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TACKLING CHILD POVERTY: A guide for schools

October 2020



Tackling child poverty: a guide for schools

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Written by David Bradley and Sophie Howes

About Child Poverty Action Group

Child Poverty Action Group works on behalf of the more than one in four children in the UK growing up in poverty. It doesn't have to be like this. We use our understanding of what causes poverty and the impact it has on children's lives to campaign for policies that will prevent and solve poverty – for good. We provide training, advice and information to make sure hard-up families get the financial support they need. We also carry out high-profile legal work to establish and protect families' rights. cpag.org.uk

About the GLA

The Greater London Authority (GLA) is responsible for the strategic administration of the Greater London area and supports the work of the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan. The Mayor believes that there is no excuse for child poverty in a city as prosperous as London and when he was elected in 2016 he promised to put in place effective, targeted interventions to tackle it. The GLA is also committed to working with a wide range of partners to address the underlying causes of child poverty through the Mayor's Equality Diversity and Inclusion Strategy. london.gov.uk

About this guide

This guide contains key lessons for schools on developing initiatives to tackle child poverty. These are drawn from a research project involving a review of published literature, interviews with practitioners around the country and research in a small number of London primary schools. This research was conducted by Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG), on behalf of the Greater London Authority (GLA). More information about this project can be found on CPAG's website. cpag.org.uk/extendedschools

Contents

1.	Introduction	2
	Foreword	2
	Why does child poverty matter?	2
	How to use this guide.....	3
2.	Examples of types of initiatives.....	4
	2.1 Extended schools	4
	2.2 Reducing the cost of the school day.....	5
	2.3 Pastoral care	7
3.	Getting started	9
	3.1 Understanding the need	9
	3.2 Identifying clear outcomes	14
	3.3 Leadership	14
	3.4 Partnerships	15
	3.5 Funding	17
4.	Strengthening your approach	20
	4.1 Awareness	20
	4.2 Engagement	22
	4.3 Evaluation	24
5.	Useful resources	26

1. Introduction

Foreword

Prior to COVID-19, there were more than four million children living in poverty in the UK – that's nine children in a classroom of 30. In London, that number rises to 11. While the full economic impact of the pandemic is yet to be seen, we know that low-income households are bearing the brunt, and for families living in the capital things are likely to get worse before they get better. Even prior to COVID-19, the high cost of rent, childcare and travel made it very difficult for London families on low incomes to cover basic costs. In addition, families with children have been hit the hardest by cuts to the social security system, squeezing family budgets even further.

In the face of this, our public services have a crucial role to play in tackling child poverty and ensuring children and families recover from the pandemic. Schools, as a universal non-stigmatising service that the vast majority of families access, are essential. As this guide shows, London's schools are already supporting children from low-income households in innovative ways, and their efforts are producing results. Schools that invest in 'extended schools' programmes are closing the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers, helping to chip away at the strong, but not inevitable, link between poverty and poorer educational outcomes.

Schools have many challenges at present. At a minimum, they need to be funded adequately to be able to support low-income families, and CPAG will continue to make the case to government for investment in extended schools because they matter, if we are to end child poverty. In the meantime, we are grateful to the GLA for championing this work at a local level, and providing the opportunity for CPAG to work with schools to understand the key factors for success in this area. This guide brings together what we have learned from this research project, and provides practical support for those thinking about how they might begin to tackle child poverty in their school. We wish them every success in developing this important work.

Alison Garnham, chief executive, Child Poverty Action Group

Why does child poverty matter?

Child poverty in the UK is rising. 500,000 more children are in poverty today than in 2010, and even before COVID-19 struck the Institute for Fiscal Studies projected that child poverty will continue to rise steadily from the current level of 4.2 million¹ - causing severe financial strain for many families with children.² This rise in child poverty is largely due to cuts in the social security system on which many children and families rely, combined with poor wage growth. This is a particular concern in London, which has the highest child poverty rate in the country. Cuts in welfare benefits together with the high cost of living can make London unaffordable for families. London has particularly high rates of in-work poverty - 76 per cent of children in poverty in London are in working families (this has increased from 52 per cent a decade ago),³ and unprecedented rises in unemployment are expected as a result of the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, other services relied on by families have seen significant cuts.

Increasing child poverty is worrying for London schools, because poverty at home is the strongest statistical predictor of how well a child will do at school.⁴ On average, poorer children have worse cognitive and socio-behavioural skills, and worse physical and mental health than their better-off peers.⁵ They are less likely to do well at school: in 2015, only 33 per cent of students eligible for free school meals got five 'good' passes at GCSE (A*-C) compared with 61 per cent of those not eligible.⁶ Poorer children are more likely to be persistently absent and four times more likely to be permanently excluded from school, with obvious implications for their education.⁷ Evidence suggests that these outcomes are both a result of direct deprivation (eg, inadequate housing, difficulties

getting healthy food, and books, computers and extracurricular activities out of reach because of cost) and the effect that coping with poverty has on parents' stress and anxiety levels as well as their mental health.⁸

During the COVID-19 pandemic, job losses, school closures and the unavailability of childcare mean that families are facing multiple challenges in the face of rising costs and income loss. Families have been hit hardest during the pandemic with 2 in 5 families facing financial difficulties.⁹ Changes to employment have impacted lower-paid employees the most, with research showing that 30 per cent of the lowest-paid employees being furloughed or losing their jobs as a result of the crisis, compared to just 8 per cent of the highest earners.¹⁰ Over 2.7 million households have made a claim for universal credit (UC) since the beginning of March.¹¹ Some families have been excluded from financial support during the pandemic, including migrants unable to work because of the crisis.¹² This is a particular concern in London, which is home to nearly 40 per cent of the UK's migrant population, many of whom will be families with children.¹³ These economic impacts are going to be seen in schools with consequences for children's education, as families face ongoing disruptions in employment which will make it harder for them to cover the basic costs of raising children.

From 20 March 2020, schools across the UK were closed to the majority of pupils as part of the government's response to the COVID-19 pandemic. Family income has contributed to children and young people having very different educational and social experiences of the school closures. Low-income families were twice as likely to say that they lacked the resources they needed to support learning at home¹⁴ and children from better-off families have spent 30 per cent more time learning at home than those in poorer households.¹⁵ Young people from a Black and minority ethnic (BME) background are less likely than their white peers to have access to a garden¹⁶ and more likely to experience poorer-quality indoor conditions. It is crucial for schools to understand how their pupils have experienced the closures so they can identify areas for support.

Schools do not have to wait for direction from central government to take action on child poverty. At a local level, there is much that can be done by schools and other key public services to tackle child poverty. Many schools are already very aware of the financial difficulties facing families, and provide free food and emergency help to those in need. This guide aims to inform schools wanting to support children and parents in ways that go beyond this kind of emergency help. We recognise that schools are managing significant workloads and specific challenges related to the COVID-19 pandemic, but small actions can pay dividends in improving children's experience of school and their ability to engage with education. Schools do not need to do this work alone – practical partnerships with other organisations can bring expertise to the school and help share the workload.

How to use this guide

This guide provides practical lessons for schools on how to prevent and mitigate the worst effects of child poverty, so that every child can thrive in the school environment and get the most out of learning. Some initiatives may not, at first, appear to be related to tackling poverty (eg, because they serve all children), but research shows that they can have a particularly positive impact for disadvantaged children if designed appropriately. In fact, the more inclusive an approach, the more likely it is to benefit children and families in poverty, as it is less likely to be stigmatising.

