Every child, every chance: poverty in schools
"Aberdeen a place where all children and young people can prosper"

Our policy and practice should be consistent. Individual schools should:

The Scottish Government's ambition is for Scotland to be 'the best place to grow up and bring up children/young people'.
All public bodies that work with, or for, children and young people are required to uphold and embed the Articles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) at every level of service. These are summarised into four core principles:

▶ **Non-discrimination**   ▶ **Devotion to the best interests of the child**   ▶ **The right to life, survival and development**   ▶ **Respect for the views of the child**

Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) embeds these principles into practice. More than 20% (210,000) children across Scotland are officially recognised as living in poverty, in some parts of Aberdeen this rises to 35%. 67% of children in poverty have at least one parent in work. Use the link to check data for child poverty in Aberdeen City identified by constituent ward.

The Education Scotland Act (1980) places a duty on all local authorities to provide adequate and efficient provision of school education. We need to ensure our school policies and practices proactively protect children/young people from disadvantage and stigma, *rather than dealing with the consequences.*

The Aberdeen school community has pledged:

▶ **No child/young person will start the school day without a breakfast**
▶ **All children and young people will have access to affordable school uniform and appropriate clothing for the North East**
▶ **Costs will not prohibit the participation of children and young people in the life of the school**
▶ **Parents and carers, children and young people will have easy access to financial advice**

Schools cannot be expected to mitigate the effects of poverty on children and young people on their own; many other local and national stakeholders must support this work.

However, better knowledge and understanding of the effect which our policies and practices may have on children and young people from low income households can help us to ensure we are poverty proofing everything within our direct control.

This guidance gives schools the opportunity to reflect on the cost of the school day in the local context, the impact on our communities and promotes consideration of actions to impact positively on the learning and lives of our children and young people.

▶ Ensure that all staff are aware of the causes, scope and impact of poverty nationally, locally and in your school. Additional information is available using these links: NHS, EIS resource; CYPCS.

▶ Enable equal access to opportunities at school by removing barriers to learning and participation. Aim to remove/ minimise, charging for all school related activities. Where additional charges remain, establish discreet, pre-emptive systems for support to avoid singling out or embarrassment.

▶ Reduce the pressure of school costs: uniform, trips, events, fundraising.

▶ Plan all learning, events and activities with affordability, accessibility and the needs of children and young people from low income households in mind.

▶ Agree consistent practice throughout school in dealing with issues which could be related to low income and poverty e.g. lending resources, providing subsidies, uniform.

▶ Make sure your communications are effective and sensitive.

▶ Explicitly discuss poverty with children/young people to raise awareness, minimise perceived shame and to safeguard positive relationships. Engage children and young people in helping to take away feelings of embarrassment, some examples are available using these links: Oxfam, UNICEF, Shelter.

▶ Support families to understand and access financial entitlements by effectively and regularly promoting information throughout the school year e.g. parents' evenings; engagement opportunities; signposting; relevant information on displays; school information on web/prospectus. Support parents to access these.

▶ Use tools in the CPAG, Child Poverty Action Group Cost of the School Day toolkit to ensure that all children/ young people can get the most out of the school day.

    ▶ **Do the groundwork.** Set up a working group, consider Parent Council input.

    ▶ **Gather information.** Ask your community about costs and potential barriers to learning.

    ▶ **Analyse your data.** Look at your information, discover issues and your priorities.

    ▶ **Take action.** Identify actions to take forward, work out a plan.

▶ Seek and use your data to understand patterns in children's uptake of opportunities eg. free school meal uptake, participation in extra-curricular activities.

▶ Investigate appropriate local, national and European grant making bodies to enable participation.

"Education is free, but a lot of school things are not."

Member of the Children's Parliament, age 11, 'The Weight on our Shoulders.'

What is the cost of your school day?

Attitudes and understanding:

How do you address and tackle the stigma related to poverty?

