

Bath and North East Somerset Council School Uniform Review

**A review by the Children and Young People Overview
and Scrutiny Panel**

**A Task and Finish Group Review into the Affordability
of School Uniforms**



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Foreword

In May 2008, Bath and North East Somerset Council signed up to the Campaign to End Child Poverty. To date, we are still the only local authority to have signed up to this campaign.

We know that tackling family poverty cannot happen in isolation and as resources contract, targeted work to tackle family poverty needs to be a priority not just for the Council but also in our schools, with our strategic partners and the voluntary sector.

Our review of school uniforms aimed to look at one area of family poverty. We wanted to find out whether school uniform policies at schools in Bath and North East Somerset were affordable, consistent and effective.

Overall, our research has found that the cost of school uniforms is not a barrier to parents/carers sending their child to certain schools in Bath and North East Somerset. We were also pleased to discover that the majority of schools offer second-hand uniforms. Our research did raise some inconsistencies with the way that school uniform prices are communicated to parents/carers.

We have put together a draft school uniform charter which we hope that Children's Services will be able to use to consult with schools in Bath and North East Somerset and eventually introduce this to ensure a commitment across the local authority area to ensure that uniforms are cost effective, durable and practical.

We fully support the aims set out in Children's Services Area Assessment of Family Poverty and are glad we had the opportunity to input into the assessment through this investigation.

We would like to thank all of the pre-schools, day nurseries, primary and secondary schools who took the time to complete our survey. We would also like to extend our thanks to the service officers who have supported us through this investigation.

- Sara Willis - Acting Head of Strategic Services and Extended Services Manager
- Abigail Fielder – Family Information Service
- Lauren Rushen – Overview and Scrutiny Project Officer
- Donna Vercoe – Overview and Scrutiny Project Officer

We have included some excellent examples from schools who are committed to pupil inclusion and tackling poverty in their schools which is to be commended.

We would also like to thank the Bath Citizens Advice Bureau who's report *"Adding Up: Education Costs in Bath and North East Somerset"* provided an excellent and complementary insight into school uniform policies in Bath and North East Somerset. We fully support the recommendations within their report and we are grateful to have had their input during our research process.

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School Uniform Review Task and Finish Group

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What is Overview and Scrutiny

What is Overview and Scrutiny?

The main decision making powers in Bath & North East Somerset Council lie with six Councillors who sit on the Cabinet. Overview & Scrutiny is the name given to the system of checks and balances implemented by the rest of the Councillors as they monitor the activity of the Cabinet and also assist them in developing policy.

There is a clear division between the roles and responsibilities of these two functions. The Cabinet is intended to create clear leadership and clear accountability for service delivery. By contrast Overview & Scrutiny is intended to review the work of the cabinet and to enhance the performance of services. It is also designed to provide a forum through which policy review and policy development can be extensively examined before consideration and decision by the Cabinet and/or full Council.

There are five Overview and Scrutiny Panels in Bath & North East Somerset which have responsibility for different areas:

1. Children and Young People
2. Corporate Resources and Performance
3. Enterprise and Economic Development
4. Healthier Communities and Older People
5. Safer and Stronger Communities

This review has been undertaken by the Children and Young People panel.

Executive Summary

This review sought to find out whether school uniform policies across Bath and North East Somerset were fair and consistent, whether policies were excluding some families when trying to decide on a school for their children and to help support some of the aims set out in the Area Assessment of Family Poverty for Bath and North East Somerset.

Our key findings are as follows:

Consistency (p. 10-14)

- Primary schools tended to have guidelines rather than uniform policies which were generally less restrictive than secondary schools
- Most pre-schools/day nurseries who responded to our questionnaire had an optional uniform
- Some schools undertake regular consultation with parents/carers about the cost, quality, practicality and durability of school uniform
- Some parents/carers raised concerns about the quality of certain branded school uniform items
- Majority of schools in Bath and North East Somerset comply with the Schools Admissions code

Effectiveness (p. 14-15)

- The vast majority (82% of Primary and 67% of Secondary schools) give parents/carers information on the price of school uniform items
- The most common method of informing students is after the child has been accepted, through an order form
- Only 23% of Primary and 43% of Secondary schools make prospective parents/carers aware of uniform costs (either through a prospectus or open day/evening)

Affordability (p. 15-21)

- Some parents/carers said they felt that uniforms were expensive but all said they regarded uniform as a necessity that they are prepared to budget for
- Pre-schools/day nurseries felt that parents/carers had bigger school related financial concerns than the cost of uniforms
- The average cost nationally of a uniform (according to the '*Cost of Schooling 2007*') is £163.72 for Primary and £211.60 for Secondary schools
- The average cost nationally of a PE kit (according to the '*Cost of Schooling 2007*') is £155.26 for boys at Secondary School, £102.11 for girls at Secondary School, £53.91 for boys at Primary school and £52.30 for girls at Primary school
- The most common form of assistance is second-hand uniform at all levels of schooling, either free or at a reduced cost
- Second-hand sales work best when they are organised and publicised through the school as parents/carers felt this helps to avoid stigmatisation
- Most pre-schools/day nurseries that offered a uniform brought in bulk from a supplier so that they could pass on the reduced cost to parents/carers

We understand that with new government policies offering schools the facility to opt out of local authority control and become self governing academies will pose potential challenges to the

abilities of the local authority to influence/work with schools on their uniform policies. In order to try and address this we have developed a model 'school uniform charter' that we feel embodies the key aims that all schools should aim towards with their school uniform policies/guidelines which we hope will be a useful tool to engage with schools.

