

ITEM No ...4.....

REPORT TO: CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVICES COMMITTEE – 23 JANUARY 2023

REPORT ON: COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY INITIATIVE UPDATE

REPORT BY: EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY DEVELOPMENT

REPORT NO: 22-2023

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the current position of the Cost of the School Day (CoSD) project in schools across Dundee.

2 RECOMMENDATION

- 2.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- a notes the contents of the report, and
- b agrees that Cost of the School day actions, including the poverty-proofing of school activities, should now be embedded, as appropriate, within School Improvement Plans.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 There are no financial implications.

4 BACKGROUND

- 4.1 Dundee City Council and the Dundee Partnership adopted the revised Fairness Action Plan for Dundee in November 2016 (Article IV of the Minute of the Policy and Resources Committee on 14 November 2016 refers). Building on the recommendations of the Dundee Fairness Commission, one of the priority outcomes related to Closing the Education Gap.

- 4.2 The Children and Families Service has made a clear and strong commitment to tackling poverty and its impact on the lives and attainment of children and young people in Dundee. Cost of the School Day plans are directly reducing costs for pupils and parents while also improving health and wellbeing, literacy and numeracy. The work of the Scottish Attainment Challenge continues to be the most visible additional investment in better outcomes; this includes the significant contribution made in each school through poverty related activity being funded and implemented through the Pupil Equity Fund to support closing the attainment gap.

- 4.3 In October 2016, the Scottish Government published its new Fairer Scotland Action Plan. This included a pledge by the Dundee Partnership and Dundee City Council to commission joint work with the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) Scotland to facilitate a Cost of the School Day initiative during the 2016/2017 year. CPAG worked with pupils, parents and teachers to identify and remove key cost barriers so that all children and young people from low income households can fully engage in their education.

- 4.4 Taking account of the work of the project team each school in the city reviewed the needs of children and young people facing cost barriers to participation in school. This has included work with children and young people, parents and carers and wider partnerships. As one Dundee secondary school Cost of the School lead said:

This (Cost of the School Day) was given a high profile. This allowed for the sharing of ideas and good practice across the local authority and meant that CoSD began to pop up on agendas.

- 4.5 In order to enable the project to work in all schools and to put in place practical responses to the challenges identified in the research, the Cost of the School Day project received a further year's funding through the Scottish Attainment Challenge. This enabled schools to build on the

momentum achieved in the first phase of this initiative and follow through on the range of activities already underway through the Pupil Equity Fund. Initially, schools worked on a Cost of the School Day Action Plan and identified a Cost of the School Day lead. Support was offered through Practice Network Meetings and a series of shared practice documents have been produced.

- 4.6 The co-ordinated city-wide approach to Cost of the School Day in Dundee has meant widespread awareness of the issues. Project evidence influenced local authority policy and in October 2018, responding to the work of the project team, Dundee City Council launched four bold Cost of the School Day statements of intent, proposing that:
- a no child or young person in Dundee will start school without a breakfast;
 - b no child in Dundee will miss out on their Primary 7 residential trip due to cost;
 - c all schools will develop a Cost of the School Day action plan by the end of session 2018/2019; and
 - d all children and young people in Dundee schools will have access to an affordable school uniform.