The guide contains lessons for schools at every stage of the journey. The 'Getting started' section (p.9) will be helpful if you are looking to establish activities from scratch; the 'Strengthening your approach' section (p.20) will be useful if you already have activities in place.

2. Examples of types of initiatives

Activities and initiatives to tackle child poverty in schools are wide ranging. This section provides a summary of some of the main approaches adopted by schools that are proven to have a positive impact for children and families living in poverty.

2.1 Extended schools

The term 'extended schools' refers to services delivered by schools that go beyond the core function of the classroom education of children within the normal school day. The extended schools programme was a pillar of the Every Child Matters policy agenda, launched in 2003. Since then, national policies have changed, but many schools continue to provide elements of extended schools, including:¹⁷

- Support services for children delivered within school – e.g. therapeutic services
- Homework clubs/additional classes for disadvantaged children
- Sporting and cultural enrichment activities
- Before- and after-school childcare and holiday childcare/play provision
- Support services for parents – e.g. adult education or parenting classes
- Activities targeted at the wider community

Ring-fenced funding for extended schools in England ended in 2011, and continuing to fund these types of activities has become difficult for schools with increasingly tight budgets. Despite this challenging environment, we found evidence that extended schools programmes continue in many London schools – and, in some, they are flourishing.

Benefits of extended schools

Extended schools programmes are proven to have benefits for children and families living in poverty.

Attainment. Extended schools programmes can engage pupils more positively with school¹⁸ and narrow the attainment gap between disadvantaged children and their peers.¹⁹ For example, attending an after-school club benefits the attainment of disadvantaged children more than non-disadvantaged children, helping to close the gap between poorer children and their better-off peers.²⁰

Health and wellbeing. Play and physical activity are important for children's health and wellbeing, and extended schools programmes can improve children's access to sports and cultural facilities.²¹ Extended schools programmes also have an impact on children's relationships. Research has found that children participating in extended schools activities get on better with their peers.²² Extended schools programmes can also improve pupil/teacher relationships²³ and, in some cases, can improve children's relationships with family members.²⁴

Benefits for parents/families. Extended schools programmes support parents in a number of ways. Breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday clubs can provide convenient and often low-cost childcare for parents.²⁵ This can support parents to work, which can provide a route out of poverty and prevent families falling into poverty. Research has also shown that extended schools programmes can positively engage parents with their child's education and school more widely.²⁶

Benefits for the wider community. Extended schools programmes can have a positive impact on the schools' relationship with the wider community. Establishing extended schools programmes often requires a school to

build partnerships and relationships with community organisations in their local area, and research has shown that schools with extended schools programmes have better links with their local community.²⁷

Case study: monitoring the attainment of children who attended a holiday club

Charlton Manor Primary School in Greenwich offers a summer holiday club on its premises, which includes breakfast, lunch and a range of activities. It is free to attend for any child, but the school particularly encourages children who it thinks will benefit most from additional enrichment and a safe place to spend time over the holiday period.

In 2016, the school began monitoring the effect of attending the holiday club on children's attainment, through an initial assessment which all children take at the start of each school year. The assessment is designed to be non-pressurising; it is not a formal test, but a series of exercises in a non-classroom environment. Previously, the school saw many disadvantaged children slipping back academically after each summer holiday, but since the introduction of the summer holiday club those children who take part now usually maintain, or even improve, their scores.

2.2 Reducing the cost of the school day

While school is free to attend in the UK, in practice there can be financial burdens associated with attending school that can cause stress and difficulties for families on low incomes, and may inadvertently exclude or stigmatise some children. For example, school uniform requirements, school trips, providing additional materials for subjects such as home economics or art, and contributing to school fundraising can all be difficult for families living in poverty. The COVID-19 pandemic has shone a light on the digital and home resource divide due to the need for remote learning during the school closures. Families have had to purchase a variety of different resources ranging from pens and paper to installing internet access in their homes²⁸ to ensure their children can continue with their learning. There have been initiatives from schools, community groups, and the government to address these divides, but further financial pressure has been placed on families as a result of the pandemic.

Projects like CPAG's Cost of the School Day and Children North East's Poverty Proofing the School Day support schools to carry out a whole-school evaluation resulting in actions and solutions that, although sometimes small, can have a great impact on how pupils experience school.

Case study: CPAG in Scotland’s Cost of the School Day project

‘My mum felt guilty that I couldn’t go... Why do we have costly trips then? It puts people under pressure and it makes people embarrassed and disappointed if they can’t go.’ Pupil, P7

What are the financial barriers to learning?

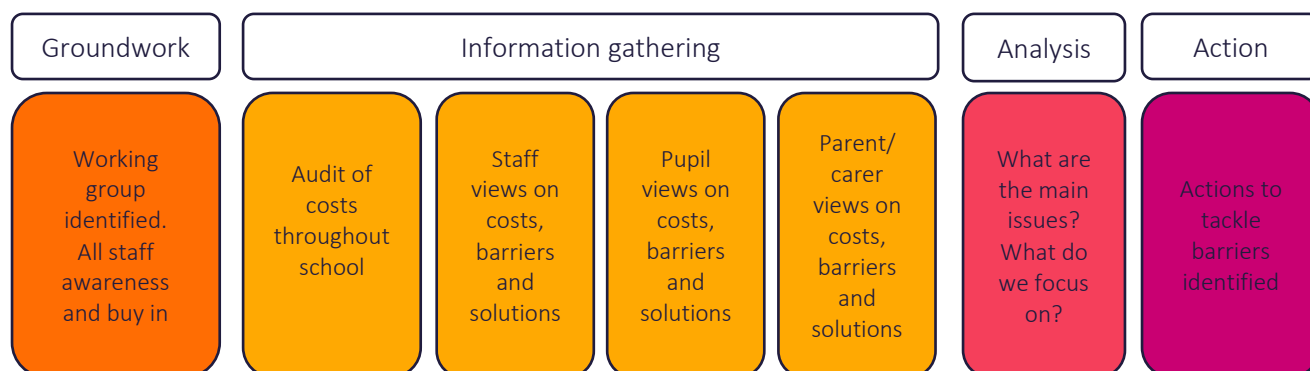
While every school is different, there are common themes and parts of the day that are likely to place pressure on children from low-income families. These include:

- getting dressed for school and uniform
- travelling to school
- learning at school
- school trips
- friendships at school
- eating at school
- fun events
- school clubs
- learning at home

What can schools do to identify and address these barriers?

As a school, understanding what the main barriers are for your pupils, the impact they have on children’s ability to participate and learn, and how to address them will help make your school and the education you provide more inclusive and fair.

The Cost of the School Day process



CPAG’s Cost of the School Day Toolkit guides schools through this process and can be used to facilitate consultations with children, families and staff.

Examples of children’s views on what helps to remove poverty-based exclusion and stigma at school

1. Looking at the school year with affordability in mind – spacing events and activities so that lots of costs do not come all at once.
2. Understanding the resources pupils have at home, modifying expectations and tasks and providing support to access resources, especially ICT.
3. Putting systems in place to ensure children and young people do not feel embarrassed if they ask for help or subsidies.
4. Ensuring consistency of rules, expectations and practice around school resources between staff.
5. Lending resources like stationery, uniform and equipment for clubs without comment or trouble, and making them available for everyone so no one stands out.

