

School Uniform Review

(A Task and Finish Group review by the Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel of the affordability of school uniforms)

Background

This review has been developed by the Children and Young People Panel as a result of the combination of research undertaken by the Citizens Advice Bureau on School Uniforms and through a motion to full Council, to sign up to the 'End Child Poverty Now' campaign. Following this our Local Strategic Partnership agreed to commission a Child Poverty Assessment which the findings of this review will feed into.

The Child Poverty Act was given Royal assent in March 2010. The Act will provide a statutory basis to eradicate child poverty in England, Wales and Northern Ireland by 2010 and create a framework to monitor progress at a national and local level.

Under this Act the Council and its statutory partners will be required to carry out a local Child Poverty Assessment and to then develop a Child Poverty Strategy, which links across into the sustainable Community Strategy, Children and Young Peoples Plan and Economic Development Strategy for the area. This would establish a range of policies/ policy approaches within schools across the Authority.

The CYP task & finish group will be reviewing one aspect of the impact of Child Poverty through the examination of affordability issues of school uniforms and investigating whether our school uniform policy or approaches within the authority are consistent and fair or excluding some families and children when selecting a school or pre-school. The findings from this work will then support some of the targets set for the Council's Child Poverty Assessment work.

Task and Finish Group – role and methodology

A Task and Finish Group may be established by the Overview and Scrutiny Panel for the purpose of conducting an in depth review of any Council service, policy or issue that affects the lives of the residents of B&NES. Matters requiring review by a task and finish group generally arise from issues which have been identified by one of the Overview and Scrutiny Panels.

Once the evidence has been considered through

- Research of currently available information and data
- Conversations/interviews with relevant officers/organisations

The Task and Finish Group produces a report containing details of the evidence gathered, their conclusions and subsequent recommendations.

The report is then submitted to the Overview and Scrutiny Panel who in turn may refer the report to the Cabinet or any partner agencies affected, asking them to consider the recommendations arising from the investigation and how things could be improved.

Purpose & Objectives

The Task and Finish Group will investigate:-

1. whether our school uniform policies/policy approaches within schools across the Authority are consistent and fair.
2. whether the cost and impact of school uniform policies are excluding some families/ children when selecting a school or pre-school.
3. The work will also aim to support the targets set for the Councils Child Poverty Assessment work.

Scope

To achieve the above objective the Task and Finish group decided to investigate the following areas:-

1. Establish what policies exist within our schools and if these are:-
 - a) consistent
 - b) effective
 - c) affordable
2. To determine best practice in other local authorities
3. Gather the findings from research undertaken by the Citizens Advice Bureau on School Uniforms and any other national work in support of our objectives.
4. Gather the results from the Survey and focus group work with parents undertaken by the Child Poverty Strategy Group for the Child Poverty Assessment.
5. To make practical solutions for recommendations to any problems identified within the report.

Excluded from Task and Finish Group work

- Pupil style, i.e. Jewellery, Body art, Hair styles, pupil preferences etc)
- Religious dress and school uniform
- This review will not be investigating options to provide financial assistance towards the cost of school uniforms

Approach

The Panel has agreed that 3 members from the CYP Panel will work with officers as a Task and Finish Steering Group, responsible for developing and coordinating the review and its activities.

In order to achieve the reviews objectives the following streams of work will be undertaken by the task and finish group:-

1. Investigate what School Uniform policies exist within our Authority for:
 - Pre- school
 - Primary
 - Secondary
 - And investigate whether these are consistent, effective and whether the school uniform is affordable.
2. Research school uniform approaches and methods used by other Local authorities and use to benchmark against reviews findings

- Contact our Family Benchmarking Group (NUB)
3. Investigate and analyse the findings from:
- research undertaken by the Citizens Advice Bureau on School Uniforms
 - any other national work in support of our objectives.
 - similar work undertaken from individual schools
- 4 Consultation work:
- Provide assistance to the Child Poverty Strategy Group in developing survey/ focus questions for Consultation with schools.
 - analyse the findings from the Consultation work undertaken by the Child Poverty Strategy Group/ needs assessment for this review.

Outputs of this Review

1. To help to identify fairer costs for uniforms
2. To ensure that policy approaches to school uniforms across schools are consistent, efficient and affordable.
3. To produce a report for the Children and Young People O&S Panel with recommendations which will be made available to the relevant Council Cabinet Member and/or other organisations to consider and make a response.
4. The findings from the review will feed into the needs assessment and Child Poverty Strategy work.

Project Constraints

- **Timescales.** Task and Finish Groups plan for 3-4 months, and aim to provide a concise and brief update of findings to the CYP Overview & Scrutiny Panel on the **20th Sept 2010** followed by a Full Report at the **Nov 2010 meeting**.
- Meetings for this review need to be held during term time
- **Budget.** The work must be managed within the budget available to the Panel, in consultation with the Panel Chair.
- **Process.** The investigation will be carried out in accordance with the Bath & North East Somerset Council Overview and Scrutiny processes.
- **Resource.** Project management resource is available from the Overview & Scrutiny Team, Democratic Services. However, Donna Vercoe will start the planning and scoping for this TFG review and will then fully brief her replacement maternity cover (from August) who will finish the remaining project management of this review.
- **Risk.** The Project Manager will undertake a full assessment of any risks associated with this review and plans will be put in place to minimise or reduce the threat of the success of this review. For example the main risks are;
 1. Failure to run this review alongside the project timings of the Child Poverty Assessment work could run the risk of duplication of effort and having less impactful outcomes.
 2. Unfair expectations could be raised if parents think that the Council might provide financial assistance to families towards school uniform costs.
 3. Without adequate Service Officer support this review could be seriously

weakened

4. Given the importance of the subject matter and the interest of stakeholders involved, this review has the potential to expand. Thus care must be taken throughout to ensure that any additional activities or extension of the scope are deliverable and justified in terms of the value that they add.

Draft Outline Project Plan

Date	Stage / Activity	Meeting Type
12 TH July 2010	Draft Terms of Reference taken to Panel meeting	Public
26th July 2010	Steering Group meeting to further agree on review activities	Private
July- August 2010	Research & investigation work	Public
July - Sept 2010	Consultation activities undertaken for the Child Poverty Assessment by the CPSG ¹	Public
20 th Sept 2010	Brief update of findings to CYP Panel	Public
October 2010	workshop to draw together the TFG's final conclusions and recommendations	Private
22 nd November 2010	Final Report and Recommendations presented at Panel meeting	Public

Project Team

- This review will need to engage with pre-schools, primary schools and secondary schools within Bath & North East Somerset speaking to head teachers and parents from these schools.
- Other Local Authorities to determine best practice approaches to investigation and research.
- The Children's Services Directorate should be included in this review and more specifically the Child Poverty Strategy work undertaken by the Strategic Services and Early Years team and Economic Development
- Cabinet Portfolio holder for Children's Services Chris Watt

Steering Group made up of 3 Members of the Children & Young People O&S Panel	Cllr David Speirs Cllr Dine Romero Cllr Shirley Steel
Divisional Director:	Sara Willis
O&S Project Officer:	Donna Vercoe
Panel Administrator, Democratic Services	Mark Durnford
Service Officer Support:	Lauren Rushen

¹ CPSG: Child Poverty Strategy Group consultation work with parents