

ANGUS COUNCIL

CHILDREN AND LEARNING COMMITTEE – 6 NOVEMBER 2018

Child Poverty – The Cost of the School Day

1. BACKGROUND

- 1.1 All Local Authorities and Health Boards have a statutory duty to report on what actions we will be taking to help meet the ambitious targets set by Scottish Government for the reduction in child poverty rates. In Angus this work is being progressed through the Community Planning Partnership and the Angus Integrated Children's Services Group. Wherever practicable we are also taking this forward as part of the implementation of the Tayside Plan for Children, Young People and Families.
- 1.2 We are working to submit our first Annual Report and associated Child Poverty Action Plan in June 2019.
- 1.3 Last school session, discussions began between officers, school leaders and parent council representatives on the topic of child poverty. Supported by the Council's revenues and benefits team and Child Poverty Action Group Scotland (CPAG), ideas were shared about how to mitigate the impact of child poverty by focusing on reducing the cost of the school day. School costs can put pressure on families and put children at risk of missing out on opportunities and feeling different, excluded and unhappy. The Cost of the School Day involves children and young people, parents/carers and school staff in identifying financial barriers and in taking action to remove them. School communities have discussed issues in relation to: uniform; school trips; travel to school; learning at school; eating at school; friendships; school clubs; fun events and learning at home.
- 1.4 Angus schools have used resources from CPAG to assess the impact the cost of the school day might have on families and have begun to take action to reduce these where they can. Their efforts in this area are often shared from school Twitter accounts using the hashtag #costoftheschoolday. By doing this, schools can share their ideas and learn from others.

2. PRACTICE EXAMPLES

- 2.1 Whilst we are at the beginning of this work, there are already important achievements to share as school teams have, along with their communities, proactively considered this issue and taken action. At a whole council level, all schools in Angus now have access to make direct referrals to Foodbanks to support families and snack in local authority early learning and childcare establishments is now funded. Work is underway across the council to endeavour to more effectively publicise and streamline processes for access to clothing grants and free school meals.
- 2.2 **Uniform** – Many schools offer swap shops for uniform and some schools have also reviewed their uniform suppliers to reduce costs for families. Burnside Primary in Carnoustie for example has recycling of school uniform in the lobby of the school and have also been successful in acquiring more than £3500 of clothing grants from a local charity for families.
- 2.3 **Learning at School** – many primary schools report that there is no expectation that children are required to bring materials to school for general learning activities. Secondary schools are in the process of reviewing their expectations in this area.
- 2.4 **School Trips** – the cost of trips can be a particular demand for families. Schools ensure that all trips need have a clear rationale and are organised throughout the child's schooling at considered times. Schools endeavour to ensure that trips with a cost are paid up over a long period of time and parents supported in setting up trip accounts to keep payments as manageable as possible. Schools also work with their parent partnerships to seek support for funding school trips where required as transport costs for school trips can be challenging.

Lochside School in Montrose for example has actively brought more experiences into school and reduced the number of residential trips.

- 2.5 **Fun Events** – schools are actively considering the demands that they make in relation to charity events and activities like dress as you please days. Whilst there is often a range of opinion in an individual school community as to the value of these events, schools are now more proactively considering the financial expectation these events can create for families. Timmergreens School in Arbroath for example limits fundraising to one local charity, one national charity and one school related focus each year.

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