Key recommendations for schools

There are a number of more general actions schools can take to help level the playing field for children and young people from low-income households.

1. Ensure that all staff are fully aware of the nature, causes, extent and impact of poverty – nationally, locally and within the school.
2. Effectively and regularly promote financial entitlements to parents throughout the school year.
3. Wherever possible remove, and at the very least minimise, charging for all school-related activities. Where additional charges remain in place, establish discreet, pre-emptive systems for providing financial assistance to avoid singling out or embarrassing children or young people.
4. Ensure there is consistent practice throughout the school in dealing with issues that could be related to low income and poverty (eg, lending resources and providing subsidies) with an awareness that children and families may hide or not disclose their financial circumstances.
5. Ensure effective and sensitive communication between staff if children and young people experience difficulties in school that are related to low income and poverty.

“The biggest impact for our school, as a result of being involved in the Cost of the School Day project, is that it really has made us all stop and think. I cannot emphasise enough that this project is not just an initiative, it is about a changing mindset that will grow and have further impact on the decisions made in our establishment.”

David McNulty, Head teacher

cpag.org.uk/cosd

2.3 Pastoral care

Pastoral care provided to children and families in schools is often the glue holding poverty-reducing initiatives together, making them more effective. The most common approach is to have a dedicated pastoral care role, such as a family worker supporting families and children outside the classroom. Family workers often spend a considerable amount of time building relationships with families, so they are likely to have a good insight into their circumstances and the types of support that would be most helpful. However, it is important that this work does not sit solely with a family worker. The most effective examples of pastoral care we witnessed involved a family worker supported by a wider pastoral care or inclusion team, including senior school leaders, who were collectively responsible for identifying issues and providing pastoral care to children and families.

Lessons from family workers

Family workers (and staff in similar roles) participated in our research project – here are their top lessons for schools.

Our role is essential! Having a dedicated pastoral care role outside the teaching team is crucial for supporting children and families living in poverty and can facilitate a preventative, rather than a reactive, response to families' challenges.

Relationships matter. Our work building relationships with children and families is vital for establishing trust with families: this can have a positive impact on the relationship between a family and the school on a broader level.

Pastoral care is everyone's job. Having a dedicated role is important, but this can be isolating. Having a pastoral care team with involvement from different levels (senior leadership and lunchtime staff are key) is important for sharing responsibility and providing support.

Communication is key. A pastoral care team should have regular information-sharing meetings, together with a robust information management system to ensure issues are identified and families are provided with the right support.

Your community is an asset. There is a wealth of expertise and resources in local community services, particularly in London. Building links with organisations can help schools to respond appropriately to the issues children and families may present.

3. Getting started

3.1 Understanding the need

Ask, don't assume

The first step for schools that are interested in developing this work is to ask children, parents, staff and other members of the school community what support families on a low income might need and how activities might best be designed to address any challenges they might face. One of the key lessons from the evaluation of the government's extended schools programme was that schools did not always sufficiently involve children and parents in the development and delivery of programmes.²⁹ This can lead to assumptions being made which may result in the development of initiatives that are not helpful or appropriate for families on a low income.

It is important to ensure that there is an inclusive and consistent dialogue with families about their individual financial circumstances, so that changes in their circumstances do not slip through the gaps and families are accessing everything they are entitled to. Many families may have had a change in their financial circumstances as a consequence of the pandemic and may be claiming benefits for the first time. It is therefore crucial that schools encourage families to alert them to any employment or income changes and actively promote access to free schools meals and other available financial support.

Poverty Proofing the School Day

Children North East's Poverty Proofing the School Day project supports schools to identify and overcome the barriers to learning faced by children and young people from families with fewer financial resources. Its team of poverty proofing experts supports schools with an audit, asking students, staff, parents and governors how they think poverty affects the school day. The resulting action plan is tailored to each school to address any unintended stigmatising policies or practices, and to celebrate and share excellent practice.

"Poverty proofing is about us working with and supporting school leaders to really understand what it means to be a child in their school who is experiencing poverty. We carry out in-depth conversations with children and young people to gain their perspectives on their educational experience and how their school supports them to overcome any barriers to learning. Through these conversations, we celebrate the good practice the school community is already doing and work with the school to develop a tailored set of recommendations that support the needs of the children and families in their school."

Luke Bramhall, school research and delivery service manager, Children North East

<http://www.povertyproofing.co.uk/>

Evaluating the needs in your school, and gathering ideas for what might help address these, does not have to be a huge task. We have worked with a number of primary schools to conduct online surveys with children about their views of breakfast, after-school and holiday clubs, for example, and there are some resources available on page 26 that can help you. The section on evaluation (p.24) may also be useful.

Case study: responding to the need during the school closures

Reach Academy Feltham: supporting children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic

When COVID-19 struck, it quickly became clear that many of the children and families at Reach Academy, and residents in the wider community, would be adversely affected. In a survey sent out to the parents of pupils at Reach Academy, around a third of respondents raised concerns about being unable to secure basic essentials, or pay their mortgage or household bills. Furthermore, during the lockdown, welfare calls to families and the schools' wider engagement with the community signalled some new applications for UC, similar to national trends. The population of Feltham is 45 per cent BME. Some of these communities have faced greater risk of harm from the virus and greater risk of being affected economically. Feltham has a large Muslim population (9.3 per cent compared to 5 per cent in England overall), 37 per cent of whom were in high-risk jobs during the pandemic (compared to 27 per cent of Christians).³⁰

Given these overlapping trends, the school set out to address the clear urgent need for information, advice and support to access financial services, as well as providing some more immediate support to help families manage over the summer holidays.

Financial support

Reach Academy has been helping families get information and advice if they have been financially impacted by COVID-19. In partnership with six other organisations in the Feltham community, Reach Academy helped to create tailored financial information for families which was hosted on the Feltham Community website. This included information on the Job Retention Scheme (furlough), the Self Employment Income Support Scheme, statutory sick pay, personal finance and mortgages, and cash grants. The financial information tabs on the website had received 445 visits at the last count.

Support for families over the summer holidays

In addition to providing financial support to families to help them address the economic impact of the pandemic, Reach Academy provided additional support to children and families over the summer holidays:

1. 25 activity sessions were delivered over the summer holidays, reaching nearly 100 children in their early years. The sessions were most popular with new families who were part of the incoming nursery cohort - they reported that they valued the opportunity to meet staff ahead of September, familiarise their children with the environment and connect with other parents.
2. Over 1,000 activity boxes³¹ were delivered to children over four weeks in the summer, which contained early learning resources to support development and encourage play.
3. 77 children received weekly meal packages through the Good Grub Club, an initiative organised by the local food banks in Feltham; over 500 packages were collected over seven weeks.

Understanding the causes of poverty in your area

Activities that are designed to support families living in poverty should be preventative in their approach, rather than providing only a short-term patch. In order to do this, it is important to understand what causes poverty in your area. Your school may have a good sense of this already, or it may require some additional research. Local authorities can provide useful data, and CPAG has produced local reports on child poverty for all London boroughs that may also assist. There are some other useful resources included in the 'Resources' section on page 26.