Recommendations

1. Encourage all schools to regularly consult parents/carers about school uniform suppliers including cost, quality, practicality and durability.
2. The Schools Admission Team should re-publicise the Schools Admission Code to all schools in Bath and North East Somerset (particularly sections 1.73, 1.90 and 1.90 which related to school uniform provision).
3. Work with schools to ensure that uniform/PE kit lists clearly identify basic uniform requirements, additional extras and pricing information.
4. Children's Services to consult with all schools in Bath and North East Somerset on the draft school uniform charter (found in appendix 4) and recommend it's introduction for the new school year.
5. Encourage schools to provide information to prospective parents/carers on associated education costs, preferably through a prospectus or an open day/evening before a child starts at the school, so that parents/carers can make informed choices about the cost of schooling and effectively budget for the costs of providing a uniform.
6. Where possible, work with schools to ensure that there is not an over reliance on online ordering or web based information and that alternative formats are always available to parents/carers who may not have internet access.
7. Further research could be undertaken, preferably through the Local Strategic Partnership and in consultation with Bath Citizens Advice Bureau, into other areas of expenses in education e.g. school trips or the cost of the summer holidays that this research has identified.
8. Support the targets/aims set out in the Area Assessment of Family Poverty to place the need to tackle family poverty centrally across the public sector through the Sustainable Community Strategy.
9. Encourage all parents/carers to donate school uniform/PE kit items for reusing when they are no longer needed.
10. Encourage all schools to offer second-hand sales or 'swaps' and suggest that this might be undertaken through their PTAs.
11. Promote the idea that schools should have a Governor to champion pupil inclusion and tackling child poverty within their school
12. Promote the idea that schools should have an identified member of staff to act as a discreet/confidential contact for parents/carers who could help with applying for local charity grants or PTA grants (if available).
13. Use money generated from second-hand sales to provide extra assistance to families in need, co-ordinated through an appointed pupil inclusion contact (see Recommendation 10).
14. Ask schools to consider whether it is appropriate to offer sew on badges in order to offer greater flexibility to parents/carers

Introduction

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' campaign¹. Following this our Local Strategic Partnership agreed to commission a Child Poverty Needs Assessment (now known as the Area Assessment of Family Poverty for B&NES).

The Child Poverty Act² 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 2020 and create a framework to monitor progress at a national local level. The Child Poverty Act required the Secretary of State, when setting the child poverty strategy, to consider which groups of children in the UK are disproportionately affected by socio-economic disadvantage, and to consider the likely impact of government policy on children in these groups.

This will provide a mechanism to target children most at risk of poverty and will allow decisions to be made on the basis of whether they will help these children in the long term.

Since the elections in May 2010, the new Coalition Government has undertaken a review of the Child Poverty Act. On the 18th August, the Coalition Government announced that although they were still committed to ending child poverty by 2020, they no longer placed a statutory requirement for local authorities to carry out a child poverty needs assessment. As a result, in Bath & North East Somerset Council, our needs assessment has become the Area Assessment of Family Poverty for B&NES and will continue to feed into the Sustainable Community Strategy, Children and Young Peoples Plan and Economic Development Strategy for the area.

We have reviewed one aspect of the impact of child poverty through the examination of affordability issues of school uniforms and investigated whether our school uniform policies or approaches within the authority are consistent and fair or excluding some families and children when selecting a school or pre-school.

Purpose and Objectives

The purpose of this review was to investigate the following:

1. Whether our school uniform policies/policy approaches within pre-schools and primary/secondary 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 Area Assessment of Family Poverty and in turn the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy work.

The review findings and recommendations are structured under the headings of consistency, effectiveness and affordability, in line with the original objectives set out in the terms of reference.

¹ End Child Poverty Campaign 2010: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/child-poverty-act>

² Link to Child Poverty Act 2010: www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/ukpga_20100009_en_1

Methodology

There were two phases to our consultation in order to capture the views of both schools (pre-school, day nurseries, primary and secondary) and parents/carers affected by poverty.

Phase One: School Survey

An email was circulated on 10th July to all primary and secondary schools within the Bath and North East Somerset area asking head teachers a small set of questions about the school uniform at their school. They had just over a week to respond to these questions. The short time span was given due to the requirement for the feedback of results before the end of school term and summer holidays. On the 19th July, a similar e-mail survey was sent out to all pre-schools/day nurseries. This was also followed up by a telephone survey of all pre-schools and day nurseries.

The majority of these questions were open ended so that we could identify any obvious inconsistencies between schools and source out examples of good practice to feature in this report.

A full summary of the findings from our questionnaire, along with detailed background research were presented to the Panel at their meeting on the 20th September 2010. A copy of the briefing report can be found here:

http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/committee_papers/OandSCYP/CYP100920/10zAppdx1.pdf

Phase Two: Parent/Carer Focus Groups

As part of the consultation for the Area Assessment for Family Poverty, Children's Services undertook focus groups over July/August which allowed us to ask parents/carers about their experiences of school uniform policies. The focus groups were undertaken with the following groups:

1. Parent/Carer Groups in Bath area
2. Parent/Carer Groups in Keynsham area
3. Parent/Carer Groups in Radstock area
4. Job Centre Plus Lone Parent advisors

The focus groups gave us a valuable insight into parents/carers experiences of buying school uniforms and any issues they have experienced in trying to provide school uniforms at their child's local school. A summary of the findings can be found in appendix six.

In addition to these consultation activities, we also undertook a wide variety of desk based research to assess existing reports on school uniform policies, Best Practice advice, legislation and guidance and work undertaken by other New Unitary Benchmark (NUB) authorities.

We also met with Gill Bottomley and Celia Gail from the Bath Citizens Advice Bureau who wrote *"Adding Up: Education Costs in Bath and North East Somerset"* (2009) to discuss our reports.

We support the findings and the recommendations set out in “*Adding Up: Education Costs in Bath and North East Somerset*” and hope that any future work in this area is done in partnership with the Bath Citizens Advice Bureau.

Findings

The research findings are grouped into three sections; consistency, effectiveness and affordability. Each section includes results and examples of good practice identified in our survey, quotes from our focus groups and examples of previous research that supports our findings.

Questionnaire Response rate:

Schools	Number Within B&NES	Total respondents to review	%
Pre- schools & Nurseries:	99	34 (28/07/10)	34%
Primary:	64*	50 (16/07/10)	78%
Secondary:	13	12 (16/07/10)	92%

Consistency:

This section has two sections that look at firstly the consistency of uniform quality/suppliers and secondly at the consistency of school uniform policies across Bath and North East Somerset.

Our questionnaire found that 77% of Secondary and 48% of Primary schools had a school uniform policy. Primary schools tended to have guidelines rather than a specific policy as they felt this offered parents/carers greater flexibility when buying school uniforms. 24 out of 34 pre-schools/day nurseries offered parents/carers an optional school uniform, it was never compulsory. The main reason for offering a uniform at pre-school/day nursery schools was that it enabled parents/carers to keep their children’s own clothes clean and tidy. Parents/carers in our focus groups were generally supportive of pre-schools/day nurseries offering an optional uniform.

