

Cost of the School Day Evaluation: Briefing for local authorities

‘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)

Does Cost of the School Day (CoSD) make a difference?

Yes. This evaluation found evidence that the delivery of the CoSD programme contributed to the following outcomes:

- Changes in the understanding of the drivers and consequences of child poverty and school costs among school staff and some parent councils.
- New school policies and practices that are more poverty sensitive.
- Reduced or removed cost barriers to participation in school and after-school activities.
- Supported schools or parent councils to secure and use available funding to lessen child poverty within their setting.
- Increased participation in school and after-school activities.
- Reduced school-related financial pressures for families.
- Promotion of entitlements and financial supports available to parents.
- Increased uptake of entitlements.

How are these outcomes being achieved?

There was evidence that CoSD activity had resulted in practice changes at school level that resulted in reduced costs and barriers related to: uniforms; clubs, fun

events and trips; learning costs; and food and transport costs, as well as promoting and supporting the uptake of entitlements. Further to this, there was evidence that CoSD activities had contributed to positive changes to awareness, understanding and attitudes towards poverty at a school level.

It is important to highlight that there was also evidence of policy changes at a local authority level. These changes included using local authority budget to cover curriculum-related costs, committing all schools to develop CoSD action plans, sourcing affordable school uniforms through securing cheaper suppliers, and making local authority-wide statements of intent that no child will start school without breakfast or miss their primary seven residential trip.

What can local authorities do to develop and sustain CoSD activity?

This evaluation produced several recommendations that local authorities should consider to develop and sustain CoSD activity in their schools:

- Designate a senior leader within education services who will champion the work and take strategic responsibility for it.
- Commit to sufficient human resource to support schools to identify needs and actions to address them.
- Consistently communicate links between CoSD and the requirements of key government policies such as the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017, Getting it right for every child (GIRFEC) and the Scottish Attainment Challenge.
- Consider local authority-wide actions that will support the work across schools – for example, the automation of clothing grants, negotiating cheaper uniform suppliers or bringing down the cost of travel.
- Reiterate within local Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) guidance that PEF money can be spent on CoSD activities so that schools feel confident using funding in this way.
- CoSD is an ongoing process in schools: ensure that regular review of CoSD activities is built into planning cycles and review or audit processes.
- Ensure local governance structures are in place to enable progress to be monitored and impact to be understood.

- Support connections between schools and other local agencies providing financial support and other services.

'[CoSD resources] tackle all areas of childhood poverty, are easy to use and quick and simple to take actions from.' (Head teacher)

Further supporting resources

The [Cost of the School Day website](#) contains a wide range of information and supporting resources for schools and local authorities.

The [Cost of the School Day Toolkit](#) is full of tried and tested discussion prompts, images, audit tools, surveys, session plans and case studies for school communities to identify and tackle financial barriers together.

[Cost of the School Day Films](#) offer examples of what other schools and local authorities are doing to address financial barriers and the impact that this is having.

You can also visit the NHS Health Scotland [Child poverty](#) and [Child poverty in schools](#) webpages for more information, resources and examples of work from across Scotland. You will also find information on the [Facing up to Child Poverty in School: Practice Network](#). This forum gives local authority education representatives a strategic remit to lead on actions to address the cost barriers in school. It also provides an opportunity to exchange peer support, share practice and engage with national level support.

Get in touch

Any questions? Get in touch with the Cost of the School Day team at Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland for advice and support at: costoftheschoolday@cpagscotland.org.uk