Free and easy access to period products is fundamental to the health and wellbeing of girls and women, the majority of whom will menstruate around 12 times a year for the majority of their lives, from their early teens until middle age. Dignity for women and girls is enhanced when they can more easily access the products they need and manage their periods more easily.

Free, easy access to period products could help to avert the serious health consequences of people using the wrong products/using products the wrong way, including infections and Toxic Shock Syndrome, which can be fatal. Women and girls with medical conditions which cause erratic periods (e.g. endometriosis) or whose periods are erratic due to puberty or menopause will be more likely to have their needs met if products are freely available.

This legislation is a welcome step towards mitigating against period poverty and helping to avoid associated absences.

What you and your colleagues can do

- Ensure that products are regularly stocked within the school somewhere accessible so that pupils do not need to ask to receive them.
- Ensure that pupils are made aware that these products



**Free and easy access
to period products is
fundamental to the health
and wellbeing of girls
and women...**

KEEP ON STANDING UP TO POVERTY

ANDREA BRADLEY, EIS GENERAL SECRETARY



This anti-poverty advice for the classroom is important because it offers teachers, our members, some potential solutions to the many dilemmas and challenges that arise in our schools when the intention is to provide good quality learning and social experiences for young people, whilst making sure that no one is excluded or stigmatised.

The EIS continues to campaign for education funding and resourcing that takes full account of the fact that a quarter of a million children in Scotland live in poverty, thousands more just above the threshold of poverty and that in some communities, this means 1 in 2 children from families that don't have enough food for everyone in the house or enough fuel to heat the home or provide hot water.

At the same time, we try to provide our members with as much help as we can to try to mitigate the impact of poverty in their classrooms.

We do all of this work because we know that, otherwise, poverty might completely ruin the childhoods and educational experiences, and wreck the life chances, of so many of our young people.

We know that being poor doesn't just hold young people back in Primary 1 or 5 or 7, when they're learning to read and write, to understand science and social subjects, to paint, and to dance and to sing, to think critically and to regulate emotions; or

only hold them back when they sit their National 4s or 5s or Highers at Secondary. We know that poverty blights their whole lives into adulthood.

As adults, children who've grown up in poverty will be sicker; they'll be more likely to suffer poor mental health; less likely to be in decently paid work; more likely to be in poor housing; more likely to suffer addiction; more likely to be in prison.

They'll be less likely to live happy, fulfilling lives with the security, love and dignity that human beings need.

That's a dreadful outlook for the thousands of young people whose lives have been set on that path by political choices that favour profit and greed to be paid for by ordinary citizens.

But it's also a troubled outlook for our whole society. The collateral damage caused by poverty is colossal because poverty literally costs lives and its damaging effects cost society an absolute fortune. It costs billions to treat the physical, psychological and socio-economic damage that poverty wreaks upon people and communities.

And these are all the reasons why the EIS as a union needs to keep standing up to poverty – why we have to fight and fight for as long as it takes until the paradigm shifts.

**...we have to
fight and fight for as
long as it takes until the
paradigm shifts.**

As an Education union, the EIS is crystal clear on the critical role of Education in that fight and in mitigating the damage that poverty can do to the lives of young people, families and communities.

We believe that quality, equitable education is the cornerstone of any society that's founded on social justice principles.

And we know that teachers – our members – are in the vanguard of striving for that social justice in classrooms all over this country.

We hope that this latest EIS anti-poverty advice will support and encourage our members to keep on striving, keep on standing up to poverty, as EIS members together, until the day comes when we no longer have to.



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Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Cost of the School Day project provides further resources for schools working to reduce financial barriers to education: cpag.org.uk/what-we-do/project-work/cost-school-day/resources



When I took up post as the interim Chief Executive of Education Scotland, I committed to regularly spending time in schools and local authorities across Scotland so that I could listen to, and learn from, the education profession. While I have been delighted to see practices which make me proud to be part of our education system, teachers and school leaders I've met have not sugar-coated the challenges they face, including the impact of poverty on our young people – and the steps that they are taking to address this.

That's why this EIS Anti-Poverty advice for the classroom is so important. The advice builds on the PACT programme: initially an EIS – Scottish Government initiative to deliver equity-related professional learning on a national scale. I was privileged to chair the PACT Advisory Board from the outset of the programme, working closely with the EIS team and a range of key stakeholders, all recognising the importance of supporting and empowering teachers and schools to minimise the impact of poverty on the education and life-chances of our children.

Since the launch of the PACT programme, we have of course lived through a global pandemic and a cost-of-living crisis which have multiplied some of the challenges the professional learning programme was designed to support. This updated guidance for teachers and schools outlines Scotland's current context, provides helpful links to further research and reading and importantly has been developed by teachers working every day to support young people and their families. Many teachers will welcome the practical advice included in a range of areas that concern them every day, such as school uniform, equipment for learning, homework and out of school learning and period poverty, as part of a whole system focus on minimising the damage that poverty does to the education and life chances of Scotland's children.

Gillian Hamilton
Chief Executive, Education Scotland



“I applaud the work of teachers throughout Scotland whose everyday actions are tackling poverty in our schools. And, I will continue to encourage anyone else who will listen to take the lead of the EIS whose “Standing up in the classroom” demonstrates what actions professionals can – and must – undertake to tackle the scourge of child poverty in Scotland.”

Professor John McKendrick

Co-director of the Scottish Poverty and Inequality Unit, Glasgow Caledonian University

“Poverty blights far too many children’s lives yet every child should be able to fully participate at school. This EIS anti-poverty advice is a vital resource that will help teachers take action to reduce poverty’s impact in their classrooms and be part of the change needed to end it once and for all.”

John Dickie

Director of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland

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