Child poverty in London has some key characteristics:

Low pay, insecure work, and unemployment. Child poverty is lower if both parents are able to work, even if one parent works part time. However, the majority of children living in poverty (71 per cent) are in a household where at least one parent works and this figure has been rising steadily over the last decade.³² Research has found that even two parents working full time on the 'national living wage' do not earn enough to cover the basic costs of raising a child, and many single parents or couples juggling part-time work and childcare will fall further behind.³³ Families on low pay or those unable to work sufficient hours face particular challenges in London, where the costs of housing and childcare are significantly higher than in the rest of the country.³⁴ Most working families on a low income are not eligible for free school meals, which means that relying on free school meals as an indicator of poverty in your school is likely to miss significant numbers of children in families that are struggling. In addition to those families in low-paid or insecure work, many more parents are facing long-term unemployment as a result of COVID-19. Certain sectors, like retail and hospitality, which employ a predominantly part-time, shift-based workforce, have been particularly hard hit. In May, the lowest-paid members of the workforce were more likely than any other to have lost their job because of COVID-19,³⁵ suggesting that families who were already struggling financially may be plunged deeper into poverty as a result of long-term unemployment.

Changes to social security benefits. There have been huge changes to the social security system in recent years, including cuts to many of the welfare benefits relied on by children and families. Until recently, benefit rates had been frozen for many years, and support for children, single parents and disabled people has been cut significantly. These cuts are leaving many families thousands of pounds a year worse off – a huge amount for families living on very low incomes.³⁶ Families may also be struggling if they have moved onto UC from the previous benefit system, facing changes to their payments, delays, and differences in the frequency of payments (monthly instead of weekly or bi-weekly), as well as having to manage the new benefit online. It is increasingly hard for people to access specialist advice to help with their claim or resolve problems. Research has found that one of the main reasons for using food banks is because of a benefit problem, for example a payment delay or sanction.³⁷

Housing. A lack of affordable housing is a major issue affecting children and families living in poverty in London. Average rents in London are more than twice the average for England. Rents in Inner London in 2015/16 were equivalent to up to 75 per cent of earnings – much higher than the English average of 24 per cent of earnings.³⁸ In London, there are more families living in poverty in the private rented sector than ever before.³⁹ Rent in social housing in London has also increased by around 30 per cent in the last five years, a more rapid increase than private sector rents.⁴⁰ There has also been an increase in the number of households living in temporary accommodation. Many are placed outside of the borough in which they have been accepted as homeless, which can mean either moving schools or having to travel long distances to school, as well as being uprooted from their community.

Childcare sufficiency. London faces an ongoing shortage of school-age childcare, particularly at affordable levels. This can leave parents relying on a patchwork of help and all too often means that mothers are restricted to part-

time jobs that fit with school hours. Maternal employment in London is the lowest in the country.⁴¹ Childcare for older children, disabled children and for children of parents who work atypical hours can be particularly difficult to find.

No recourse to public funds. Recent research has found that children in families whose immigration status is granted on condition that they do not have recourse to public funds are growing up in exceptional poverty, with some families living on less than £2 per person per day.⁴² Children in these families are usually not eligible for free school meals, and their parents and carers are not permitted to work nor access most welfare benefits or homelessness assistance. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic these families are particularly at risk of financial hardship as many will be unable to work, which may have been their only source of income. London Councils has estimated that there are over 3,000 children living in households in London without recourse to public funds.⁴³ As a result of COVID-19, the government made temporary changes to free school meals eligibility to include children with no recourse to public funds, however at the time of writing the government has not clarified how long children will remain eligible.

Case study: supporting families to address the causes of poverty

Surrey Square Primary School is located next to the Aylesbury Estate in Southwark, one of the largest housing estates in Europe, and deprivation is a feature of the lives of many of the children who attend.

The school has a range of initiatives to support families on a low income, including a free breakfast club for all children, subsidised after-school clubs, adult education and volunteering opportunities for parents and carers. It offers crisis support when needed, including food, clothing and bedding, as well as referrals to other services. In addition, Surrey Square has introduced support to help parents address some of the underlying causes of poverty and deprivation in their lives.

Support for families with no recourse to public funds

Five per cent of the school population live in families with no recourse to public funds. The school was aware that these children were living in a constant state of insecurity, with many of their basic needs going unmet. It developed the following framework in response:

What we see

What we do

HUNGER



FREE DAILY BREAKFAST CLUB *(Magic Breakfast)*

INADEQUATE CLOTHING



PROVIDE CLOTHES/UNIFORM/SHOES

LACK OF ENRICHMENT



FREE CLUBS FOR THOSE IN NEED & HOLIDAY REFERRALS

LACK OF SLEEP



PROVIDE BEDDING, APPLY FOR GRANTS

JOB INSECURITY



PROVIDE EMPLOYMENT, TRAINING AND VOLUNTEERING

DEPRESSION, ANXIETY AND POOR MENTAL HEALTH



PASTORAL SUPPORT TEAM, PLACE2BE, LISTENING

EXTREMELY COMPLEX CASES



SIGNPOST TO OTHER AGENCIES AND STAKEHOLDERS



In addition to helping families meet these basic needs, Surrey Square is piloting a project with Citizens UK and Coram Children’s Legal Centre to provide legal advice for families who need help with immigration issues. Families will be able to access this advice at the school.

3.2 Identifying clear outcomes

It is important for schools to be clear about what they hope to achieve by establishing programmes to support children and families living in poverty. Having clear, realistic outcomes helps develop an action plan, establish methods for monitoring your activity and supports evaluation further down the track.⁴⁴ Children and families' individual circumstances may be complex and, in some places, the need for support may be great. However, this should not deter schools – small initiatives can, and do, make a difference to children living in poverty and they can often support families in multiple ways.

Breakfast club: outcomes and actions

1. Children are not hungry when they go into the classroom: provide children with breakfast.
2. Children are focused and ready to learn when they go into the classroom in the morning: provide an opportunity for children to play and socialise with friends before school.
3. Parents who work are supported by having access to free childcare before school: ensure working parents use the breakfast club.
4. Non-working parents learn skills which help them move into work/training: provide volunteering opportunities for non-working parents at the breakfast club.

Having clear outcomes can help you establish methods for monitoring your activity, for example, if a breakfast club is designed to support working parents then having mechanisms for monitoring the use of clubs and evaluating the impact for this group will be important. The section on evaluation (p.24) may be useful.

3.3 Leadership

Good leadership and management structures are integral to the development of successful initiatives to tackle poverty in schools.⁴⁵ Schools that participated in our research had strong strategic leadership at a senior level, involving governors, head teachers and other senior leadership team staff who were committed to developing this work. Leadership provides a clear vision of what the school is trying to achieve that is shared across the staff team and informs the delivery of this work at an operational level.

Leadership at an operational level is also important. Having staff in dedicated roles, rather than adding this responsibility to existing roles, was found to be a key factor in achieving successful outcomes. Often the family worker, who is responsible for delivering much of the pastoral care to children and families, takes a lead on delivering these types of activities in schools. In some schools, this work was shared with extended schools co-ordinators, who were part of the teaching team, but with reduced teaching hours to allow them time to co-ordinate programmes such as breakfast and after-school clubs. Developing clear responsibilities and structures for managing the work is an important first step when establishing these activities in schools.

3.4 Partnerships

Schools do not need to embark on this work alone. Schools that are delivering successful initiatives to support families on a low income often have strong partnerships with local organisations in the private, public and voluntary sector. Our 'Resources' section on page 26 can help you identify organisations that you might want to approach.