The main reasons for having a school uniform policy were:

- A Sense of Identity
- Preventing Exclusion
- Health and Safety/Safeguarding i.e. suitable footwear and easy to identify students on school trips

Parents/carers in our focus groups also supported the idea of schools having a uniform, *“I like the idea of school uniform – it means I don’t have to worry about*

“It encourages pupils to be proud of their school, as a uniform symbolises belonging. Importantly, it is a leveller and avoids the problem of students feeling either powerful or inadequate about their clothing. Clothing in itself can set high standards and present a ‘corporate’ image.”
(Oldfield Park Infant School)

dress my child in all the latest fashionable clothes. Uniform should make child poverty less obvious.” (Parent, Bath)

*“At pre-school, uniform gets them in the right attitude for going to school. It also keeps their clothes clean and you can’t judge too much if you have a uniform.”
(Parent, Bath)*

Quality of Uniforms/Suppliers:

Good Practice: *“Following the many comments/ complaints that the school received from both parents and students regarding the quality of certain articles of the uniform, particularly the outside coat we have been engaged in recent months in a review with the year and student Councils. It is very clear that the outside coats are not popular, the sweatshirts are not good value for money and many girls don’t like wearing the school blouse.” (Writhlington School)*

Some schools reported that they consulted with their parents/carers on whether to have a school uniform and what the uniform would encompass. Other consultations included asking parents/carers about the cost, quality, practicality and durability of school uniform.

8 pre-schools/day nurseries reported that they decided to introduce an optional uniform because parents/carers had asked for it during consultation.

Writhlington School found that parents/carers were dissatisfied with the uniform and as a result introduced a new uniform in September. Parents/carers in our focus groups also raised concerns about the quality of school uniform suppliers:

“My daughter’s school changed their jumpers after she had been there for 6 months so I had to spend more money on the new ones. They are poorer quality too.” (Parent, Bath)

1. Recommendation: Encourage all schools to regularly consult from parents/carers about school uniform suppliers including cost, quality, practicality and durability.

All levels of schooling had different ways of sourcing specialised school uniform/PE kit, some opted to buy in bulk from suppliers and sell on to parents/carers to reduce costs whilst others told parents/carers to go directly to the shop as they thought this offered parents/carers greater flexibility to purchase uniforms e.g. not being restricted to term times. Due to the variety of both suppliers and supplier methods, we were unable to gain an accurate picture of exact uniform costs across Bath and North East Somerset.

The Schools Admission Code³ (2010) places a statutory duty on all governing bodies to ensure that their policies and practices do not disadvantage any children. The School Admissions Code says schools should limit the expense of uniforms by ensuring that articles are widely available and that they should consider the cost of branded items. Items should be affordable and not disadvantage certain social groups. (See **Appendix 3**, for Paragraphs 1.73, 1.90 and 1.91 of code).

There is no legislation that deals specifically with school uniform. It is for the governing body of a school to decide whether there should be a school uniform and if so what it should be. Despite this, the Department for Education⁴ (previously the Department for Children Schools and Families) recommends that schools should consider the following when introducing a school uniform policy:

1. The timeframe for introducing a new uniform or amending an existing one
2. The cost of including branded items and items in unusual colours/shades
3. Promoting a strong, cohesive, school identity that supports high standards and a sense of identity among pupils
4. Describing the school uniform appearance and policy and publicising it well

In terms of school uniform suppliers, our survey suggests that schools in Bath and North East Somerset appear to comply quite well with the Schools Admission Code as we found a wide variety of uniform suppliers (see briefing report for further details).

Good Practice: *"We provide new and secondhand sweatshirts etc and let parents choose where to buy everything else."* (Farmborough School)

Good Practice: *"I am often looking into new dealers of uniform to get the best deal for parents. The nursery sell them for what we pay for them so make no profit as we feel it's important to keep the cost down as much as we can."* (Queens Road Methodist Church Pre-School)

2. Recommendation: Bath and North East Somerset should re-publicise the Schools Admission Code.

Parents'/carers' in both Bath and Keynsham said that they felt their schools had a flexible approach to school uniform that did not disadvantage their children:

"I only ever buy the sweatshirt through the school or whoever they say we have to buy it from. All the rest comes from Asda or Marks and Spencer – all their other tops, trousers and skirts." (Parent, Bath)

"I didn't spend that much when he started school. I just got the jumper from the school and bought the rest from Tesco. It hasn't been a problem." (Parent, Keynsham)

³ Schools Admission Code <http://www.tsoshop.co.uk/education/bookstore.asp?FO=1205046&DI=611594&trackid=002488>

⁴ Department for Children Schools and Families <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/u/uniform/>

The Office for Fair Trading⁵ found that overall price differentials varied greatly across schools they surveyed according to the number of compulsory items and the number that are subject to restrictive supply arrangements, as well as the prices charged.

Consistency of school uniform policy application:

Our focus groups raised inconsistencies with the ways in which school uniform policies have been applied in schools which has resulted in confusion for parents/carers about what the school's uniform expectations are.

"Yeah they say that pre-school and primary uniforms are optional and then they give you a whole list of all the items! I feel obliged to buy them so that my child fits in and is the same as anyone else" (Parent, Bath)

"I forked out for a whole tracksuit and she never wore it at school." (Parent, Bath)

We feel that it is important for schools with uniform policies or guidelines to clearly indicate which items are basic requirements and which items are additional.

3. Recommendation: Work with schools to ensure that uniform/PE kit lists clearly identify basic uniform requirements, additional extras and pricing information.

We have recommended in our school uniform charter that all schools should offer the option to parents/carers to purchase non-branded school uniform items, where possible.

Two parents/carers raised concerns about inconsistent policies for children with disabilities or health problems.

"uniform just doesn't cater for children with disabilities – they can't pull it up or do the buttons up." (Parent, Bath)

"My son has cystic fibrosis. His school says he has to wear shorts for PE in the winter. I said no way. They need to account for medical conditions. I'm not going to let him get ill wearing shorts in the winter" (Parent, Bath)

We feel it is important that schools are prepared to adapt their uniform policies/guidelines in order to respond to the needs to students with extra mobility/health requirements.

However, we are keen to stress that in addition to these inconsistencies, parents/carers also identified schools with a flexible approach to their school uniform policies.

"My child's school is quite lenient really. Some want branded but at his school they don't mind too much, there are more important things." (Parent, Radstock)

This comment was echoed by parents/carers in all of our focus groups which suggests that there are gaps in the consistency with which policies/guidelines are applied across Bath and North East Somerset.

