SCOTLAND
NASUWT
The Teachers' Union

Cross-Party Group on Poverty
Inquiry into poverty and stigma
11 March 2022

1. The NASUWT welcomes the opportunity to comment on the Cross-Party Group on Poverty call for views on poverty-related stigma.

2. The NASUWT — The Teachers' Union — represents teachers and headteachers in Scotland and across the United Kingdom.

3. The Union recognises that poverty-related stigma is a significant challenge and that a national discussion to fully identify the causes and impacts of poverty-related stigma, as well as solutions to it, is overdue.

GENERAL COMMENTS

4. The number of people struggling financially is not insignificant, with over one million people in Scotland living in poverty. Existing socioeconomic inequalities are being exacerbated and entrenched as a result of stigma and shame.

5. The Union agrees that poverty-related stigma can have a range of implications for the kind of support and services people are able to access, how they are viewed and treated by services, the media and the wider public, and how people experiencing poverty see themselves.

6. The NASUWT's evidence is informed directly by serving teacher and headteacher members and also by the work of its representative committees and consultative structures, made up of practising teachers and school leaders working in the education system. As a teachers' trade union, the NASUWT is profoundly concerned about the impact of poverty and poverty-related stigma on the education of children and young people and the need to close the poverty-related attainment gap.

SPECIFIC COMMENTS

Section 1: Impacts of stigma

1) What is the scale and extent of poverty-related stigma in Scotland?

7. Inextricably linked to the level of stigma around poverty is the percentage of the population living in poverty. It is widely recognised that these figures are increasing.

8. The NASUWT provided evidence to the Education and Skills Committee in 2018 to support its inquiry into the impact of experiencing poverty on the attainment and achievement of young people at school, and highlighted that:

'More than 25% (260,000) of Scotland's children are officially recognised as living in poverty, compared to 22% (220,000) in 2014/15. This is a level significantly higher than in many other European countries. Indeed, the recent increase in child poverty is in keeping with independent modelling by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (IFS) which forecasts an increase of more than 50% in the proportion of children living in poverty in the UK by 2020/21: this would reverse most of the decrease in child poverty observed in the UK since the late 1990s'.

9. The Union, in 2018, provided clear and unequivocal advice to the Scottish Government that urgent action was needed to exert sustained downward pressure on poverty and its causes:

'One of the most profound and damaging consequences of child poverty is the impact that it has on pupils' educational attainment, their wider wellbeing and their future life chances. The establishment of a purposeful, coherent and integrated approach across Government policies and practices to tackling child poverty and social exclusion must, therefore, be regarded as a fundamental duty of any Government.

'It is imperative that the Scottish Government takes all possible action within its remit to exert sustained downward pressure on child poverty and its causes. It is welcome that the Scottish Government has recognised that there are steps it can take to exert downward pressure on poverty levels in Scotland in, for example, the Fairer Scotland Action Plan and the recommendations of the Commission on Widening Access. Policy in Scotland sets out clear targets for poverty reduction by 2030. It is important that this area of policy continues to be prioritised by Scottish Ministers. The publication of periodic Child Poverty Delivery Plans offers an important means by which progress towards these targets can be tracked, and all relevant stakeholders, including the NASUWT, can be engaged meaningfully in this work.

'The Union is clear that key to tackling child poverty is:
* *the establishment of an effective statutory and regulatory framework for policy development and implementation;*
* *sustained investment in anti-poverty programmes;*
* *co-ordinated Government policy on education, health and housing; and*
* *a welfare system that supports children and families.'*

10. Where the root causes of poverty have not been addressed sufficiently, and insufficient ownership of this failure has been taken by central government, the onus or responsibility is pushed onto the individuals experiencing poverty. Political rhetoric is no substitute for tangible action to reduce poverty, and where poverty is used as a political football because government has not taken full responsibility for reducing or eradicating it, the narrative naturally shifts from a collective social responsibility to individual blame: it is this dereliction of central responsibility which creates a climate in which stigma and shame are fostered.

2) What are the key impacts of poverty-related stigma on you and/or the people that your organisation works with?