5 UPDATE

- 5.1 Schools have worked hard to evidence the four statements of intent and now Cost of the School Day and poverty-proofing school activities are exemplified in School Improvement Plans. The Pupil Equity Fund continues to support this at individual school level. Examples from schools across the city include breakfast and fruit snacks being readily available, subsidised trips including P7 residential, cheaper uniform suppliers, provision of PE kit, non-stigmatising approaches to fundraising, improved promotion of financial entitlements and much more.
- 5.2 Cost of the School Day and poverty awareness is now included in the annual Children & Families Service Equalities Briefing which is delivered by Headteachers to all school staff at the start of session. The section specific to Cost of the School Day highlights the extent of child poverty in Dundee and reminding all staff of the importance of reducing the costs associated to school for families. In addition, all school staff are encouraged to complete an eLearning -module which was also developed for Dundee by colleagues at the Child Poverty Action Group. A new e-module is due for release in January 2023.
- 5.3 The work of our schools and nurseries in tackling poverty with particular reference to Cost of the School Day initiatives features in the annual Dundee Fairness Action Plan and Child Poverty Report.
- 5.4 Children and Families Service, working in partnership with Active Schools as part of their commitment to the Cost of the School day, made a further commitment to children and their families to reduce barriers to participation in wider opportunities by removing any costs associated with school sport or physical activity clubs (at the point of participation), which take place before school, at lunch times or after school.
- Any new sport or physical activity clubs being introduced before school, at lunchtime or after school should not incur any charge going forward. Schools can choose to recruit volunteers, apply for funding or use school funds to reduce costs.
- 5.5 Following a survey of parents and carers Active Schools identified that access to suitable clothing is one of the main barriers for children participating in sport and physical activity. In April 2022 they launched 'Kit for All' appeal, looking for preloved sports clothing to be donated by the school community for city wide redistribution. Schools were asked to help by asking for donations and to collect items on behalf of Active Schools. The team then worked in partnership with schools to make these items available to families who could benefit most from receiving them. This work was highlighted nationally by Sport Scotland. More information can be found here: <https://sportscotland.org.uk/kit-for-all/case-studies/kit-for-all-dundee/>

- 5.6 In the last 12 months Dundee school and nursery staff responded to a joint CPAG and Public Health Scotland survey 'Tackling Child Poverty in Schools and Nurseries'. Examples of how schools are tackling the issue are included in Appendix 1.
- 5.7 Last session, the Scottish Government expanded the provision of free school meals for Primary School pupils. From January 2022 all P1 - P5 pupils have had the option of a free, healthy school meal. Between August and December 2022, on average, 60% of pupils in P1 - P5 have taken up this offer. In addition, during school holiday periods Dundee City Council continues to make direct payments to all families eligible for Free School Meals. School and Family Development workers in school play a critical role in ensuring families are aware of these benefits.
- 5.8 As a result of Dundee City Council streamlining processes eligible families in receipt of Housing Benefit or Council Tax reduction are now automatically awarded the school clothing grant and no longer need to fill in a new application form each year. Schools continue to actively publicise the grants and benefits that families can access in an effort to ensure barriers to education are minimised.
- 5.9 The Morgan Academy Cluster, working in partnership with Social Security Scotland, have started a weekly 'drop-in' for parents and carers to ensure they are receiving the benefits they are entitled to. This initiative began at the end of November and already two families have benefited, with one gaining £200/month and another £100/month from the new child payment scheme.
- 5.10 Local authority led Early Years establishments in Dundee are no longer required to submit Cost of the School Day Action Plans as collectively they have worked to reduce all additional costs associated with learning in the nursery.
- 5.11 Dundee schools continue to work with Dundee Bairns to support families. Schools have accessed, amongst others, funding from the 'Cosy Bairns' initiative, food vouchers, and funding for Family Tea Clubs.
- 5.12 Schools and Community Learning & Development have supported families and young people to access the Scottish Government funded free bus travel for under 22s. Whilst the continuation of the Young Scot Attain Funding has continued to support those previously eligible for free travel by offering 'rewards' via the Young Scot website. These rewards include gift cards for a variety of local food outlets, Waterstones bookshop and other leisure activities including Ryse Dundee and Wild Shore. Anyone with a Young Scot card is eligible for a free meal at Ardler Community Centre Café. This tends to be especially popular during school holiday periods with over 80 meals being enjoyed from August - October 2022.
- 5.13 The Child Poverty Action Group (Scotland) continues to take an interest in the Cost of the School Day work in Dundee schools. As a result of an article in the Guardian in 2020 highlighting Cost of the School Day work in Dundee and featuring Ardler Primary, CPAG was approached in April 2022 by the Good Gifts Catalogue and received a donation of £2250 specifically to benefit young people in Dundee schools. Headteachers across all establishments were asked to bid for this money to help pupils enjoy experiences their families may not be able to afford. A report on how this fund was used is attached as Appendix 2
- 5.14 Access to provide free period products has been in place across schools since October 2018 and Period Dignity is now considered as part of Cost of the School Day school plans. All primary, secondary, offsite, special schools and services must provide free access to period products to all primary and secondary school pupils who menstruate, during term time. Out with term time schools are responsible for ensuring children and young people know where to go to access the products within their community.