Case study: using partnerships to deliver initiatives

Surrey Square Primary School is located in Southwark. There are high levels of deprivation among the school population at Surrey Square and the school has a number of initiatives to support children and families living in poverty, including a number of activities that are delivered in partnership with external organisations.

Place2Be offers counselling and therapeutic support to pupils, parents and carers, and staff at the school. There is a Place2Be counsellor based on the school site. Staff can refer pupils, and pupils can refer themselves via a drop-in service.

<https://www.place2be.org.uk/>

Magic Breakfast is a national charity that supports schools to provide breakfast to pupils so that no child is too hungry to learn. Magic Breakfast supports the provision of the breakfast club at Surrey Square, alongside some core funding from the school, which ensures it is free of charge and available to all pupils, their parents, siblings and family members.

<https://www.magicbreakfast.com/>

Citizens UK uses community organising to identify issues on a local or national level that communities feel passionate about and then influences those in government, business and public life to effect change. Surrey Square is a member of its local 'chapter' (Southwark Citizens), and through this Surrey Square pupils have been instrumental in driving campaigns about citizenship rights (including going to Parliament to meet with decision makers) as many pupils have been directly affected by this issue.

<https://www.citizensuk.org/>

Fiona Carrick-Davies, family and community co-ordinator at Surrey Square, is responsible for managing some of these partnerships:

"Working with our local partners and with other organisations who operate across London and the rest of the UK is an invaluable part of our offer for families. It can take time to develop meaningful relationships and follow up on links with other agencies, but the benefits of doing this are obvious. It makes sense to connect families directly with organisations who have expertise on issues like welfare rights, deprivation, housing and immigration difficulties, though we still stay involved and ask to be updated so that we can continue to support on the ground."

We invite representatives of support agencies in to school to run workshops with our parents or speak at parent events and by doing so, we are endorsing the support they can offer and thus demonstrate to our parents the school's commitment to addressing home issues that can affect their child's learning and wellbeing."

There are many other benefits for schools of working in partnership with private sector and voluntary sector organisations in this way: opportunities for networking and peer support, pooling of resources, and building relationships with the wider community. Allowing organisations to use your school space to deliver their service not only locates them in the heart of the community, but can attract new services that previously didn't have space to operate in. 'Cluster' working (a network of schools working together) was highlighted as a best practice model in the evaluation of the original national extended schools initiative. Researchers found it helped reduce the additional burden on schools of doing this type of work, and fostered stronger links with the local community.⁴⁶

Understanding the support available in your local area

There are lots of resources and sources of expertise in the wider community that can help schools with this work. Developing strong links and partnerships with these organisations and with multiple teams across your local authority, including benefit advice or employability services, is an effective way to support low-income families. Local organisations often have the benefits of being run by members of the local community, creating trust between those using services and those delivering them.

Some common local services to be aware of are:

Local welfare assistance schemes. Local welfare assistance provides emergency support to people who have fallen into a financial crisis or who need help to remain or start living independently. Local welfare assistance schemes vary greatly: some councils offer vouchers to pay for food, fuel or clothing (in-kind support), or bigger basic living items such as beds, cookers and fridges. Others offer cash grants or loans, or make referrals to charitable organisations such as food banks. The schemes are often open to families who have no recourse to public funds. It is important to be aware that some local authorities do not have a functioning scheme. However, as part of the response to COVID-19, the government confirmed some additional funding for local authorities in England to help those struggling financially as a result of the pandemic. In the case of Barking and Dagenham this has contributed to the development of a new Individual Assistance Payment Fund to help residents with emergency living expenses.

Welfare or debt advice. Financial support and advice for families is often delivered at a local level either through dedicated teams within local authorities or through voluntary sector organisations. Schools should research their local area to understand how this service is delivered locally, engaging with the appropriate council team or developing relationships with organisations such as [Citizens Advice](#) operating in the local area for residents. Referring families to local welfare rights advice, alongside more emergency crisis support (see above and below) is important as these services can help families resolve their financial issues on a more long-term basis, by making sure families are claiming benefits to which they are entitled.

Immigration advice. Access to support for refugees, asylum seekers, and other migrants can often be found at a local level. Organisations such as [Project 17](#), [Hackney Migrant Centre](#) and the [Southwark Refugee and Migrant Project](#) offer free advice on issues such as immigration, welfare and health concerns. These are important services for families with no resource to public funds, who are particularly susceptible to financial hardship during the pandemic.

Employment support. Supporting families to access training and support to develop their skills and careers can help adults back in to work or progress in their careers, potentially moving away from insecure work. An example of support could be providing adult education programmes, such as the [Reach Children's Hub](#) which worked in partnership with the London Borough of Hounslow to provide a range of adult education programmes on the school site. Schools should be aware that increasing unemployment as a consequence of the pandemic is likely to

result in significant investment in employment support, so conducting up-to-date research on what may be available in your local area is important.

Emergency or crisis support. Local charities, community organisations and religious institutions often provide different forms of emergency support for local residents. Through partnerships with larger, national organisations, community organisations are able to deliver support to local residents. Examples of emergency support in local areas are food or clothing banks. There may be specific services available for families with no recourse to public funds. These organisations sometimes work on a referral basis and by developing relationships with them, schools will be able to refer families to their support services.

There are also a number of regional and national organisations that operate across London boroughs that schools can refer to. A list of some of the key organisations to be aware of is included in section 5 of this report.

Delivering welfare rights advice in schools

As part of a GLA-funded pilot project to tackle child poverty in schools, CPAG delivered welfare rights advice across eleven primary schools in London from April-December 2019. Schools received either weekly or fortnightly advice sessions, delivered by a welfare rights worker who provided sessions for parents at the school.

There was positive take-up of the sessions by parents and carers. 79 clients were seen by the advisers in relation to 126 separate matters. Key issues clients presented with included help with doing a benefit check, making or maintaining a UC claim, appealing a benefit decision, and issues with tax credits, disability living allowance, and housing benefit.

75 per cent of clients identified as women. 21 per cent identified as having a disability. 70 per cent identified as being BME. These figures support findings from a similar Scottish pilot project that found that groups that are less likely to access advice from mainstream advice agencies, namely women and people from a BME background, are more likely to access advice when it is available at a school.

Some of the families who accessed welfare rights advice made significant financial gains, helping to ease the severe financial hardship that some families were experiencing. £122,197.83 was gained for clients in terms of ongoing financial gains (per year), and £16,627.78 was gained for clients in terms of one-off payments.

If unable to provide co-located advice services on the school site, schools may want to consider exploring links with local advice agencies in their area. A local welfare rights advice service, delivered by the local authority or a local voluntary sector provider, will have knowledge of the local area. They may also have established links into other services for issues that are out of scope, and may be located in services that offer a range of support services for families and children (e.g. employability advice, debt advice). This can help with providing a holistic service to parents and carers.⁴⁷

3.5 Funding

It is important for schools to consider from the outset how initiatives to support children and families living in poverty will be sustained. This can be challenging for schools which have, in recent years, faced budget cuts that can make establishing extra activities outside the core task of teaching children difficult. In the long term, CPAG

and others continue to make the case for central government funding for extended schools programmes, so that schools are adequately resourced to deliver this work effectively.

In the short term, schools are attracting additional funding for this work in innovative ways.

