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**Please find attached the report in respect of Item 11 on  
the agenda for the above meeting**

11.	<b>School Clothing and Footwear Grants</b> (Pages 1 - 6)  Consider report by Service Director Children & Young People. (Copy attached.)	10 mins
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## **CLOTHING AND FOOTWEAR GRANT**

**Report by Service Director Children and Young People**

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**SCOTTISH BORDERS COUNCIL**

**24 August 2017**

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### **1 PURPOSE AND SUMMARY**

- 1.1 This report provides background information relating to child poverty rates locally and nationally and seeks approval to increase the Clothing and Footwear Grant, bringing it into line with the national average payment made by Local Authorities.**
- 1.2 Child Poverty statistics in Scotland continue to rise and have an impact upon our children and young people's health, educational attainment, standards of living and opportunities for social inclusion and participation. The Children and Young People's Directorate and a range of strategic partnership groups had already identified tackling the impact of child poverty as a key priority for session 2017/2018 and had started work in this respect.
- 1.3 As part of the above plans and in light of the release of new national statistics relating to school clothing and footwear grants it is proposed that the planned action to look at the cost of uniform and footwear is supported by the immediate proposal to increase the clothing and footwear grant from £45 to £70; providing those families who received their 2017/2018 grant with an additional allocation of £25.
- 1.4 It is also proposed that further 'tackling child poverty' work is carried out as a priority and any budgetary implications are included as part of the budget plans for 2018-19 onwards.

### **2 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1 **I recommend that Council agree the proposals to:**
  - (a) increase the Clothing and Footwear Grant from £45 to £70 with immediate effect**
  - (b) arrange to make the increased payment of £25 to those families who have already received the lower payment at the start of school session 2017/2018**
  - (c) develop policy and guidance relating to tackling child poverty issues for children and young people attending early learning and childcare, primary schools and secondary schools in the Scottish Borders; and**
  - (d) ensure the policy is taken to Council before March 2018 and is considered within the budget setting process for 2018-2020**

### **3 BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1 National Picture- Child Poverty In Scotland**

Information gathered in December 2015 by the Child Poverty Action Group, "End Child Poverty" see appendix 1 identified that 23% of children in Scotland live in poverty (after housing costs). The institute for Fiscal Studies forecasts that this will increase from 1 in 5 children to 1 in 4 children by 2020. In terms of child poverty Scotland ranks about equal with Estonia, Hungary and Portugal and below Poland and the Czech Republic and has significantly higher child poverty rates than countries such as Norway, Finland and Sweden. Two thirds of children in poverty live in families in which at least one adult works. Two parent families are also managing the highest levels of household debt which has risen by 42% since 2013. Contrary to stereotypes, 93% of people receiving out of work benefits are not dependent on drugs or alcohol. All the research supports the analysis that the causes of poverty are structural. Principal causes are unemployment, low wages and insecure terms and conditions of employment such as zero hour's contracts.

Children are considered to be living in poverty if they live in households with less than 60% of median household income. This is the key measure used by the UK and Scottish Government e.g. a lone parent family with two children is living in poverty if they are living on less than £297 per week (after housing costs have been deducted).

The Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland estimate the average cost of school per year is approximately £800 per child and that 71% of parents said that they had struggled with the cost of school.

#### **3.2 The Effects of Child Poverty**

The impact of poverty on children's lives is significant affecting standards of living, quality of life, health, opportunities and educational attainment. For example :

- By age 5 there is a 10 month gap in problem solving development and a 13 month gap in vocabulary in children from low income households compared to higher income households
- 3 year olds in households with incomes below £10,000 are two and a half times more likely to suffer a chronic illness than children in households with incomes above £52,000
- Children in low income households are three times as likely to suffer mental health problems than their affluent peers

There is also a wider cost for society; a 2013 study found that the high levels of child poverty in the UK are costing the country at least £29 billion a year.

There has been a dramatic change in Education policy in Scotland in reducing the 'poverty related attainment gap' in recent years through the "Delivering Excellence and Equity" strategy and the allocation of funds

through the Scottish Attainment Challenge and the Pupil Equity Fund.

### **3.3 Local Picture- Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders**

In the Scottish Borders, the child poverty rate has increased from 11% in 2011 to 21 % in 2016 according to the research reported by the Child Poverty Action Group In Scotland statistics are available by wards (see appendix 1). The Scottish Borders was 15<sup>th</sup> out of 32 Councils in Scotland with a higher child poverty rate than other Councils. These figures when considered within contexts such as fuel poverty , rural accessibility costs ,low wages and high private renting housing costs highlights that there are many children and their families experiencing significant barriers every day in getting children to school and ensuring the children and young people can experience all the learning opportunities on offer in the Scottish Borders.

At a recent Head teacher training day, "Raising Awareness of Child Poverty" Head teachers developed their own awareness and understanding of child poverty and its impact on educational outcomes. They spent time exploring the cost of the school day and examining the impact of poverty-related stigma as a key barrier to the attainment, achievement, participation and inclusion of our children and young people. The Head teachers' responses in the training backed up these recent statistics that 1 in 5 children in the Scottish Borders are affected by poverty on a daily basis. It was concluded that significant work in this area needed to be a priority for action for children and young people services in school session 2017/2018. A paper will be forthcoming to the Education Executive in the Autumn of 2017 which will provide detailed information on feedback from our school and partnership staff with regards to the impact of poverty in schools in the Scottish Borders and a set of recommendations of the actions schools will be expected to take to "poverty proof" their school moving forward.