11. Teachers and school leaders are acutely aware that poverty is a key inhibitor of educational progress. The NASUWT has undertaken extensive research into child poverty through studies on the impact of financial hardship on children and young people and the cost of education. Indeed feedback from NASUWT members confirms that teachers continue to pay for items for pupils out of their own pockets. The NASUWT has campaigned to ensure the cost of education is addressed and argued for schools to be given clear statutory guidance on charging policies and curriculum access.

12. Poverty-related stigma creates a further barrier when seeking to mitigate any educational costs: many pupils and families do not wish to disclose financial information to their peers or their school and do not wish to accept targeted interventions which would 'other' them. Ultimately, educational performance suffers as a result of inter alia poverty-related stigma.

3) How does poverty-related stigma impact on communities that are more likely to be affected by poverty?

13. If we look at free school meals (FSM) as an example, the study *Fuelled in School? A nation-wide survey of secondary school pupils' opinion on school meals in Scotland March 2022* considered the views of over 17,000 pupils from almost 200 secondary schools across Scotland and found that:

   'Pupils entitled to free school meals were less likely to eat breakfast regularly (41%, compared to 51% of those no entitled to free school meals).

   'Those who were entitled to free school meals were more likely to eat school meals regularly (48%, compared to 31% of others). However, more than one-fifth of those entitled to free school meals reported that they never ate them (23%).'

14. The data highlighted above illustrates that 41% of pupils entitled to FSM were arriving at school not having eaten breakfast, yet 23% of pupils entitled to FSM never ate them. Reasons impacting take-up included:

   - *7% - I like to eat with my friends;*
   - *7% - I like to get outside of school at lunchtime;*
   - *3% - I like to get out of school in good weather.*

15. The report underlined the importance of social engagement in FSM take-up:

   'Liking the food and being able to eat with friends were the most common reasons for taking a school meal.'

   'Girls were more likely than boys to acknowledge the importance of the "social context" of school meals, with more girls identifying "eating with friends" as the main reason for having a school meal.'

16. While the report has a national overview, it also exposed substantial variation in pupils' experiences across schools, and the NASUWT would support the report's calls for school-level analysis and reflection on the data gathered to further explore local disparities, the impact of poverty-related stigma on take-up and identifying any localised successes in overcoming those barriers.

17. There is no doubt, looking at evidence across a number of studies, that universal FSM has a positive impact on addressing the food insecurity that many households with children continue to face, as well as mitigating against some of the barriers to take-up resulting from poverty-related stigma. The Children North East briefing on FSM, for example, noted:

    'Expanding free school meals to more children can also help to tackle inequalities by decreasing the number of children in low-income families who miss out, and it can reduce stigma associated with the entitlement. More broadly, research shows that when children are hungry at school they miss out on learning'. [1]

18. The advantages to Universal FSM are further espoused in the Department for Education (DfE) *Free school meals pilot: impact report 2012*, which found that:
    • the universal entitlement pilot led to significant increases in attainment for primary school pupils in areas A and B, with pupils in both areas found to make around two months' more progress in Key Stage 2, on average, than pupils in comparison areas;
    • potential explanations for such effects may include the benefits of having a nutritious meal at lunchtime, the social benefits of children eating a meal together (cited in the school case studies)

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[1] https://www.nasuwt.org.uk/static/uploaded/d2702cf0-a3f8-4847-ad1e2bfd49978ec9.pdf

and more positive relationships between parents and the school, for which the case studies found some evidence.

- the effect of the universal entitlement pilot appears to be strongest amongst pupils from less affluent families. This could partly be because school meals provided greater improvements in nutrition over packed lunches for children from less affluent families than for children from more affluent families, because their packed lunches were originally of lower quality. The qualitative case studies described this as a 'levelling effect' associated with all children being offered FSM, with school meals providing a nutritious, balanced meal for all pupils, therefore reducing socio-economic differences in the quality of food eaten at lunchtime. This finding provides some suggestive evidence that universal entitlement to FSM may contribute towards reducing the gap in attainment between pupils from different socio-economic backgrounds.

