

Media Release

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COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY RESEARCH PUBLISHED

Children and young people from low income families in Glasgow can find that costs across the school day act as a barrier to their participation at school. This can make pupils feel excluded and in some cases, may have a direct result on their ability to achieve, research has found.

The research findings from a unique, year-long pilot project in Glasgow looking at the impact of poverty on the lives of children and young people and their access to an education will be published on Friday 2 October.

Carried out by the Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, the research author – Sara Spencer – will unveil the findings and recommendations at a special Inclusion and Equalities conference being organised by the council and held at Celtic Park tomorrow, 2 October for education professionals.

Working with 340 young people and 120 school staff from two learning communities across eight primary and secondary schools in the city, the project is modelled and inspired by the success of an initiative in the North East of England last year.

The main aim was to consider the impact of poverty on the school day, the barriers to participation that this can have for some of our children and young people and how we can improve on current school policies and practices.

As Stephen Curran, Executive Member for Education and Young People explains: “It is estimated in Glasgow that one in three children are in poverty – affecting almost 36,000 of our children.

“This can result in them feeling excluded from school activities, trips, meals or simply finding it difficult to take part in routine school tasks like submitting homework which requires online access.

“We will try to do everything possible that we can to eliminate the obstacles that poverty can create so that every child in Glasgow can have equal access to a quality education.

“The findings and recommendations of this valuable report will shape future policies in Glasgow and build on the good practice and work already being carried out on this area in our schools.

“We have already used the findings of the research to revisit our distance criteria for free home school transport in the city to minimise the financial burdens that so many of our families face daily.”

The Cost of the School Day looked at education policies and school practices and how they can impact on the participation and school experiences of children and young people from low income families. It has also gathered together a wide range of existing good practice examples from Glasgow schools which are working to reduce costs and ensure equal access to opportunities regardless of income.

John Dickie, Director of the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland, commented: “No child should ever miss out or be made to feel awkward at school just because their families are struggling on a low income but our work tells that all too often they do.

“That’s why we have been absolutely delighted to work with education and health services in Glasgow to identify the cost barriers children face at school, and are even more pleased that individual schools and the council are already taking practical action to remove those barriers.

“It’s now vital that all schools, local authorities and national government act on this report to ensure that no child misses out on any aspect of school because of financial barriers. If Scotland is serious about closing the attainment gap all our young people should benefit from everything that our schools have to offer, whatever their family income.”

Fiona Moss, Head of Health Improvement (Glasgow Health and Social Care Partnership) said: "We must reduce child poverty to improve the health and well-being of all children in the city. This work highlights action for schools, and others, to reduce the financial burdens of school life"

"The research captured stories of how well children manage poverty at school, but also reveals the guilt that children, and their families, can have about the situation they are in. This research starts the conversations needed on how we can all work to change the perceptions and experiences of children experiencing poverty for the better."

The main findings in the report focus on uniform, travel, learning, friendships eating at school, school trips, school clubs, fun events and attitudes to poverty.

The Cost of the School Day dedicated officer will be funded by the NHSGGC and the GCPH for a further 18 months to work and support schools across the city and utilising the educational resources that have been developed as part of the project.

Schools can use these special tools to consider ways in which to minimise the impact of poverty on a child's education and learning.

James Egan, Public Health Programme Manager, Glasgow Centre for Population Health and Chair of the Cost of the School Day project steering group said: "This new report moves from describing the challenges we face to show how partners from the voluntary sector, council and health can work together to ensure that all children, regardless of family income, can fully participate and realise their potential throughout the school day."

Ends

Notes to editors

The Cost of the School Day is a Poverty Leadership panel project in partnership with Glasgow City Council and funded and supported by NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership and Glasgow Centre for Population Health

A copy of the full report can be accessed at www.cpag.org.uk/costoftheschoolday from 9am on Friday 2 October or available on request.

An executive summary is attached for information.

Interviews are available with Sara Spencer at the Inclusion and Equalities conference on Friday 2 October (10.15am, Celtic Park, Kerrydale Suite) and case studies from Glasgow schools who took part in the Cost of the School Day also available.

John Dickie, Director CPAG in Scotland, Tel: 0141 552 3656 M: 07795340618 is also available for interview opportunities.

For further information or to arrange interviews either on the day or pre-records please contact Fiona Ross, PR officer, Glasgow City Council on 0141 287 0918 or 07766 443 788.