The Children and Young People's Directorate engaged throughout school session 2016/2017 with the staff involved in the 1 in 5 National Child Poverty programme and subsequent discussions developed at various forums within the Council regarding the development of a strategic approach to tackling Child Poverty in the Scottish Borders: the Community Planning Partnership ,the Reducing Inequalities Delivery Group, the Children and Young People's Planning Group, the Corporate Management Team and the Directorate Management Team. This work will be co-ordinated by the Chair of the Children and Young People's Planning Group and presented to the Education Executive in the Autumn of 2017.

### **3.4 Clothing and Footwear Grants**

Following discussions at the Head teacher training programme on child poverty in June 2017 it became apparent that there was a need to look at the payments currently made to parents and carers to fund clothing as well as consider school policy on uniform and materials to support learning. A commitment was made to do this within school session 2017/2018. The existing school clothing and footwear grant is paid once per child per year and is £45.

At the beginning of the school session information became available which highlighted the range of payments being made across Scotland. This

ranged from £40 to £120. In 2009 a government working group proposed a minimum of £70; which six Councils across Scotland meet. It is proposed that Scottish Borders Council changes the payment to this recommended level with immediate effect giving all those families entitled this year an additional payment of £25 and bringing forward an action that would have been addressed as part of the planned work in the Children and Young People's Strategic Plan for 2017/2018. It is expected that a set of more detailed recommendations will be forthcoming as the "poverty proofing" strategy evolves. A further recommendation is that detailed analysis is completed relating to uniform and school material costs. Policy will then be further developed in this area to remove any possible barriers to inclusion of all children and young people, ensuring the income status of their family is not a barrier to learning.

## **4 IMPLICATIONS**

### **4.1 Financial**

In 2016/2017 Scottish Borders Council paid out approximately 1,397 claims on behalf of 2355 children at £45 per child at a total cost of £ 105,975. The annual cost of an increase from £45 to £70 (based upon the same number of applications) would be £59k. This will be met within the Children and Young People's Directorate budget during 2017/2018.

Further work will be carried out during the budget setting process for 2018 onwards to consider the long term funding plan and a strategy for reviewing the clothing and footwear grant on a regular basis.

### **4.2 Risks and Mitigations**

It is likely with a 'poverty raising awareness programme' that more families are likely to apply for the clothing and footwear grants and costs will increase. The Children and Young People's Planning Group had already identified that further analysis of the impact of child poverty in the Borders and actions to mitigate this impact was a priority for action. The 'strategic approach to tackling child poverty' paper is being co-ordinated by the Children's and Young People's Planning Group Chair, the Service Director for Children and Young People and will examine the implications for Scottish Borders Council and strategic partners within the Community Planning Partnership. These implications will be considered within financial planning processes and cycles.

### **4.3 Equalities**

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out on this proposal and it is anticipated that there are no adverse equality implications

### **5.4 Acting Sustainably**

There are no adverse economic , social or environmental effects of increasing the school clothing and footwear grant from £45 to £70 or in exploring a strategic approach to tackling child poverty in the Scottish Borders

### **4.5 Carbon Management**

There are no effects on carbon emissions

### **4.6 Rural Proofing**

This is not a new or amended policy or strategy affecting rural proofing or rurality.

#### 4.7 **Changes to Scheme of Administration or Scheme of Delegation**

There are no proposed changes to the scheme of Administration as the scheme of Delegation.

### **5 CONSULTATION**

- 5.1 The Chief Financial Officer, the Monitoring Officer, the Chief Legal Officer, the Chief Officer Audit and Risk, the Chief Officer HR and the Clerk to the Council have been consulted and any comments received have been incorporated into the final report.

#### **Approved by**

**Donna Manson**  
**Service Director Children and Young People**

**Signature .....**

#### **Author(s)**

Name	Designation and Contact Number
Donna Manson	01835 726742

#### **Background Papers:**

- Poverty in your area, End Child Poverty, Child Poverty Action Group
- Child Poverty Action Group in Scotland, Series of papers and information available on their website.

**Previous Minute Reference:** N/A

**Note** – You can get this document on tape, in Braille, large print and various computer formats by contacting the address below. [Insert name] can also give information on other language translations as well as providing additional copies.

## Appendix 1

Source: Poverty in Your Area, "End Child Poverty" copyright Child Poverty Action Group 2015

### % of children in poverty October – December 2015

Ward / Local Area	Before Housing Costs	After Housing Costs
Tweeddale West	9.12%	14.78%
Tweeddale East	6.02%	10.01%
Galashiels and District	14.64%	23.61%
Selkirkshire	13.83%	27.17%
Leaderdale and Melrose	8.95%	14.53%
Mid Berwickshire	11.18%	17.93%
East Berwickshire	16.32%	25.64%
Kelso and District	14.54%	23.20%
Jedburgh and District	18.21%	28.04%
Hawick and Denholm	17.92%	28.73%
Hawick and Hermitage	13.66%	21.76%
Scottish Borders	13.11%	21.54%