19. Assurances have been sought from the Scottish Government Support and Wellbeing Unit that they will be working closely with the National Improvement Framework Unit within the Learning Directorate to facilitate policy coherence between the expansion of FSM and the work to close the poverty-related attainment gap. When the pilot of universal FSM in the secondary sector takes place, the NASUWT will continue to advocate for issues of wellbeing, stigma and attainment to be given primacy.

4) Does poverty-related stigma impact on the ways that public services are delivered? If yes, please give examples.

20. While the Union would concur that public bodies should consider the impact of poverty-related stigma within decision making, there is insufficient evidence to show that such criteria are consistently applied.

21. Assessing the impact of poverty is nuanced, as the NASUWT highlighted to the Health, Social Care and Sport Committee during its inquiry into the health and wellbeing of children and young people in Scotland:

'There is no population-wide monitoring of food insecurity in Scotland. Food insecurity has physical and psychological consequences for children. Children who have experienced hunger are more likely to have poorer physical health; they are more likely to have diminished academic, behavioural and social functioning, and negative mental health outcomes. Research shows that children are aware of food insecurity in their families and internalise responsibility for managing food resources to alleviate pressure on their carers. In the UK, it is estimated that food insecurity affects 19.5% of children below the age of 15.'

22. Factors such an awareness of food insecurity and internalised responsibility, alongside stigma resulting from prejudice and stereotyping, will negatively impact the wellbeing of children and young people: it is not only hunger which is detrimental to pupil health and wellbeing.

5) Do particular groups of people living on low incomes (for example women, disabled people, Black and minority ethnic people, young people) experience stigma in different ways? If yes, please give examples.

23. Greater understanding and action around the interaction between mental health and protected characteristics is required. As highlighted above, stigma is strongly linked to health and wellbeing. There are existing institutional barriers facing particular groups, including Black and minority ethnic (BME) young people, accessing support services.

24. The Intercultural Youth Scotland (IYS) draft report on race and mental health specifically calls out the lack of acknowledgement of racial trauma in current services, the trust gap with existing mental health services, and the need for specialised mental health in order to overcome this. The IYS report, which looked specifically at Black and People of Colour (BPoC) children and young people's mental health, advocates for the development of a specialised response to the significant, but hidden, impact of race and racism on mental health, noting:

'Encountering racism and hearing about racism against others had a clear negative impact on many of the children and young people's mental health. This manifested in various ways, including feelings of isolation, hurt, anger, loss of motivation; constant worrying; hypervigilance; unsettlement; and self-doubt.

'Worryingly, most children and young people did not feel they could discuss race and racism and their effect on their mental health with school staff or other adults with authority. Reasons included that they did not feel they had a safe space to do so and that racist incidents were not taken seriously by school staff and other adults.

'BPoC children and young people experience a wide range of barriers to engaging with mental health services, including thinking the problems they face are not serious enough to merit engaging with mental health services; not acknowledging mental health issues until they reached a breaking point; lack of knowledge about available services; and misunderstandings of counselling. Altogether, these barriers reflect the hidden dynamics of structural racism in the mental health sector – the alienation and marginalisation of BPoC children and young people.'

25. The Union has, as a result of representations made to the Scottish Government, ensured that the Mental Health in Schools working group

will look to provide guidance or support around the relationship between race and mental health as a long-term aim. However, there is still an absence of any commitment to immediate action which is necessary to ensure that the Whole-school Approach (WSA) framework published on 24 August 2021 is not perceived as race blind. Ensuring that support is available and relevant to young Black people across Scotland is a challenge we all need to tackle together.

26. A diverse teaching profession is also vital to securing high educational standards and supporting the mental health and wellbeing for all children and young people. The Scottish Government must play its part to support increased employment and skills opportunities and deliver supportive and inclusive workplaces for people from Black communities in Scotland.

27. Looking at specific interventions to support poverty reduction, greater time needs to be spent ensuring these are appropriate for all pupils. The *Fuelled in School?* survey found that:

'There is a need to examine the extent to which school food adequately caters for those with particular dietary requirements and is able to deliver a culturally appropriate offer. It is notable that there are lower levels of school meals consumption and higher levels of dissatisfaction among many of these pupils.