- How much do you know about poverty, its impact in your local context and its effect on parents and children?
- Are reward/ merit systems not affected by issues which may relate to finances?
- Are staff vigilant and a system in place to ensure there is no embarrassment when asking for support?
- Do staff maintain confidentiality when dealing with sensitive information?
- Is anti-bullying policy and practice alert to income-based bullying and stigma?
- Is there awareness and discussion of poverty and how this affects people e.g. PSHE, Health and Wellbeing, Modern Studies, in your local context?
- Do positive relationships ensure money advice and welfare rights local information are promoted throughout the year?
- Are staff aware of the nature, causes and impact of poverty GTCS? CLPL identified?
- Do leaders at all levels self-evaluate effectively HGIOS 4: 1.5; 2.1; 2.2; 2.4; 2.5; 2.7; 3.1; 3.2
- Have you encouraged handmade cards for teachers? Considered asking for no presents at all to be given?

Learning:

What do children need to pay for?

- Do they need to pay for subjects/ materials? Art, home economics, technical?
- Do you have clear, consistent guidelines for lending resources?
- Is spare clean kit available without needing to be "asked for"?
- Is there stationery that can be used by all learners at any time in each class?

Home learning:

Does your policy and practice ensure no discrimination of those who do not have access to resources or support at home?

- Is your homework policy clear? Primary?
- Do you know your learners well, provide materials, resources and support where needed?
- Is consideration given regarding availability of ICT, alternative learning environments e.g. library, club?

Friendships:

What awareness raising is needed for children in your school?

- Are children supported to be safe, healthy, achieving nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included?
- Is everyone aware that some children may not get presents or a party for their birthday? Could you consider how birthdays could be celebrated in class?
- Do you speak to parents directly or email/sealed letter, rather than read out names of children who have not paid?
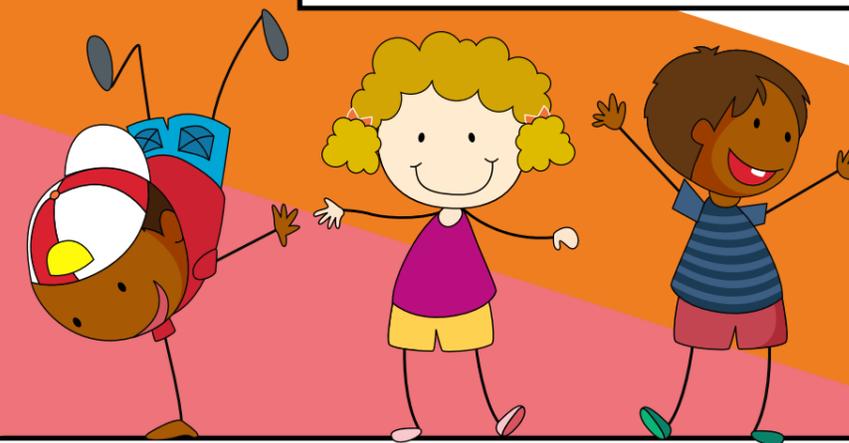
What is the cost of your school day?

What impact does your dress code policy have?

- Is no profit made on sale of uniform items?
- Do you recycle uniforms, use positive language - recycle, pre-loved, link to eco schools?
- Are you mindful of costs – affordable and range of suppliers?
- Is there a consistent approach amongst staff to ensure no stigma?
- Are staff vigilant regarding clothing stigma?
- Is there a lost property policy to recycle and are parents advised?

School clubs:
Do you offer a range of opportunities which are free or low cost, do you know who takes part?

- Is consideration given to hidden costs e.g. special kit, travel?
- Do you identify and support participation?
- Do you use data to understand deprivation related patterns in uptake of opportunities?

Travel:
Does this impact on children joining in the full life of school?

- Is there a safe, secure place to store bikes, scooters, clothing?
- Are individual circumstances considered regarding late coming?

School trips:
Do you offer a range of opportunities that minimise pressure on families?

- Do you know about local activities and grants?
- Do you inform parents in advance and allow payment in instalments?
- Are opportunities without "first come first served" to ensure all have a chance to pay?

Eating at school:
How do you share the free school meal application process? Is it supported and promoted? What about p4?

- Do you give support to complete applications?
- Are relationships in the dining hall prioritised?
- Are all children able to eat if they have money or not, breakfast, lunchtimes – even if children may be late?

Fun events / fundraising:
Are fun events planned for and shared with families at the start of the year/ term?

- Are they designed so everyone can take part?
- Do you consider voluntary donations, cost free things at summer fair, alternatives to dressing up/ non-uniform days, low cost alternatives instead of "prom"?
- Have you explored how children can support causes, rather than donate money?