⁵ Office of Fair Trading http://www.offt.gov.uk/shared_offt/reports/consumer_protection/oft865.pdf

In order to help governing bodies comply with the Admissions Code and help to tackle child poverty within their schools, we have set out an example of a school charter that embodies many of the recommendations featured in this report that we would encourage schools to 'sign up' to (see Appendix 4).

4. Recommendation: Children's Services to consult with all schools in Bath and North East Somerset on the draft school uniform charter (found in appendix 4) and recommend it's introduction for the new school year.

Effectiveness:

We have identified two areas in which the effectiveness of school uniform policies can be measured; effective communication about uniform requirements/costs and effective methods of communicating with parents/carers. Pre-schools/day nurseries were not asked about how they publicise their school uniforms as they were mainly optional rather than compulsory.

Requirements:

Table 1 shows the number of schools that provide information to parents/carers about uniform costs

School	Yes	No	No response
Secondary	8 (67%)	2 (17%)	2 (17%)
Primary	41 (82%)	8 (16%)	1(2%)

Table 2 showing specified ways of how schools provide information to parents/carers about uniform costs:

	Primary	Secondary
Order Form	30%	43%
Starter Pack	13%	-
School Office	20%	-
Prospectus	17%	14%
Newsletter	3%	-
Online	3%	14%
Notice board	6%	-
Open evening	6%	29%

The most common method of distributing price information to prospective parents/carers varied between Primary schools, who tended to use their prospectus (17% for Primary, 14% for Secondary) and Secondary schools, who tended to use open evenings/days (29% for Secondary, 6% for Primary).

"I have a ten year old, a twelve year old and a fourteen year old. My eldest is moving to a new school. He's not even been accepted yet and already I've forked out over £100 in new school uniform." (Parent, Bath)

"It's worse when you have two children both starting a school at the same time. I paid £85 for two sets of uniform – just the basics. You have to think ahead otherwise you'll get to a point where you haven't got the money for it." (Parent, Radstock)

However, we are concerned that the most common method of distributing cost information is through an order form, usually once the child has been accepted at the school, as this may make it difficult for prospective parents/carers to effectively budget for the cost of their child's schooling, particularly if parents/carers have more than one child at school.

5. Recommendation: Encourage schools to provide information to prospective parents/carers on associated education costs, preferably through a prospectus or an open day/evening before a child starts at the school, so that parents/carers can make informed choices about the cost of schooling and effectively budget for the costs of providing a uniform.

Communication Methods:

The Office of National Statistics highlights that up to 30% of families in the South West region do not have internet access⁶. Therefore, it is important that parents/carers have access to information about school uniform costs/requirements and the ability to purchase uniforms in a variety of ways to prevent exclusion.

"I find that I have to buy uniform through my child's school at least twice a year. They keep saying to order through the computer but what if you haven't got one?" (Parent, Bath)

Our survey suggests that schools in Bath and North East Somerset do provide information to parents/carers in a variety of ways, mainly in writing however the quote above highlights that schools should not rely on online methods of purchasing or information provision.

6. Recommendation: Where possible, work with schools to ensure that there is not an over reliance on online ordering or web based information and that alternative formats are always available to parents/carers who may not have internet access.

Affordability:

As previously mentioned in the 'consistency' section of the report, we were able to identify a host of specialist school uniform and PE kit providers. Our focus groups also highlighted that the majority of parents/carers interviewed by us buy their child's uniform from a mixture of specialist and high street retailers in order to lower costs. This appears to be reflected nationally, as the Department for Children, Families and Schools in their report *'The Cost of Schooling in 2007'* also found this to be the case. This means we have been unable to find out the cost of a 'typical' uniform for Primary and Secondary schools in Bath and North East Somerset.

Pre-Schools and Nurseries:

⁶ Internet Access 2010: Households and Individuals. Accessed 11.10.10 <http://www.statistics.gov.uk/pdfdir/iahi0810.pdf>

We have been able to gain figures for those pre-schools and nurseries that offered a uniform option. These ranged as follows:

"I think £6 for a t-shirt, or whatever the nurseries charge, is too expensive. You might expect that for a jumper but not a t-shirt."
(Parent, Keynsham)

- Polo shirts (£3.40 - £9.00)
- Sweat shirt (£4.63 - £10.00)
- T-shirt (£2.74 - £6.00)

All pre-schools and nurseries that offered uniforms said they were optional and some provided these free of charge however, a few parents/carers in our focus groups who had pre-school/nursery age children felt that some of the prices were too expensive

Although the vast majority of parents/carers with children of pre-school/nursery age felt that the cost of uniform was a secondary consideration and uniform costs would not pose a barrier to sending their child a particular pre-school or nursery.

"the costs of uniform wouldn't really affect where my child goes to nursery, pre-school or school. It's more important that the setting or school is right for them and near to where we live" (Parent, Keynsham)

Primary and Secondary Schools:

Although we have not been able to gather specific costs of uniform items in B&NES, the recent Local Authority Report to the Schools Adjudicator for Bath and North East Somerset states

*"There is no evidence in Bath and North East Somerset to show the cost of a school uniform inhibits the choice of school. This has not been raised as an issue by any parents to either our Welfare or Choice Advice Services"*⁷

Previous research by the Department for Education (DfE, previously Department for Children Schools and Families) found out that the average cost of school uniform items in 2007 were as follows:

Table 3 shows the national average cost of school uniform/PE kit items⁸

School Uniform ⁹ Item	Average Cost in 2007		PE Kit ¹⁰ Item	Average Cost in 2007
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⁷ Local Authority Report to the Schools Adjudicator 30th June 2010
<http://moderngov.bathnes.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=2961>

⁸ Taken from 'The Cost of Schooling 2007' accessed 27.09.10
<http://www.education.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR588.pdf>

Shirt/blouse (girls only)	£6.06	Shorts	£5.40
Shirt (boys only)	£5.76	T-shirt (all year)	£5.89
Jumper/sweatshirt	£11.18	Summer t-shirt	£6.91
Shoes	£27.77	Winter PE shirt	£11.23
Trousers	£9.91	Skirt (girls only)	£9.38
Schoolbag	£10.41	Football/rugby shirt (boys only)	£16.38
Skirt/kilt (girls only)	£9.13	Tracksuit	£17.94
Shorts (boys only)	£7.95	Trainers/plimsolls	£16.45
Dress/pinafore (girls only)	£7.95	Tracksuit top	£12.32
Socks	£2.67	Hockey boots (girls only)	£24.66
Tie	£4.54	Football boots (boys only)	£31.49
Blazer	£31.73	Swimming costume (girls only)	£9.53
Hat	£4.20	Swimming trunks (boys only)	£6.55
		Socks	£3.95

The DFE suggested that on average parents/carers will pay a total of £163.72 for Primary school uniform and £211.60 for Secondary school uniform per child per year. For PE kit, the DFE found that the total cost of PE kits were most expensive for boys at Secondary school (£155.26) compared to £102.11 for girls at Secondary School. PE kits at Primary school level were relatively similar in cost (£53.91 for boys compared to £52.30 for girls).