'Several pupils also observed that the school meals environment was not one that was conducive to meeting their needs. • I am autistic and pupils skip in front of me when in line. My parents wish I had a separate line to cater for my needs.'

28. Looking at the societal impact beyond schools, there remains evidence that disabled people face stigmatisation as benefit scroungers which links to increases in disability hate crime.

29. Disabled members confirm that it is becoming increasingly more difficult to get or keep a job, at the same time that the Government has decided to make it even harder to access benefits. Disabled people can, as a result, become increasingly isolated and withdrawn due to stigma. A dramatic narrative change around welfare would be required to destigmatise disabled people.

30. Looking at the experience of women, a 2015 survey by Opinium and Refuge found that as many as one in five women had experienced financial abuse at some point in their lives.[2] Financial abuse can leave women and children with no money for food or clothing. These findings may undermine the Scottish Government's current definition of poverty that, as it is based on income, assumes all individuals benefit equally from the combined household income.

31. The NASUWT has supported the call of the UK Women's Budget Group for an increase in funding for women's organisations, such as refuges, to respond to this increasing demand for safety from violence and abuse. The Union has, in addition to campaigning for the Scottish Government to provide more resources and money for women's welfare groups and helplines, been calling for greater enforcement and compliance with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention 190.

32. Stigma also affects domestic violence survivors who feel shame, guilt or responsibility for being a domestic violence victim. The intersectionality across protected characteristics is important to acknowledge as not only does it affect an individual's likelihood of being in poverty, but it also increases the multitude of individual and societal pressures on their mental health and wellbeing.

33. The Equality Act 2010 and the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) places significant legal responsibilities on all public bodies, including

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[2] Sharp-Jeffs, N. (2015). Money Matters: Research into the Extent and Nature of Financial Abuse within Intimate Relationships in the UK.

the Government, when carrying out their functions. Legislation requires such bodies to have due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it. Independent NASUWT research shows that the majority of schools are unaware of their duties and obligations under the PSED. Without rigorous inspection and enforcement, the PSED will remain largely a tick-box exercise among many public sector employers, who only pay lip service to the legislation and whose commitment to equalities remains tokenistic at best.

34. The Scottish Government should also be meeting its responsibilities under the PSED by collecting and using evidence when developing policies. When undertaking national consultation processes, this should mean that the papers should explain the evidence, issues and potential adverse impact as well as how they plan to mitigate any adverse impact. Respondents to the consultation should be invited to comment on this information as well as any gaps in the evidence base. Unfortunately, in almost all cases, public authorities ask equality impact questions passively expecting others to identify the issues and the evidence.

Section 2: Causes of poverty-related stigma

6) In your view, what is the primary cause of poverty-related stigma?

35. Lack of training, education and information often reinforces existing misconceptions, preconceptions and stereotypes. Equally it militates against individuals and organisations accurately being able to assess socio-economic impact.

36. The principal contribution made by schools in enhancing the wellbeing and life chances of children and young people relates to their work in providing high-quality learning experiences. National strategic action is

being undertaken to ensure race equality, LGBT-inclusive education and the UNCRC being embedded within the Scottish curriculum for excellence. Socio-economic impact must also be considered as part of any national review of teaching and learning.

37. Partnership working is also critical to effective child poverty reduction strategies. It is important that agencies with responsibility for the wellbeing of children and young people are able to collaborate effectively to address poverty, stigma and their causes. Collaborative working has to be supported and facilitated and requires the investment of time and financial resources. Multi-agency working is too often subject to excessive and unjustifiable local variation in the form that collaboration is expected to take, the way that collaborative arrangements are overseen and managed, and the ways in which responsibilities are distributed between different services and agencies. There needs to be a consistent and coherent national approach.

7) What role do you believe the media, including social media, play in causing poverty-related stigma?

38. The NASUWT has first-hand experience of members with protected characteristics experiencing discrimination at work or being severely impacted by the availability of work. There is, however, reluctance on the part of those experiencing poverty or discrimination to tell their stories publicly and identify themselves in the media. It is accepted that this often leaves a vacuum for journalists which can be filled by rumour or speculation.