Funding: ideas from schools

- **Attracting resources through partnerships with the voluntary and private sector.** This can include in-kind donations, such as food, staffing or use of facilities, as well as financial contributions. For example, one school in Croydon used a crowdfunding platform to raise funds to be able to provide emergency parcels to children and families during the COVID-19 pandemic – including food, toiletries, books, and equipment – with many local businesses making donations.
- **Applying for charitable funding.** Some schools are automatically charities (eg, academies and foundation schools) and can apply for charitable funding. Other schools are applying for charitable or social enterprise status, so they can access new sources of funding.
- **Raising finances by using the school grounds.** Some schools rent out their school facilities, such as halls or sports facilities, to raise additional income.
- **Ensuring schools are accessing all their entitled funding.** Due to the COVID-19 pandemic it is likely that there will be an increase in the number of families living on low incomes or claiming UC in many schools. This may make more pupils eligible for free school meals, allowing schools to claim more pupil premium funding. Schools will need to make sure families who are newly eligible for free school meals are supported to apply, which will guarantee the school is able to get all the pupil premium funding due.
- **Pooling resources with other schools.** Delivering activities in partnership with other schools can reduce costs. For example, nearby schools sometimes work together to provide breakfast or after-school clubs where it is not viable to do this independently.
- **Supporting parents/carers to access financial entitlements through information sessions and advice.** Many welfare benefits to which low-income families are entitled go unclaimed because families do not realise they are eligible or they struggle with the process. This includes help with childcare costs through tax credits or UC, which could be used to cover a proportion of the costs of registered breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday clubs.⁴⁸
- **Charging parents if necessary.** If this is unavoidable, it is important to think about minimising the impact on families whose budgets are very stretched. For example, tiered payment systems, allowing parents to pay in instalments and providing lots of notice so that parents can prepare and spread the costs can all help. Our Cost of the School Day project (p.5) can help schools when thinking about how to reduce and mitigate any financial burden on parents.

Case study: funding sources for extended schools programmes

Charlton Manor Primary School in Greenwich provides a range of extended school activities funded in different ways. Charlton Manor's head teacher has been imaginative and proactive in engaging funders and other organisations in the community.

Charlton Manor's breakfast club has been supported by funding from a partnership between the GLA and Greggs since 2016. Greggs provides bread, and the funding covers the cost of cereals and other food, as well as the initial £500 start-up costs to buy equipment – eg, a freezer. This allows the school to provide its breakfast club at no cost to parents. School staff report that the relationship with the funder is straightforward without onerous reporting rules. The school covers the cost of staffing the scheme from its budget.

"If we didn't have the Greggs/GLA funding we would either have to lose something else, cut back breakfast club or start charging parents."

Tim Baker, Head teacher

Charlton Manor also provides a free holiday club for five weeks in the summer holidays, offering a morning of activities every day with breakfast and lunch provided. The club is funded by renting out some of the school's facilities to a private holiday play scheme which offers all-day childcare throughout the summer and charges parents for places. The school is sometimes also able to raise funds by renting out its facilities for parties and other events.

In term time, the school benefits from an arrangement with FareShare, which donates leftover food. The school sells cheap food at the end of the school day and at its Saturday Café, offering an alternative to local takeaways.

The school's newest initiative is to establish a community space on land attached to a new housing development nearby, which will include a community garden where children and parents can take part in growing food and cooking. It has also arranged a partnership with a football club on the same site, so that children can use its facilities. In order to fund these activities the school set up a charitable arm, allowing it to apply for grants not usually available to schools. The school was able to obtain pro bono help from a local law firm to apply for charitable status and set up the necessary paperwork. It is fundraising through grant applications as well as having been nominated 'charity of the year' by the local Round Table who are fundraising through activities such as quizzes.

4. Strengthening your approach

Establishing successful initiatives to tackle child poverty in schools is not without its challenges. This section sets out some of the key challenges identified in our research and some strategies for overcoming them. It is particularly relevant for schools that already have activities in place, but are looking for ideas on how to strengthen them.

4.1 Awareness

Lack of awareness of activities, and how to access them, was a barrier identified in the research. Activities designed to support children and families on a low income require ongoing promotion to ensure children and families are aware of them and know how to access them. Schools which took part in our research reported that promoting activities was an ongoing task, particularly as the school population changes throughout the school year. It is important to ensure that there are many opportunities for families to find out about activities – eg, via information provided at the start of the school year, at parents' evenings and school events, through school newsletters and on the school website.

Lack of awareness of financial entitlements that can support families to access activities (where there is a cost) was identified as another barrier. For example, families may conclude that they cannot afford to access provision, such as a fee-paying after-school club, when in fact they may be eligible to have a substantial amount of their childcare costs covered through tax credits or UC. If your school provides subsidised places for families on low incomes, is this publicised to parents? Is there more you could do to promote the financial support that is available to families within your school?

Childcare entitlements for school-age children in UC and tax credits

Families who are claiming UC or tax credits may be eligible for help with childcare costs for school-age children. Key facts to be aware of:

- **Parents must be working.** For UC, working single parents, couples who are both working, and couples with one partner working and the other who cannot work due to ill-health, caring responsibilities or temporary absence, are all eligible. For tax credits, parents must be receiving working tax credit, which requires a certain number of hours of work per week.
- **Registered providers.** Parents must use childcare that is registered or approved. In England, childcare providers are registered with Ofsted. Information about registering childcare with Ofsted can be found in the 'Resources' section on page 26.
- **Percentage of costs covered.** UC pays up to 85 per cent of childcare costs, up to a monthly maximum of £646.35 for one child or £1,108.04 for two or more children. Tax credits pay up to 70 per cent of childcare costs, up to a weekly maximum of £122.50 for one child or £210 for two or more children.

Parents/carers who are working and not claiming UC or tax credits may be able to get help through the government's tax-free childcare scheme.

More information is available from Coram Family and Childcare.

<https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/help-your-childcare-costs>

Case study: information and advice sessions for parents

Colville Primary School is a two-form entry school near Portobello Road in North Kensington, an area with a mixed demographic profile. North Kensington houses some of the most affluent, and some of the poorest, families in London.

Children not attending out-of-school provision

The school was aware of children not attending any extended school activities who they considered could most benefit from attending, as well as being at risk of exclusion from friendship groups and other enriching experiences.

It was thought that one reason for non-attendance might be because parents were not aware of their entitlement to financial support to help pay for childcare costs, such as out-of-school activities.

“Children develop social skills and language skills through our rich out-of-school provision. This makes them all more able to manage the core curriculum. Over time, they become confident children who are well equipped for adult life.”

Jagdeep Birdi, Head teacher

Information and advice sessions for parents

As part of our research project, the local Family and Communities Employment Service was invited into the school to provide information sessions for parents, backed up with an option of a one-to-one interview where requested.

An important feature of the activity was to embed an ongoing information and referral service in the school by involving the family worker from the outset. This meant that she could continue to see parents, gather details of the situation and make a referral to an appropriate local or national advice service if required.

What did the school learn through this?

The school felt that this was a very valuable exercise because it was able to support parents who came forward for the first time with issues that were having an impact on their lives and those of their children. It established that there was a clear need for expert information and advice sessions at the school, and demonstrated that the family worker was an important port of call and someone the parents felt they could trust.

It also showed that it takes time and effort to build up both take-up of information and advice sessions, and good data on and relationships with organisations to which parents can be referred. The school concluded that the knowledge gained from the sessions was an important factor in delivering the high-quality pastoral care that it is proud of as an outstanding school.