We asked parents/carers in our focus groups whether they felt the current cost of school uniforms or PE kits at schools in Bath and North East Somerset was a barrier for them. We found generally that although parents/carers felt uniform and PE kit were often expensive, it was seen as a necessity and that other costs associated with schooling were more of a barrier. Some families have had to make big sacrifices in order to finance their child's uniforms. Pre-schools and day nurseries also expressed that they felt parents/carers had greater concerns than the cost of school uniforms.

"You just have to go without to make sure they get it. You just don't pay the phone bill or the lights have got to go out." (Parent, Bath)

"Our parents would be happier if they were provided with free places for under 2s with special needs rather than worrying about the price of a sweatshirt." (Bath Opportunity Pre-school)

⁹ Based on a parents/carers survey

¹⁰ Based on a parents/carers survey

This was also reflected in the Bath Citizens Advice Bureau report who found that in particular the cost of paying for school trips or bus fare were far bigger concerns for parents/carers than the cost of uniform/PE kit. As this was not within the remit of this review, we were not able to explore these issues in detail with parents/carers, although our Panel has previously conducted a review into the cost of Secondary School Transport (available on our website: <http://www.bathnes.gov.uk/scrutiny>).

"All schools want the kids to wear uniform and it all costs the same so it's not worth thinking about. It's more about what's right for the child and which school they want to go to." (Parent, Bath)

"A bigger problem for me is the trips. I'm expected to pay huge instalments for my child to go on a school trip." (Parent, Radstock)

"What's worse than uniform is all the cost of the leavers' prom – the limo, the dress, hair and make up. I feel pressure to afford all that for my daughter." (Parent, Radstock)

"Uniform's an afterthought. It's more about bus fare. £3 a day per child that costs me and I've got three kids." (Parent, Bath)

7. Recommendation: Further research could be undertaken, preferably through the Local Strategic Partnership and in consultation with Bath Citizens Advice Bureau, into other areas of expenses in education e.g. school trips or the cost of the summer holidays that this research has identified.

This research has also helped us to recognise that child poverty cannot be tackled in isolation and we strongly support the aims and targets set out in the Area Assessment of Family Poverty which our research has helped to feed into.

8. Recommendation: Support the targets/aims set out in the Area Assessment of Family Poverty to place the need to tackle family poverty centrally across the public sector through the Sustainable Community Strategy.

Sources of Support:

Table 4 shows sources of assistance towards school uniforms:

	Primary	Secondary
Local Authority Grant	3 (5%)	1 (7%)
School/PTA/Charity Fund	3 (5%)	2 (14%)
Second hand uniforms at reduced cost	29 (51%)	2 (14%)
Second hand uniforms free of charge	15 (26%)	4 (29%)
No	7 (12%)	1 (7%)
No answer supplied	0	4 (29%)

The main form of assistance offered to parents/carers at all levels of schooling is second-hand uniforms, either free or at a reduced cost. 77% of Primary and 43% of Secondary schools

offered this facility. 23 out of 24 pre-schools/day nurseries said they did not offer financial assistance mainly because they tended to buy in bulk and passed the subsidises directly on to parents/carers and made no profit themselves.

Good Practice: *“Second-hand uniforms are available through the school (we do not sell these but parents are invited to make a donation if they are able). Parents are informed of this through newsletter & coffee morning flyers” (Three Ways School)*

Some schools stated that second-hand uniform was available, usually from the school office, if parents/carers required where as others had taken a more proactive approach to supplying second-hand uniform.

Where organised sales existed, parents/carers reported that this was a positive experience.

The Bath Citizens Advice Bureau also found locally that 87% of schools encouraged their students to donate uniforms when they are no longer needed and that second-hand exchanges worked particularly well when organised by the schools' PTA and recommended that all schools should offer this facility.

“My child’s school does organise termly second hand sales, to be fair. They’re quite good and all the Mum’s go so it’s there’s no stigma.” (Parent, Radstock).

The DFE found that on average school uniform/PE kit costs were reduced by £13.21 at Primary and £21.27 at Secondary level per annum when a second-hand facility was available to parents/carers.

9. Recommendation: Encourage all parents/carers to donate school uniform/PE kit items for reusing when they are no longer needed.

10. Recommendation: Encourage all schools to offer second-hand sales or ‘swaps’ and suggest that this might be undertaken through their PTAs.

Financial Support:

We conducted Benchmarking research with other local authorities who make up the New Unitary Authorities Benchmarking (NUB) Group. We found that only 7 out of these 17 local authorities in this group offer financial support to parents/carers. Of those that do, this is usually based on receipt of Income Support or Incapacity Benefit.

The Bath Citizens Advice Bureau also undertook extensive Benchmarking research for their report. Key examples include:

- Stockton’s approach to the provision of school Uniform is that the individual schools determine the school uniform policy whilst Stockton Council provides a clothing grant of £30 per child, per year, whilst in receipt of free school meals at secondary schools. No assistance is given for primary school pupils in the borough.
- Blackpool Borough Council offer secondary school grants to parents/carers in receipt of a range of benefits. Grants range from £20-the cost of a full uniform. They also have a dedicated assessment team.

- The Welsh Assembly provides local authorities with vouchers for parents/carers in receipt of free school meals to purchase Secondary School uniforms in Year 7.
- Herefordshire District Council provide low income families with vouchers for £40 for Secondary and £15 for Primary school students that can be redeemed in certain school uniform supplier shops
- East Riding Council provide a £40 voucher to parents/carers when their child transfers from Primary to Secondary school to low income families. This can be applied for online or will be received automatically if parents/carers receive housing benefit or Council Tax benefit.