6 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 This report has been subject to the Pre-IIA Screening Tool and does not make any recommendations for change to strategy, policy, procedures, services or funding and so has

not been subject to an Integrated Impact Assessment. An appropriate Senior Manager has reviewed and agreed with this assessment.

7 CONSULTATIONS

- 7.1 The Council Leadership Team were consulted in the preparation of this report.

8 BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 8.1 None.

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21 December 2022

APPENDIX 1

DUNDEE SCHOOL AND NURSERY RESPONSES TO CPAG AND PUBLIC HEALTH SCOTLAND SURVEY

On Tackling Uniform Costs

- Uniform is available on rails for families to take from and leave what they can (Primary School, Dundee).
- Donated winter coats, new shirts, gloves, hats and scarves, PE kit and new uniform for any pupil requiring it. Recycling blazers is encouraged (Secondary school, Dundee).
- Offering PE kit for those who need it and laundering of that (Secondary School, Dundee).
- Supplying donated gym shoes (Primary School, Dundee).
- We have applied for a Burgess Grant to buy in more uniform to have in stock. We supplied uniform to new Syrian families who came to the school free of charge (Primary School, Dundee).

Eating At School/Breakfast Clubs

- Toast is supplied by Morrisons. The school collects bread from Morrisons. A plate of toast is delivered to all classrooms (Primary School, Dundee).
- Free breakfast (cereal bars, drinks) is provided for those who require it. Funding/supplies come from ASDA and Kellogg's grants and PEF (Secondary School, Dundee).

Resources for Learning

- PEF has been important. We have been able to remove all costs for Home Economics, Art and Technology. We previously allowed Departments to fund children who could not afford to study these subjects but children did not always want to ask for financial support (Secondary School, Dundee).

Fun Activities

- There are no dress up/down days. For Christmas jumper days there is not a set day, so that anyone who does not have a jumper does not feel left out. Some parents provide old and new jumpers for the school. A local supermarket supplied jumpers. We use our PEF money to ensure that everyone can attend the Halloween disco. Staff know that they can't do events if a cost is involved (Primary School, Dundee).
- Some events have a minimal cost to pupils but it is known that we will fund anyone who has difficulty funding this. This is managed sensitively by the Guidance Teacher or House Teams (Secondary School, Dundee).

Ensuring Everyone Understands CoSD

- With parents there can be a bit of pushback e.g. the Parent Council, especially with parents who are new to the school, around not doing things they take for granted (dress up days). However we know that events with a cost (or even just wearing pyjamas to school) mean some parents will not send children to school on that day. Therefore we no longer have events that have costs. New parents are told about our philosophy on CoSD. Some parents found the shift in thought tricky but once this was explained to them they understood (Primary School, Dundee).

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APPENDIX 2



Report to the Good Gifts Catalogue

NOVEMBER 2022

In April 2022, the Good Gifts Catalogue kindly donated £4,500 to help school children across Dundee and at Surrey Square Primary School in southeast London. The grants have been well used to support vulnerable pupils who are living with significant levels of deprivation. Both organisations send their sincere thanks for the opportunity to help more children during this particularly tough time for families.

Surrey Square Primary School

The donation of £2,250 was added to the school's Welfare Fund which predominantly supports children in receipt of free school meals, those whose parents have No Recourse to Public Funds due to restrictions on their immigration status and those whose parents are on zero-hours contracts or minimum wage employment.

The grant has contributed to:

- Clubs for 32 vulnerable children
- Music lessons for 6 vulnerable children
- Clothing, mattress and toiletries for child A (see below)

Case Study 1

Child A is 4 years old and lives with his maternal grandmother after she was granted Special Guardianship due to her daughter's substance misuse and alcoholism. He went to live with her when he was 3 years old, and she enrolled A in our Nursery straight away. He had previously been living abroad with his maternal great-aunt although he was born in London, so has had a great deal of disruption in his short life.