39. There is also sometimes negativity in the approach adopted by the media to news coverage, which contributes to poverty-related stigma. Too often the messages are highly politicised and focus more on point scoring between parties rather than on the people and communities who will be affected.

40. The need for constant reinvigoration of policy at breakneck speed also hampers the ability of government interventions to alleviate poverty, which, as outlined in paragraph 9, results in a blame culture. As one example, the Education and Skills Committee enquiry into attainment and poverty noted the following:

'The evaluation of the first two years of the Attainment Challenge noted that bureaucracy and tight timescales had been a problem. The programme underspent by 28% across the two years and by 50% in the challenge authorities in year 1. The total allocation from 2015 to 2017 was £51.9m of which £37.2m was spent'.

41. When policies are rushed through at a national level without sufficient thought being given to how they will be implemented across schools and local authorities, it perpetuates negativity in reporting.

8) What role do you believe public figures (politicians, business leaders, celebrities, and others) play in creating and/or perpetuating poverty-related stigma?

42. The NASUWT considers that tackling the root cause of poverty, ensuring public services including the education system are appropriately funded, and increasing humanisation in public discourse around poverty are key targets for public figures and government.

43. It is acknowledged that school funding, for example, is a highly politically charged issue, but to address poverty-related stigma the narrative around austerity and public spending needs to change. It is extremely easy for stakeholders in the education system to perceive inequalities, even injustices, in school funding when comparing different schools or different local authorities, and for this to bleed into narratives of the 'deserving poor'. Regrettably, while core services continue to be cut and support staff removed, sufficiency of funding is not there: not only will inadequate funding fail to deliver the impact

needed to reduce the poverty-related attainment gap, but it will also perpetuate the perception of some people in poverty being less deserving than others.

9) How do public bodies and public services contribute to poverty-related stigma? Please provide examples if possible

44. In 2018, the Scottish Government published its *Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan (2018-22)*, recognising that the risk of child poverty varies between different groups, and identified a number of 'priority groups' from their statistics:

- lone parents: 36% of children in relative poverty;
- disabled: 30% of children in relative poverty;
- 3+ children: 30% of children in relative poverty;
- minority ethnic: 37% of children in relative poverty;
- youngest child aged <1: 32% of children in relative poverty; and
- mothers aged <25: 44% of children in relative poverty.

45. Today, children who are in care are among some of the most vulnerable to poverty in Scotland,[3] but the Scottish Government does not currently include children in care as one of the six priority groups at a higher-than-average risk of poverty.[4] Policy drivers and messaging need to be consistent and coherent. Groups affected by poverty who are overlooked simply creates further marginalisation and isolation: where the impact of poverty is not recognised, stigma and self-doubt will prevail.

46. The NASUWT remains fully supportive of the Scottish Education and Skills Committee findings of its enquiry into child poverty and

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[3] https://digitalpublications.parliament.scot/ResearchBriefings/Report/2021/12/1/a53b6c2d-0d6a-445e-8bd3-413ee081f41b-1
[4] Scottish Government. (2021, June 23). Tackling Child Poverty: Third Year Progress Report 2020-2021.https://www.gov.scot/publications/tackling-child-poverty-third-year-progress-report-2020-2021/

attainment and believes that the implementation of its recommendations would provide a supportive foundation to tackle poverty-related stigma. The report called for:

- better measures to be developed to assess levels of poverty;
- education authorities to review their school practices to ensure they do not discriminate against low-income families;
- the Scottish Government to survey schools to assess the level of charging for school activities;
- schools to poverty proof their uniform policies;
- the Scottish Government to review how pupil equity funding is being used and give more support and guidance to schools on interventions to address poverty and the attainment gap.

10) Are there any other bodies, organisations or individuals that you believe play a role in creating and/or perpetuating poverty-related stigma? If so, please detail.