Bath and North East Somerset School examples:

Good Practice: *"We...apply on parents behalf to a local charity if they are unable to pay the full cost of uniform and are in receipt of certain benefits." (Culverhay)*

We think this is an excellent example of a school showing dedication to tackling child poverty within schools and whilst we acknowledge that schools may not be in a position to allocate a member of teaching staff to promote pupil inclusion we strongly encourage schools to have a dedicated contact (if not a teacher, then a school Governor or PTA member) for families who may find the cost of providing uniform/PE kit difficult.

Good Practice: *"Beechen Cliff will pay all or some uniform costs to families in need. It also has a very large PTA run second hand stall selling all possible uniform items." (Beechen Cliff)*

5 Schools in total (3 Primary and 2 Secondary) reported providing financial assistance from

Good Practice: *"In order to introduce the uniform to all year groups in September 2010 the school will be providing and paying for a navy blue jacket for each student in the current Years 7 - 10. These jackets cost between £25 - 29.38 each. The governors have decided to pay for a jacket for each student as a recognition of the cost for parents transferring to the new uniform and as a gesture in order that parents support this new initiative." (Writhlington)*

either themselves, a local charity or their PTA. Parents/carers in our focus group said they felt peer pressured to provide the right uniform in good condition for their children so knowing that there is a contact within a school who could help with applying for a local charity grant application or applying to members on the PTA to provide assistance in a discreet and confidential way, we feel, would be reassuring to parents/carers.

We would also suggest that money raised through second hand sales could be used to provide small scale grants to families who are in need of extra financial assistance/or paid back to parents/carers who have donated old uniforms to sales at the end of each school year.

11. Recommendation: Promote the idea that schools should have a Governor to champion pupil inclusion and tackling child poverty within their school.

12. Recommendation: Promote the idea that schools should have an identified member of staff to act as a discreet/confidential contact for parents/carers who could help with applying for local charity grants or PTA grants (if available).

13. Recommendation: Use money generated from second-hand sales to provide extra assistance to families in need, co-ordinated through an appointed pupil inclusion contact (see Recommendation 10).

Sewn on Badges:

One of the interesting differences we found between our survey the Bath Citizens Advice Bureau was the use of sewn on badges. Bath CAB found that 39 schools in Bath and North East Somerset offered this facility to parents/carers to reduce uniform costs.

We would encourage all schools that require students to wear logo-ed uniform to offer this facility as it would offer parents'/carers' greater flexibility to purchase school uniform items from the high street as well as specialised suppliers.

14. Recommendation: Ask schools to consider whether it is appropriate to offer sew on badges in order to offer greater flexibility to parents/carers.

Conclusion

To conclude, we set out to investigate whether school uniforms policies in Bath and North East Somerset were consistent, effective and affordable.

Whilst we have found out that generally schools comply well with the Schools Admission Code there are inconsistencies with the way information about school uniform requirements and costs are communicated to parents/carers. We think communication with parents/carers needs to start early, at open evenings or in prospectuses so that parents/carers know what uniform is required, how much it costs and who they can speak to for further advice. Our focus groups flagged up that some parents/carers felt pressured into purchasing additional extras so that their child does not stand out, early and effective communication could address this.

At pre-school and day nurseries, we found that the majority of schools that responded to our survey did offer a uniform but this was always optional. Despite the uniform being optional, many parents/carers choose to purchase the uniforms as this prevents their own clothes from getting dirty and puts them in the right frame of mind for school.

We also feel it is important that schools make sure that schools continue to provide non-internet based alternatives for purchasing school uniforms and information about uniform policies as this could become a barrier for parents/carers without internet access.

We found some excellent examples of good practice to support families affected by poverty and would encourage all schools to offer a well publicised second-hand exchange and have a key contact for parents/carers to provide support for those who might be struggling with school uniform costs.

Overall, we found that the cost of school uniforms does not appear to be a barrier for parents/carers. We found that other issues e.g. cost of sending children with special educational needs to pre-school through to school trips were more of a concern for parents/carers. This was reflected at pre-school right through to secondary school level.

Above all, we feel that consulting with schools and adopting our school uniform charter will be a useful tool to engage with schools in the future. This may be particularly useful for schools considering moving out local authority control and help to keep tackling child poverty high on the agenda across Bath and North East Somerset.

Next Steps

A summary of this report has been included as an appendix to the Area Assessment of Family Poverty in B&NES which was presented to the Local Strategic Partnership Board in October as part of the Sustainable Community Strategy refresh. This will ensure that the aims of this work are presented to a wider audience of both the Council and its partners to encourage a linked approach to tackling family poverty in Bath and North East Somerset.

This report will be presented to the Children and Young People Overview and Scrutiny Panel on the 22nd November with the response from the Cabinet Member for Children's Services due back at their meeting on the 17th January 2011.

Appendices

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

Appendix 2: Copy of e-mail sent to all Primary and Secondary schools

Appendix 3: Relevant Sections from Schools Admission Code 2010

Appendix 4: Model School Uniform Charter

Appendix 5: References

Appendix 6: Anonymised Summary of Focus Groups

Appendix 1: Terms of Reference

School Uniform Review

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

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 Area Assessment of Family Poverty for B&NES and in turn the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy 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/carers undertaken as part of the Area Assessment for Family Poverty in B&NES.
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 Early Years and Extended Services Team in developing survey/ focus questions for Consultation with schools.
 - analyse the findings from the consultation work undertaken by the Early Years and Extended Services Team/ Area Assessment of Family Poverty team 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 and 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 Area Assessment of Family Poverty for B&NES and Sustainable Community Strategy .

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 September 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/carers 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 Area Assessment of Family Poverty for B&NES by the CPSG ¹¹	Public
20 th Sept 2010	Brief update of findings to CYP Panel	Public
October 2010	workshop to draw together Panel'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/carers from these schools.
- Other Local Authorities to determine best practice approaches to investigation and research.

¹¹ CPSG: Child Poverty Strategy Group consultation work with parents

- The Children's Services Directorate should be included in this review and more specifically the Area Assessment of Family Poverty for B&NES 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/Lauren Rushen
Panel Administrator, Democratic Services	Mark Durnford
Service Officer Support:	Abigail Fielder

Appendix 2: E-mail sent to all Primary and Secondary Schools

Dear Sir/ Madam

The Children & Young People Overview & Scrutiny Panel here at Bath & North East Somerset Council, have just agreed to undertake a review into 'School Uniforms'. This review has been developed 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 has agreed to Commission a Child Poverty Assessment which the findings of this review will feed into.

