

Subject:	Poverty Proofing the School Day in Brighton & Hove - summary report and possible options		
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Report of:	Education and Skills Team Children, Families and Learning		
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Purpose of the report

This report outlines some possible options to address the Fairness Commission's recommendation 49: 'The council, working with city schools, should bring to Brighton & Hove the 'Poverty-proofing the School Day' initiative to ensure no child misses out on the opportunities and experiences at school because of low family income.'

Introduction

The Child Poverty Action Group outlines the impact of poverty on outcomes for children and young people and in particular for education.

- 'Children from poorer backgrounds lag at all stages of education.
- By the age of three, poorer children are estimated to be, on average, nine months behind children from more wealthy backgrounds.
- According to Department for Education statistics, by the end of primary school, pupils receiving free school meals are estimated to be almost three terms behind their more affluent peers.
- By 14, this gap grows to over five terms.
- By 16, children receiving free school meals achieve 1.7 grades lower at GCSE.'

It is the case in Brighton & Hove that there is a gap between the outcomes for pupils in disadvantage and their peers and all schools have 'diminishing this difference' as a key priority. The Brighton & Hove Fairness Commission considered these issues and one of the main recommendations of the Commission is to introduce 'Poverty Proofing the School Day' into the City. This paper outlines the strategy and proposes some options for taking it forward.

Poverty Proofing the School Day

This project started in 2011 when Children North East sought to better understand what child poverty looks and feels like from a child and young person's perspective. With funding from the Webb Memorial Trust they distributed 1,348 disposable cameras across the North East and asked children and young people to tell them what poverty looked like where they live.

11,000 images were returned which powerfully conveyed strong themes and confirmed that child poverty is definitely not a thing of the past.

The feedback they gave showed that discrimination in schools was one of the biggest issues they faced. Children North East in partnership with the North East Child Poverty Commission with funding from VONNE's Policy and Representation Partnership, started to develop a way to 'Poverty Proof the School Day'. They developed a toolkit that has as its main aims to reduce the stigma and discrimination children and young people experiencing poverty face in schools; as well as to remove barriers to learning to support schools to reduce their attainment gap. The Toolkit can also be helpful to schools in helping to decide and plan the most effective way to spend their pupil premium allocation.

The process involves talking with all children and young people in the school, an online survey for governors, parents and staff and then the team work with the school leadership to develop an action plan, individually tailored to each school, to identify and remove barriers to learning, reducing the stigma and discrimination faced by pupils.

Impact

The evaluation of the report, carried out by researchers at Newcastle University in February 2016, available on line at www.povertyproofing.co.uk identified the following impact.

Key Findings of the evaluation of '*Poverty Proofing the School Day*':

1. There is evidence of and real concern in schools about the rising costs of the school day.
2. This is a high impact programme, which has revealed a huge array of generic issues that are routinely, if unintentionally, stigmatising children living in poverty and contributing to the increasing cost of the school day.
3. The audit is challenging but highly effective, delivering to the school a rare opportunity to give voice to its most disadvantaged pupils and their families and see their practices through the eyes of all pupils, parents and staff.
4. There are numerous benefits for the school as a result of going through this process, including a shift in whole school ethos and culture and the opportunity to make changes in response to the action plan, with maximum impact on pupils.
5. There is early evidence of increased attendance and attainment of disadvantaged pupils as a result of removing barriers to learning.
6. The audit provides a constructive opportunity to review pupil premium spending and through this and other actions, reduce the cost of the school day for pupils in real terms.
7. These impacts are dependent on the third party nature of the audit. Whilst it is very important to share good practice in this area, it is unlikely that the same benefits will be derived if a school reviews these issues in isolation through a self-evaluation process.
8. Whole school buy in, including senior leadership and Academy Trust or LA as appropriate, is crucial.
9. The fee is good value for money given the array of benefits the school derives from this programme, the whole school learning and shift in school culture which result, and the likely long-term impacts.

Possible options for Brighton & Hove

Brighton & Hove school leadership teams are mindful of the costs that families face in the school day and there are examples of good practice in addressing this across the city. The Poverty Proofing process brings with it a strategic approach that could raise awareness and

improve practice for all. It could be implemented in several ways, outlined below and there are advantages and disadvantages of each option. The original project in the North East received funding from a range of sources and the working party may wish to explore options for such funding. **Option one**, to poverty proof all schools over two years is the most costly and has greatest financial implications, but does mean that every school will be offered the opportunity to take part in the self-evaluation exercise. Some might question whether it is appropriate to spend this sum of money on exploring poverty.