A settled well into the nursery and is now in reception, although he has speech and language difficulties as well as some behavioural issues, which may well be a result of his unsettled early years. The Good Gift Catalogue's donation helped us support A's grandmother financially as she had to reduce her working hours after taking on the Special Guardianship. In the summer term, we gave her funds to buy summer clothing for A, as he only had winter clothes and didn't have any clothing suitable for the warmer weather. This term we provided funds for toiletries and a mattress for A's bed. Someone had donated a bunk bed with a desk underneath, but it came without a mattress, so this was an essential item that A's grandmother couldn't afford herself.

Case Study 2

Child B is in year 5 at our school and has been with us since she was 4 years old. During the summer holiday of 2021, her Mum had surgery for a benign brain tumour, and as a consequence of the surgery, completely lost her sight. This has had an enormous impact on the quality of B's life, as she has now become a carer for her mother.

In addition to referring B to a youth club near her home and arranging council-funded transport for her to and from school, we used the donation to pay for B to attend two after-school clubs during the summer term 2022:

dance and multi-sports. This gave her the opportunity to spend time having fun with her friends at school before then returning home to be with her Mum in the evenings. She loved both of those clubs, and this Autumn, she is doing keyboard lessons which are also funded through the donation.

Dundee

The Cost of the School Day project is well established in Dundee schools and headteachers and their staff are now able to keep costs for families to a minimum. The £2,250 donation from the Good Gifts Catalogue was used to offer additional support for extra-curricular activities, including school trips, which are a valuable addition to the educational experience of pupils but sadly not always available or accessed by everyone. All Dundee schools were made aware of the additional funding and asked to bid for a share.

The grant has contributed to:

- A day trip to London for 4 pupils
- A residential trip to Inverclyde National Sports Training Centre for 2 pupils
- 22 pupils taking part in an extra-curricular Karate School

Rockwell Learning Centre asked if we could fund a one-day trip to London for four pupils. They had been working on a travel and tourism unit of work – planning a trip, booking imaginary flights, planning excursions etc. – and yet none of them had real-life experience of such and their parents were unlikely to be able to afford any school trip.

Accompanied by 3 staff they travelled by minibus to Edinburgh Airport, flew to London early morning, took the tube into the centre of the city, visited various attractions and flew home again that night. One young person said:

"Having never been on a plane before the experience was exciting and so much fun for me. The safety briefing was interesting, and I learned a lot about the importance of safety on a plane. I have only travelled as far as Edinburgh in my life so going to London was a great experience and made me think more about travelling to other places with the school. I didn't realise how big London was and how busy it would be, I found it intimidating on tubes but also found it interesting how busy and full it was. The trip was a great learning experience for me, we learned more than I thought we would and I can't wait to do it again."

Kingspark School, a school for children with additional support needs, arranged a residential experience for senior pupils. The donation from the Good Gifts Catalogue allowed two pupils to attend who otherwise would have had to remain at home because of the cost (despite the trip being subsidised by the Parent Council).

Preparations have begun for the trip, which will be in February 2023. It will consist of 3 days of activities and a 2 nights stay at Inverclyde National Sports Training Centre. Pupils will have opportunities to develop their independence and participate in a range of indoor and outdoor activities with their friends, supported by school staff. In addition to the centre's instructors, school staff will support pupils in all aspects of care required over the course of the 3 days.

Pupils will look to achieve an SQA National 1 – Taking Part in a Residential Experience as part of the trip where they will learn to prepare for activities, participate in them and give their opinions. Activities may include, canoeing, adapted cycling, gymnastics skills, outdoor and indoor games, archery and boccia.

Cost of living crisis placing pressure on families

We were relieved the government announced in the Autumn statement that benefits and the benefit cap will rise with inflation from April 2023. This is only the 4th time in 10 years that benefits have risen in line with inflation.

This will provide some relief for families on the lowest incomes. In the meantime, many face a bitter winter ahead, with those on a cliff edge forced to make the choice between heating and eating.

Please would The Good Gifts Catalogue consider a further donation to these two causes to ensure pupils don't miss out on opportunities at school because of associated costs?



Please contact Alice Morgan on amorgan@cpag.org.uk or 020 3955 4497 for more information.

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