This review will not be investigating options to provide financial assistance towards the cost of school uniforms, but whether our school uniform Policies/ Policy approaches within schools across the Authority are consistent, fair, effective and affordable. It will also examine whether the cost and impact of school uniform policies are excluding some families/ children when selecting schools.

Part of our research is to investigate the following about your school:-

- 1. a) Do you have a School Uniform Policy? (also including other items such as Bags, Shoes, Summer outfit, school pe-kit)**
 - b) If so why?**
 - c) is it available on line?**
- 2. a) Do you recommend a school uniform supplier?**
- 3. a) Do you provide parents/carers with information about how much uniforms will cost them?**
 - b) Do you provide any assistance to school uniform costs? for example, Do you provide a second hand exchange or subsidised provider?**

The steering group would appreciate any answers that you could provide to the above questions. We will also keep you up to-date with the findings from this review and welcome any further feedback that you feel would benefit our review.

Appendix 3: School Admission Code (2010)

School uniform

Paragraphs 1.73, 1.90 and 1.91 state that:

- 1.73 Governing bodies *should* ensure that their other policies and practices do not disadvantage certain social groups or discourage some groups of parents from seeking a place at the school for their child. Local authorities *should* work with governing bodies (where the governing body is not also the admission authority) to ensure that admission arrangements which appear fair, are not then undermined by other school policies, such as a requirement for expensive school uniform or sportswear, unless arrangements are put in place to ensure that parents on low incomes can afford them.
- 1.90 School uniform plays a valuable role in contributing to the ethos and setting the tone of a school, and the Government strongly encourages schools to consider the introduction of uniforms where they do not already have them. Governing bodies should help limit the expense of uniforms so that parents on low incomes do not feel that the prospective cost of the uniform means that they cannot apply for their preferred school. Governing bodies should ensure that the uniform chosen is widely available in high street shops and other retail outlets and internet suppliers rather than from an expensive sole supplier. They can use their own purchasing power to buy in bulk and pass on savings to parents. Governing bodies should not seek to operate as sole suppliers in order to raise additional funds through the sale of new school uniforms.
- 1.91 All schools which have a uniform policy should have arrangements in place to ensure that no family feels unable to apply for admission on account of high uniform costs. This applies equally to sports kits and any other specialist equipment outlined in the policy. Schemes for remission of cost should cover children eligible for free school meals, and children whose parents are entitled to the maximum level of working tax credit. Schemes should be administered discreetly so that no parent is embarrassed to ask for help. These schemes should be widely publicised and clearly explained in admissions, or other, literature provided by the school.

Appendix 4: Draft School Uniform and PE Kit Charter

We [School] are committed to tackling child poverty in Bath & North East Somerset. To show our commitment, we have signed up to the Bath & North East Somerset school uniform charter which aims to make sure parents/carers know the real costs of school uniforms, facilitate support and source uniforms that are cost effective, durable and practical.

1. We will endeavour to consult with parents/carers about our school uniform to ensure that they are happy with the supply of uniform, durability, affordability and availability.
2. We will consult and inform parents/carers of any proposed changes to our school uniform, offering them the chance to input into changes and allow plenty time to phase in new uniform items.
3. If we choose to have a specialised school supplier, we will work with them to ensure that prices are kept as low as possible
4. Where possible, we will always try to be flexible with our school uniform/PE kit to offer parents/carers freedom of choice to shop around for the best value school uniform/PE kit items e.g. white shirts, grey/black trousers, plain coloured jumpers/blazers that are widely available on the high street
5. When choosing our uniform we will be mindful of less able bodied students and be prepared to adapt our uniform to suit their needs
6. We will make sure that suppliers who offer an online purchasing facility, also allow parents/carers other methods to purchase school uniforms so as not to exclude families who may not have internet access
7. We will make sure information about the costs of our uniforms is available in a variety of formats, written and/or online
8. We will try to make sure that prospective parents/carers can find out the cost of uniforms before their child starts at school e.g. at open evenings, prospectuses or new starter packs to allow parents/carers to effectively budget for their child's schooling.
9. We encourage parents/carers to donate school uniform/PE kit items once they are no longer required
10. We will hold regular second-hand sales or exchanges which will be promoted throughout the school, for all parents/carers
11. We have appointed a dedicated person as our key contact for pupil inclusion for help/advice about school uniform costs. This person is NAME/ROLE/CONTACT DETAILS

Appendix 5: Anonymised Summary of Focus Groups

School Uniform Review (2010) Parent and carer consultation summary

The key issues identified through parent and carer consultation are as follows:

Group	Key issues surrounding affordability	Key comments
Bath; ~8 parents	<p>More than one child to clothe</p> <p>Certain items must be bought from a specialist supplier</p> <p>Alienated by online ordering</p> <p>Inadequate uniform provision for children with additional needs</p> <p>Expensive yet poor quality</p> <p>Redesign of uniform requires whole new uniform</p> <p>Uniform means I don't have to dress my child in the latest fashions</p> <p>Costs extend to PE kit, shoes, trainers</p> <p>Name embroidery limits the opportunity to buy second hand</p> <p>Children are reprimanded for incorrect uniform</p> <p>Uniform practices do not prevent a hierarchy at school</p> <p>Uniform practices are inconsistent and send mixed messages to the parents and children</p> <p>Parents are encouraged to buy 'optional' items</p> <p>Parents feel embarrassed and awkward when they can't provide the correct uniform</p> <p>Parents and children dread Mufti day</p> <p>No parents were aware of funding for uniform (although one was aware of a payment scheme with a uniform supplier)</p> <p>Financial help stigmatises children</p> <p>Uniform cost does not influence which school a child goes to because parents incur costs whichever school they choose</p> <p>Parents are forced to pay 'voluntary contributions'</p> <p>Trip deposits and instalments are too large</p> <p>Food during the school holidays is a massive cost</p>	<p>Uniform just doesn't cater for children with disabilities – they can't pull it up or do the buttons up.</p> <p>If Schools want our children to wear uniform it has to be affordable. It's them that insist on it. I spent £24 in two days on uniform. That's a quarter of my weekly income.</p> <p>I forked out for a whole tracksuit and she never wore it at school.</p> <p>I used to dread Mufti day – and my daughter does too. She didn't go in to school in her own clothes. She didn't feel confident enough because we can't afford nice clothes.</p> <p>There's pressure from other parents and pressure from other children on my son.</p> <p>There's just no help for it (uniform). Or if there is, they don't brag about. They don't brag about it at all. They keep it secret.</p> <p>Uniform's an afterthought. It's more about bus fare.</p> <p>My little one said to me 'not now Mum, but when you can afford it', but when is that?</p> <p>Never, it's just a cycle.</p> <p>You just have to go without to make sure they get it. You just don't pay the phone bill or the lights have got to go out.</p>
<p>Keynsham; ~20 parents</p> <p>(Generally, parents and carers at the group had no</p>	<p>Uniform practices vary depending on the school you go to</p> <p>Schools are petty and should worry about more important issues</p> <p>Uniform could be cheaper than buying other fashionable clothes</p> <p>Uniform does not disguise the fact that some</p>	<p>I don't really think about the cost – I just get it if they need it</p> <p>I didn't spend that much when he started school.</p> <p>Haven't even considered it – many more important things to think about with a baby!</p> <p>To be honest I've not even thought about</p>