47. There is a role for education bodies, such as the SQA and Education Scotland, to take the lead in providing advice and modelling approaches to combat poverty-related stigma within the education system. System leaders have not, however, managed to develop such approaches to date and indeed the controversies over the awarding of qualifications in Scotland in 2020, which led to an independent review of the awarding process, was a good illustration of how ill-equipped the education system is in undertaking equality impact assessments.

48. The structures and systems in place across Scottish education cannot be viewed in isolation. There is a significant question to be asked about whether the processes which were put in place to navigate the pandemic generally and, more specifically, to deliver alternative certification created an increased poverty-related attainment gap. Remote learning disadvantaged those who did not have a suitable, quiet study space at home and this concern applies to homework more

broadly. Any impact should always be acknowledged and addressed publicly.

49. There is also a need to ensure that with technological advancement we have an equitable infrastructure including laptops and broadband. This is with the understanding, of course, that technologies should only ever be used as a support for teachers undertaking curriculum and assessment and never as a replacement. Following evidence submitted by the NASUWT, this point was recognised by the Education, Children and Young People Committee in the recommendations of its report, *Impact of Covid-19 on children and young people*:

'The Committee encourages the Scottish Government to ensure that the work to roll out devices to children and young people recognises the wider requirements, as detailed above, to ensure that the policy achieves the desired outcomes and contributes to closing the "digital divide". This wider work should recognise that access to the internet may be more challenging in rural locations'. [5]

50. In many schools there are not enough laptops, and where schools are asking pupils to use their own devices, this creates a two-tier system and undermines work to tackle socio-economic disadvantage. In other authorities where schools have issued each pupil with an iPad, there have been unintended consequences and structural challenges often resulting in pupils and staff feeling it may cause more trouble than it is worth. Teachers and pupils have reported difficulties in accessing the internet both at school and at home, particularly in rural areas where there are often issues of hidden poverty and unreliable mobile data and broadband. Equally, there are knowledge barriers to pupils engaging with technology: often an assumption is made that children and young people will inherently know how to use a device, but this is not always

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[5] https://sp-bpr-en-prod-cdnep.azureedge.net/published/ECYP/2022/2/11/9c0fcf62-e8ea-43ad-a05e-1d214ce00829-1/ECYPS062022R2.pdf

true. Technology, while capable of being a good support in some circumstances, is not a universal quick fix. Austerity has also removed many of the IT-support technician roles from schools, creating further workload burdens for teaching staff.

51. We know that money can make a world of difference. With greater investment in areas of disadvantage, children from the poorest households would benefit from improved facilities within schools, as well as more opportunities to continue learning, including personal and social development, outside the school gates with dedicated funding for play schemes, recreational and youth and community facilities.

52. Given that poverty and disadvantage can have a profound impact on pupils' educational achievement, moving forward, the Scottish Government must adopt an intersectional approach to addressing socio-economic disadvantage which will involve engaging with a large pool of stakeholders including trade unions, such as the NASUWT. Lessons can be learned from the ongoing work of the REAREP and the LGBT Inclusive Education Implementation Group. Intersectional disadvantage is not going away. In the UK today, children from Black communities continue to be affected disproportionately by material disadvantage. The most recent official data shows that BME children are twice as likely to grow up in poverty as their white peers. The right to grow up free from poverty and socio-economic insecurity is one of the most important of children's rights, and the disproportionate impact of poverty on Black children must not be ignored.

Section 3: Tackling and ending stigma

11) What is the key change that can be taken that would help tackle poverty-related stigma?

53. The Union believes it is important that the views of communities directly affected by poverty are sought, and indeed in Scotland, in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, this

includes listening to young people's opinion on matters which concern them. Indeed, there is evidence that this dialogue can positively affect outcomes as highlighted in the Children North East briefing on Free School Meals:

'Some schools were introduced to useful tools such as the EEF Toolkit for the first time. Improved knowledge of pupil/parent issues The difference between what pupils/parents said and what staff said revealed areas of "blindness" where schools were not aware of issues, directly leading to changes being made for the most disadvantaged learners.