“Every time we are able to meet the needs of a family, we see improvements in pupil attendance and adult engagement.”

Jagdeep Birdi, Head teacher

4.2 Engagement

Children from disadvantaged backgrounds are less likely to engage with, and therefore benefit from, activities such as extended schools.⁴⁹ This presents a challenge for schools that do have activities in place, such as breakfast clubs and after-school clubs, but find that those children and families who may benefit the most are not using the provision.

Schools involved in our research reported that engaging children and families takes time. While the first step is to ensure that children and families are aware of provision, engagement often relies on relationship building. Extra effort may be needed to reach parents who may not access the school. For example, schools may have limited contact with parents who work, or whose children have special educational needs and arrive at school by school transport, or whose children are older and travel to school independently.

Engagement: key strategies used by schools

- **Relationship building via family workers.** The family worker role is integral to this work. They are located outside the teaching team, often have an understanding of family circumstances outside of school, and may be providing support with other issues. If this is a trusting relationship, family workers may be able to engage and encourage participation in activities provided by the school.
- **Using other parents.** Asking parents who already have a good relationship with the school to ‘spread the word’ among other families can be helpful in engaging parents who might not have a positive relationship with school staff, or are less likely to attend events or read a newsletter or other promotional material. Coram Family and Childcare ‘parent champions’ are parent volunteers who might be able to assist (see below).
- **Universal targeted approach.** Stigma is a powerful deterrent in the school environment, and initiatives that are clearly targeted at disadvantaged families (eg, by restricting provision to children eligible for free school meals) are often less successful in terms of take-up. A ‘universal targeted approach’ (see p.23) was identified as one way of ensuring that the most disadvantaged children access initiatives, without giving the impression that the initiative is solely for disadvantaged children.
- **Be mindful about communication.** Promoting initiatives as enrichment opportunities open to all, rather than initiatives to support families living in poverty, is important. Stigma can be a major barrier in terms of engagement, and ensuring activities are pitched as inclusively as possible can help.

Coram Family and Childcare Parent Champions Network

<https://www.familyandchildcaretrust.org/parent-champions-national-network>

Case study: Charlton Manor's universal targeted approach

Charlton Manor offers a breakfast club, holiday club and after-school club, which are free for all children to attend. Within this universal approach, the school actively identifies children who would benefit from taking part and encourages them and their parents. It is not always easy to engage parents who do not respond to things like school newsletters or take part in parent-teacher associations, but the school has various strategies to do so.

The school's two learning mentors play a key role in this. One is a school employee, the other is brought in for particular days. School staff feel that it helps that one of them is not a long-term school employee, as it can be easier for some parents to talk to someone who is not perceived as being enmeshed in the school. The learning mentors are present in the playground at drop-off and pick-up times and try to engage parents informally by chatting. Once a friendly relationship has been established, this can be developed by asking parents if they would help out with school trips, expressing thanks for their involvement, encouraging them to come in for lunch and so on. The school has a separate house with a comfortable atmosphere and furnishings, so staff can chat with parents without being in a formal setting that feels like a 'meeting'. A human face is absolutely key.

Teaching staff can also play this kind of role, but for some parents it is easier to talk to staff who are not teachers. The learning mentors often support parents in discussions with teachers. Staff also make use of a group of parents with whom they already have a good relationship, who can be relied on to spread the word to others.

The learning mentors are part of a wider 'inclusion team' who are also present at breakfast club and who all play a role in monitoring information on children's attendance, behaviour and any other concerns. This information is entered into a central system so that patterns can be tracked, and the team meets regularly to discuss children and their needs.

Where parents have been asked to come to the school to talk about other issues (eg, about children's behaviour or attendance), staff try to build a positive relationship by offering support, emphasising how much they need and appreciate the parents' help, and encouraging them to come in for lunch or join in with other activities.

The school has also designed various activities to include parents. For example, circuit training is available at the breakfast club (free of charge), parents can come in for lunch, and the school runs a low-cost café after school and on Saturdays.

If parents or children are struggling, as well as encouraging them to take part in activities offered by the school, the inclusion team is able to signpost them to other sources of help nearby. This includes respite services, food banks and emergency grants, and help with housing issues.

4.3 Evaluation

Evaluating initiatives such as extended schools programmes has been challenging for schools.⁵⁰ Conducting an evaluation does not have to be comprehensive; our research found that small-scale evaluation can be helpful for schools when thinking about how to develop or improve current initiatives. Evaluation can be done through online surveys with children and parents that can be straightforward to administer and analyse online, by asking parents to fill in feedback forms, or by speaking directly to children and parents who participate (and if possible children and parents who might benefit but who do not take part). There are links to resources that can support schools, including survey templates for use with children and parents, on page 26.

Suggested evaluation questions

1. Is your activity achieving its outcomes?
2. Which children/parents are taking part? Is it reaching those who need it the most?
3. What are children's and families' experiences of using the activities?
4. If children/parents are not accessing activities, why not? What are the barriers?
5. What changed for children and parents as a result? Were parents able to access employment or training or increase their working hours as a result, for example?
6. What improvements could be made, and where are the gaps?

Case study: asking children their views on extended school activities

Colville Primary School is in North Kensington. As part of our research project, the school decided it was important to understand more about children's and parents' views of current provision, find out why children did not attend out-of-school provision, and meet the gaps in its current offer.

Surveying children

In order to maximise the feedback, the school consulted all its key stage 2 children about its extended school provision via a child-friendly electronic survey. The survey was anonymous but, since it was completed class by class and the survey software noted the time of completion for each individual child, the school was able to follow up on any responses which caused concern about a child's wellbeing.

The results of the survey were as follows:

- There were 211 responses (15 x 11-year olds, 51 x 10-year-olds, 48 x nine-year-olds and 97 x eight-year-olds).
- Eight per cent said there are lots of times when their family cannot afford things for them and their siblings.
- 55 per cent said that sometimes their family cannot afford things for them and their siblings.
- 37 per cent said that their family can always afford things for them and their siblings.
- 61 per cent attend out-of-school provision, the most well-attended being after-school club.
- Responses centred around the food offer, activities and socialising with other children.
- The rating of importance differed between before-school activities, after-school activities and holiday clubs.

- There were 36 comments about food. These were mainly from pupils who use before-school care. One comment was: “The food because if I don’t have food, I will be hungry.” It is difficult to unravel the reasons for some of the responses about food, but the content would suggest that there is a significant group of children for whom food provided at school has a particular importance. Some of the children wanted the offer to be more sustaining – eg, requests for eggs at breakfast time.
- 20 per cent of children said they do not attend after-school club (over 40 children) and 13 per cent do not go to holiday club because their parents cannot afford it.

“I would like to go to piano clubs, but they are £££££ and my dad cannot pay that much because he has to pay for my sis lunch in secondary and does not put me in any clubs.”

“Me and my family (just my mum and my brothers) are in a tight situation with money, as we have £2,000 or so in rent we haven't paid yet. The housing trust has not made a decision whether or not we will stay in our house or be evicted. I'm scared.”

“[I would go] if my parents had the money.”

What did the school learn from this?

The school felt that it had been invaluable to consult directly with children. The school gained knowledge of the barriers that some children face and was clearer on how, and for whom, it could improve the offer. The research also emphasised the importance of the breakfast club and the school concluded that it needed to improve its food offer.