experience of buying school uniform. They were not particularly concerned with the cost of prospective uniform, nor did they name uniform affordability as key factor in selecting an Early Years provider or school.)	<p>children are poor</p> <p>Not even thought about uniform</p> <p>More important things to think about than uniform</p> <p>Uniform cost is not a problem</p> <p>Bath is generally wealth and parents are willing to pay for uniform</p> <p>Cost is not a factor</p>	<p>uniform. I've got a 2 month old and a 2 year old and I didn't even realise nurseries or pre-schools had them.</p> <p>You used to be able to tell who the poorer children were by their uniform and you still can now. I don't know whether the children notice though – probably not at primary age.</p> <p>When my husband was at secondary school his mum knitted his jumpers rather than buying them. He wouldn't wear them because you could tell it was cheap!</p> <p>School uniform policies and practices get really petty. It doesn't really matter whether you have a blue jumper with a logo or not. It's not essential.</p>
Radstock; ~12 parents	<p>Uniform cost does not influence which school a child goes to because parents incur costs whichever school they choose</p> <p>Cost is a barrier to out of school activities</p> <p>Deposits and instalments are hefty</p> <p>Forced to pay voluntary contributions</p> <p>Additional costs are also an issue – school trips, deposits, childcare, lunches, bus fares, leavers' proms</p> <p>Some schools arrange regular second hand sales and others suggest you take lost property for free</p> <p>School uniform gets lost and taken by other parents</p> <p>No parents were aware of funding for uniform</p> <p>Freebies stigmatise children</p> <p>Children are humiliated when they don't wear correct uniform</p> <p>Children are reprimanded for incorrect uniform</p> <p>Children look odd if they don't wear optional uniform</p> <p>More than one child to clothe</p> <p>Uniform gets worn out before children grow out of it</p> <p>House colours limit the opportunity to buy second hand uniform</p> <p>Supermarkets have good deals on uniform</p> <p>Expensive yet poor quality</p> <p>Costs extend to PE kit, bookbags etc.</p> <p>Parents varied in their experience of uniform affordability – for some, practices were fair and effective</p>	<p>Not only is uniform expensive, the quality is usually poor. It was alright when we could get it from M&S, but with the suppliers, the sleeves of the jumpers wear away within no time.</p> <p>My child's school is quite lenient really. Some want branded but at his school they don't mind too much, there are more important things.</p> <p>You don't have to get the uniform, but every other child there wears it so your child looks the odd one out if they don't.</p> <p>Uniform doesn't really factor in where I send my child to nursery or school.</p> <p>If you haven't got the PE kit they make you sit out – and if you sit out twice it's an after school detention.</p> <p>It's not the child's fault if they haven't got the right uniform. It's humiliating if they have to borrow kit, like when we had to do it in our pants and vest at school.</p> <p>Bath and North East Somerset don't give you any help for uniform do they.</p> <p>It's so hard to keep track of the uniform and then when you try to find it it's been taken from the lost and found.</p> <p>Most of the uniform I buy ends up in lost property – then it's a free for all. The parents take what's new and just cut the name labels out.</p> <p>I don't trust the parents; they'll take any uniform that looks alright from the lost property.</p> <p>My child's school does organise termly second hand sales, to be fair. They're quite good and all the Mum's go so it's there's no stigma.</p> <p>Welton are actually good with trip instalments. They start them early and so we don't have to pay too much at a time.</p> <p>For me it's at least £5 on transport before anything else – going out and doing things gets expensive.</p>

JobCentre Plus Lone Parent Advisors	Uniform affordability is a real issue and has been noted by other organisations across the Local Strategic Partnership	<p>I have this week alone had 4 lone parents I have seen who have asked re help in buying school uniform!</p> <p>There appears to be no help anywhere with buying new uniform. Primary uniforms appear to be more relaxed with only specific polo shirt and sweater, whereas secondary schools want specific items with logo.</p> <p>An example given to me on Monday was for a Blazer with badge, 2 pairs trousers, shirts, school tie, shoes 2 sets of PE kits in school colours (outside and inside) trainers and football boots and also specific school outdoor jacket totalling over £200!</p> <p>It is an extreme problem for anyone with a child starting school or growing!</p> <p>In my old PTA days we used to organise second hand uniform sales but there doesn't seem to be a lot of schools that operate this.</p>

Appendix 6: Reference List

Legislation and Guidance:

Child Poverty Act 2010 (c.9), London: HMSO

www.opsi.gov.uk/acts/acts2010/ukpga_20100009_en_1 Accessed: 27.09.2010

Department for Children Schools and Families (2009) “*DCSF guidance to schools on school uniform and related policies*” <http://www.teachernet.gov.uk/management/atoz/u/uniform/> Accessed: 27.09.2010

Department for Children Schools and Families (2010) “*Schools Admission Code*” <http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/sacode/> Accessed: 27.09.2010

End Child Poverty (2009) “*End Child Poverty Campaign*”: <http://www.endchildpoverty.org.uk/why-end-child-poverty/child-poverty-act> Accessed 27.09.2010

Previous Research

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