The costs in each option do not include the costs for any follow up work that schools would do having carried out the survey.

Option two suggests that the Poverty proofing survey / audit is carried out in a smaller number of schools under the licence agreement which is less costly and the outcomes could be distributed to all schools to consider their own actions going forward. This may mean schools are less engaged with the process and lessens the ownership of the data, but does give it specific Brighton & Hove results.

This is also the case for **option three**, which suggests carrying out the audit in a few, representative, schools and then disseminating the information to all school leaders.

Option four involves the distribution of research findings such as 'The Cost of the School Day Report' to schools. The Cost of the School Day Report presents learning and recommendations from children and staff, along with resources to support poverty proofing work in other schools and local authorities. It includes:

- Key financial barriers affecting participation and experiences at school for children from low income households
- Existing good practice measures which children say help to reduce costs, ensure equal access to opportunities and reduce poverty related stigma, along with their ideas about what more could be done
- Recommendations for local authorities, schools and other stakeholders
- Resources to support poverty proofing, including reflective questions and sample sessions for children
- Examples of simple changes made by schools participating in Cost of the School Day, including removing the need for more expensive badged uniform, improving communications with parents about financial support and starting homework clubs.

School communities would then be able to read the report and decide the action that would be most appropriate for their communities. We would include a follow up visit to each school to be able to report back to the Fairness Commission.

Potential costs of the four options

Option 1 'Poverty Proof' all schools - £150,000 (over 2 years, £99,000 in year one and £51,000 in year 2)

A lead officer / temporary project manager on the project

To train a team to work in schools and a licence for five schools - cost £10,000

The licence to carry out the poverty proofing - £14,000 a year

If we were to offer this process to all schools at no cost to them and work on the premise of one school a week it would cost in the region of £150,000

This would be made up of:

- £10,000 training
- 2 years of licence 38,000
- Backfill for lead role for two years (0.5 time allocated) 70,000
- Additional staff members (assuming large team and not all charged to this) £40,000

Time commitment for the poverty proofing

Each school would have a team of two people to carry out the audit to avoid concerns raised in several schools in the original survey about leading questions or other bias.

Up to 250 pupil primary school and nursery schools - 2 nurseries	1 day	19 schools
251 - 400 pupil primary school and special schools	2 days	20 schools
401 - 500 pupil primary school	3.5 days	9 schools
501 – 1000 pupil primary school	5 days	10 schools
Secondary school – group less than 1000 pupils	5 days	4 schools
Secondary school – group more than 1000 pupils	6 days	6 schools
Total number of days: 21+40+31.5+50+20+36= 198.5 days		

Option 2 –Poverty proof 30 schools - approximate cost £100,000

Poverty proofing carried out in 30 schools over one year and then the findings made public to schools.

Cost: £35,000 release of officer

Team: £20,000

Training and licence: £24,000

Option 3 – poverty proof six schools - cost approx. £30,000

Poverty proofing carried out in 6 schools (training school plus 5).

1 x 250 pupil primary school	1 day
1x 251 - 400 pupil primary school and special schools	2 days
1x 401 - 500 pupil primary school	3.5 days
1 x 501 – 1000 pupil primary school	5 days
1x Secondary school – group less than 1000 pupils	5 days
1x Secondary school – group more than 1000 pupils	6 days

Costs

10,000 for training

20,000 for officer time and dissemination

Option 4 - Circulate relevant research and carry out half day follow up visit to each school - cost approximately £15,000

Circulate the report The 'Cost of the School Day Report' to all schools and collect evidence as to the actions schools are taking

Costs

A half day visit for each school and costs of collating and reporting back

Consultation

The impact and evaluation of Poverty Proofing the School Day shows that it can make a real difference to the experience that young people have at school and it links well to the priority that the vast majority of the city's schools have to raise achievement of the most vulnerable. However, it is only effective if school leaders and school communities engage positively with it and have ownership. We aim to consult school leaders (headteachers and governors) to assess the level of commitment to the project.

We plan to:

- Write to all heads and chairs of governors in the city explaining the project and asking for an expression of interest
- Speak at a range of headteacher and governor meetings in January and early February to enable questions to be asked and discussions be had.
- Report back on the level of commitment.

Conclusion

There are different ways that this recommendation can be implemented. Whilst in **option 1** this could be offered to all schools, the council could not insist that all schools take part. There is evidence that schools are already addressing some of the issues and concerns that the audits carried out so far have identified and so a sharing of best practice and awareness raising may make a lot of difference for less cost in time and resources. We will be able to better understand the best way forward through the consultation outlined above.

The Education and Skills team will work to implement the outcome the Committee decide.