'A key conclusion of this evaluation is therefore that it is not necessarily enough for a school to adopt a self-audit of these issues. Whilst this may be an important step towards preparing for the Poverty Proofing audit, in order to begin to raise an awareness of the impacts of a school's practices on pupils living in poverty, the defining feature of this programme is the third party collating of whole school voice'.

54. In addition, a review of Personal and Social Education (PSE) and mental health awareness will need to play an important role in supporting children and staff and reducing stigma.

55. Finally, the Scottish Government should specifically address the cost of education and make provision for regulations which will secure poverty-proofing of the school day.

56. An NASUWT 2016 survey of teachers in Scotland shows that 71% of teachers have seen pupils coming to school hungry; 81% of teachers have seen pupils who do not have the correct equipment for lessons; and 79% of teachers have seen pupils who are lacking in energy/concentration due to eating poorly. In addition, the research showed that teachers are now regularly giving increasing numbers of children money, food, clothes and equipment at their own expense.

Furthermore, there is now more and more evidence emerging that some young people are being forced to reject the subject options they would prefer because their parents would be unable to afford the books, equipment or field trips necessary for the course; 3% of parents say their child had to choose subjects based on equipment costs. Reducing barriers to engagement and adopting universal approaches, as advocated for above with FSM, would also help tackle poverty-related stigma.

12) What changes can the media make to help end poverty-related stigma?

57. The effects on society of the COVID-19 pandemic have been deep and wide-reaching, causing long-lasting issues that will undoubtedly be felt for many years. The NASUWT agrees that there is a real opportunity to achieve a fairer and more equal post-COVID Scotland. Recovery should be understood as a long-term process, given the pandemic's far-reaching impacts. It should also be viewed as an opportunity to tackle deep-rooted structural issues affecting children and young people, in all aspects of their lives, which have been exposed and exacerbated by the pandemic. It must therefore be reported in a different way, one which avoids click-bait headlines and holds political parties and others to account over a longer period.

13) What role can public figures play to help end poverty-related stigma? Please give examples of existing good practice where possible

58. An NASUWT survey earlier this year found that 79% of teachers reported an increase in adverse emotional, personal or social issues in the past year in their pupils. A key issue is publicly recognising the scale of the problem around the health and wellbeing of all children and young people in Scotland, whilst at the same time understanding the

severity of the impact on particular groups of children and young people.

14) What changes can public services and public bodies make to help end poverty-related stigma? Please give examples of existing good practice where possible.

59. Over the last decade, NASUWT members have been reporting a funding crisis in schools. Pre-pandemic teachers were reporting that the underfunding of schools had led to the following extremely detrimental consequences:

- allocations to subject departments in many schools are around half what they were five years ago;

- seniors are being asked to buy books for their courses, or to print resources for the courses they are taking at home;

- in one school, in the last six years, no teacher has been able to go on a training course for which there is a charge;

- class sizes continue to increase, with low-ability sets growing to the stage where pupils cannot receive the individual attention they need;

- off-campus places for children and young people with the most challenging behaviour are impossible to get, other than for looked-after children;

- special school provision in many local authorities has been stripped out;

- children and young people with very challenging behaviour in mainstream settings are failing to receive the support they need and discipline standards are plummeting in classes affected, which impacts on all pupils in these classes;

- large capital purchases in schools, together with the replacement of obsolete or broken equipment in departments such as science, are not being funded;

- practical science lessons are being cancelled because schools cannot afford chemicals and equipment; and

- timetabled senior classes are being cancelled due to 'uneconomic numbers'.

60. Increasing numbers of teachers reported the profound shortage of teachers in many subject areas, with cover and doubling-up of classes masking the teacher shortage.

61. Teachers report that the failures of the school system in providing adequately for vulnerable children and young people, and worsening provision for pupils with additional support needs, are stoking up problems for society in the future, when these children and young people become adults. Provision for violent, autistic or mentally ill pupils is at crisis point.

62. Teachers also report that education cuts are preventing many local authorities from delivering their statutory duty to ensure equity irrespective of socio-economic disadvantage. There is no question that many pupils can only pursue senior courses of study because their families can afford to pay for textbooks and resources.