“Understanding the underlying needs of all our children is key to our school’s success. This survey has helped us to reflect and think about how we make our before- and after-school offer even more accessible – ensuring that finance is not a barrier.”

Jagdeep Birdi, Head teacher

5. Useful resources

Access Aspiration: provides work placements and employer insights for 16-18 year olds.

<https://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/our-programmes/access-aspiration/>

Advice Local: find local advice services in your area.

<https://advice.local.uk/>

Bite Back 2030: free cookbook with five lunchtime recipes, all from a £15 weekly shopping list.

<https://biteback2030.com/campaign/free-cook-jack-e-cookbook>

Citizens Advice: free, independent and confidential financial advice.

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/search-for-your-local-citizens-advice/>

Citizens UK: organises communities to act together for power, social justice and the common good.

<https://www.citizensuk.org/>

Connect with Work: supports people who face barriers getting into work by providing tailored skills training and connecting them to businesses that are recruiting.

<https://home.barclays/society/investing-in-our-communities/our-citizenship-programmes/connect-with-work/>

Coram Children's Legal Centre: promotes and protects the rights of children in the UK and internationally in line with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

<https://www.childrenslegalcentre.com/>

Cost of the School Day: range of resources to support schools to address financial barriers to education in their schools through engaging with their school community, including parental surveys.

<https://cpag.org.uk/scotland/CoSD/toolkit>

Debt Free London: free expert information and advice available on understanding debt and access to support and solutions.

<https://www.debtfree.london/>

Employment Rights Hub: free information about different employment rights plus details of what to do if you're having trouble at work.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/employment-rights-hub>

EntitledTo: benefit calculator to make sure families are getting the support they are entitled to.

<https://www.entitledto.co.uk/>

EU Londoners Hub: free information for EU residents living in London.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/eu-londoners-hub>

Football Beyond Borders: school-based programming to support young people to finish school with the skills and grades to make a successful transition into adulthood.

<https://www.footballbeyondborders.org/what-we-do/>

Fair Finance: offers a range of financial products and services designed to meet the needs of people who are financially excluded.

<https://www.fairfinance.org.uk/>

Greggs Breakfast Clubs: support with funding school breakfasts clubs, encouraging the use of parent volunteers.

<https://www.greggsfoundation.org.uk/breakfast-clubs/about-the-scheme>

Guidance for young Londoners on securing rights to citizenship and residence: aims to help young people to identify what legal immigration options they have and the steps to take towards obtaining citizenship.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/what-we-do/communities/migrants-and-refugees/guidance-young-londoners-citizenship-residence>

Home-Start: volunteers trained to work alongside families to overcome challenges.

<https://www.home-start.org.uk/find-your-nearest-home-start>

Just for Kids Law: working with and for young people to ensure their legal rights are respected and promoted, and their voices are heard and valued.

<https://justforkidslaw.org/about-us>

Kitchen Social, Mayor's Fund for London: programme addressing the issue of children and young people facing food insecurity and social isolation outside of term time.

<https://www.mayorsfundforlondon.org.uk/kitchen-social/>

Let us Learn: aims to inspire young people to take the lead in their schools and communities to ensure all migrants have the chance to contribute fully to British society.

<http://letuslearn.study/>

Mayor of London, London Assembly: information about COVID-19 and employment rights, available in multiple languages.

<https://www.london.gov.uk/coronavirus/employment-rights-business-guidance-and-coronavirus-covid-19/coronavirus-and-employment-rights>

Magic Breakfast: providing healthy breakfast food and expert support to help identify and reach those pupils at risk of hunger.

<https://www.magicbreakfast.com/>

NRPF Network: a network of local authorities and partner organisations focusing on the statutory duties to migrants with care needs who have no recourse to public funds.

<http://www.nrpfnetwork.org.uk/Pages/Home.aspx>

Parentkind: blueprint for parent-friendly schools, to support school engagement with their parent community.

<https://www.parentkind.org.uk/Research--Policy/Projects/Blueprint-for-Parent-Friendly-Schools>

Project 17: works to end destitution among migrant children, working with families who are experiencing exceptional poverty to improve their access to local authority support.

<https://www.project17.org.uk/>

Shelter: free support from expert housing advisers.

https://england.shelter.org.uk/get_help

Shpresa Programme: a user-led organisation that promotes the participation and contribution of the Albanian-speaking community in the UK.

<http://www.shpresaprogramme.com/>

The Money Advice Service: general information regarding the benefits that are available to people.

<https://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk/en/categories/benefits>

The Project for the Registration of Children as British Citizens: focuses directly on children and young adults and their right to British citizenship.

<https://prcbc.org/>

The Trussell Trust: national network of foodbanks delivered by community groups and organisations.

<https://www.trusselltrust.org/get-involved/start-a-food-bank/>

Turn 2 Us: has an online grant search tool where you can find charities that offer non-repayable grants to help individuals on low incomes.

<https://grants-search.turn2us.org.uk/>

10 key lessons for schools

1. Understand the need

Take time to understand the needs and experiences of families at your school. Ask them what support would help. Understand the issues that might affect families, such as changes to social security benefits, having no recourse to public funds, housing problems, difficulties accessing childcare, and low paid or insecure work.

2. Be clear about outcomes

Be clear and realistic about what you want to achieve. It can be positive to start small with the resources you have, and grow initiatives from there. For example, providing free school meals to children with no recourse to public funds may be possible from existing funds, with securing funding to provide free meals universally in your school as a longer-term goal.

3. Leadership

Leadership at both a strategic and an operational level was identified as important for the schools that participated in our research. Establishing clear lines of responsibility at different levels helps underpin the delivery of successful initiatives. Placing an anti-poverty strategy at the heart of the school's vision makes an important statement and commitment.

4. Universal targeted approach

Universal provision helps ensure initiatives have an enrichment, rather than a disadvantage, focus. It helps avoid stigma, which can be a major barrier for engagement. Schools can still take steps to engage disadvantaged children, so that they benefit from initiatives.

5. Prevention rather than crisis

Where possible, focus activities on prevention rather than crisis. For example, if you have families who are struggling with changes to welfare benefits and are having to use food banks as a result, think about bringing in a welfare rights adviser who can help families to access benefits, rather than (or as well as) setting up a food bank at the school.

6. Partnerships

Local organisations can provide a wealth of resources to support your school to develop initiatives. For example, some schools provide co-located services to families, including counselling and therapeutic services, adult education classes and expert advice services. Some voluntary sector organisations will provide these services free of charge as it helps them achieve their charitable aims, and private sector organisations often have corporate social responsibility policies to meet.

7. Funding

Budgets are stretched, but schools are being creative about generating additional income and resources to develop initiatives for families living in poverty. Applying for charitable funding, attracting resources from the private sector and renting out the school premises are some suggested ways for finding the funds to develop this work. Working with other schools or organisations can also reduce costs.

8. Awareness

Work to promote activities in schools is ongoing. In addition, parents may not be aware of the support that is in place to ensure families on a low income can access activities and how they can apply.

9. Engagement

Engaging families so that they access initiatives provided by a school can take work. Investing in building relationships, via family workers or similar roles, or via relationships with other parents, can help with this.

10. Evaluation

Evaluating activities to see whether they are achieving their aims is crucial, but in practice this rarely happens. Evaluation does not need to be large scale; simple steps, such as surveying children or asking for feedback from parents, can help identify successes and areas where you may be able to make improvements.

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