63. The NASUWT understands the extent to which investment in the economy is not entirely within the gift of the Government. However, investment in key public services which have been devolved to the Government is a policy option which the Government can and should adopt.

64. Public services provide a vital social infrastructure, which means that investment in them benefits the whole of society. In addition to the improvements in services which result from high levels of investment, there are benefits to the wider economy of higher employment and wage levels in schools and other key services, as higher consumer spending would tend to be focused on Scotland's businesses.

Devolved taxation powers give the Government the opportunity for a programme of investment in public services, including the school system and the schools workforce. If austerity in education funding is not replaced by a meaningful programme of investment in the school system, and the schools workforce, it will jeopardise the success of the National Improvement Framework and broader national work to tackle poverty and the stigma associated therein, irrespective of the changes made by the Government when distributing its funding to schools.

65. The Scottish Government also urgently requires an accountability framework so there is a clear audit trail on Scottish Attainment Funding and Pupil Equity Funding (PEF). As part of this assessment, they should be asking how many teachers in relevant schools were aware of PEF, knew how much funding their schools had received, and were engaged in decision making about the use of this funding. To date, the evaluation process has been very top down. PEF is spent at the discretion of the headteacher, so using headteacher responses to identify case studies does not provide a robust quality assurance check. Teacher views need to be sought directly, not only to provide that check and balance, but also to provide the best evidence of whether the funding has made any significant improvement to the classroom experience.

15) What other bodies or organisations do you believe have a responsibility for helping to end poverty-related stigma, and what particular changes can they make?

66. The Scottish Attainment Challenge, and associated PEF, has successfully provided additional targeted resources aimed at tackling the poverty-related attainment gap and further increased awareness politically, socially and within the education sector of the damaging impact of poverty upon children. But while there have been examples of good practice from individual schools utilising the SAC funding streams, these are often isolated, and insufficient opportunity has been

taken to share these successes and facilitate any learning where the results have been disappointing.

67. Measuring something is not the same as improving it. There is considerable variability on the ground between local authorities, schools, and even departments, and a need for increased transparency and accountability. The onus and workload associated with facilitating transparency must lie with the Scottish Government, local authorities and national bodies, not schools and teachers.

68. Any evaluation strategy on tackling poverty and reducing poverty-related stigma must include talking to grass-roots teachers and must not be overly reliant on paper-based feedback from local authorities. A shift in culture is also required whereby a more open and honest national conversation is able to be had about interventions which were not successful, and sharing the learning from those experiences, as well as those which had a more positive outcome.

16) Is there anything else that you would like to tell us in relation to the drivers, impacts and solutions to poverty-related stigma?

69. Tackling the causes of poverty must underpin any education-related intervention. The educational success and wider wellbeing of children and young people is dependent on ensuring that their legitimate rights and entitlements are respected in all aspects of their lives, both within and beyond school. Teachers and school leaders have important roles to play in this respect, but the contribution of families and other agencies with responsibilities for children and young people's care is also critical.

70. The UNCRC confirms that it is a responsibility of the state to ensure that children and young people, as well as having access to an effective education, are safe, secure and able to make a contribution to society and enjoy good physical and mental health. Health, social care,

youth justice and cultural and leisure services, working in partnership with schools, all have a critical part to play to ensure that every child has the best possible start in life, as well as good future life chances. There have been reductions in the resources available to these services and ineffective frameworks for collaboration between them. Critical areas of concern, including child protection and promoting good mental health among young people, depend on a well-funded public service framework.

71. Finally, it is important to emphasise that poverty and stigma affects those in work and can affect members of the teaching community. The experience of teachers on financial hardship and wellbeing issues are taken from findings from the NASUWT Big Question 2021 and Wellbeing 2021 Surveys, which found that:

- 71% of Scottish teachers were worried about their financial situation;
- 31% had cut back on expenditure on food;
- 29% had cut back expenditure on essential household items;
- 16% had increased use of credit cards/pay day loans.

Furthermore, in ranking the factors which had 'adversely affected your mental health', 'Financial Worries' scored highest for Black and Asian women, further underlining the need to examine poverty through an intersectional lens.

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