



Scottish Government 'Community Choices Fund' Project

Your School - You Decide



August 2017

One Parent Families Scotland & Ardenglen Housing Association

Child Poverty Initiative "Reducing the Cost of the School Day": Overview

A recent Community Choices Project, funded by Scottish Government, held its **Participatory Budgeting** event for parents and children from two primary schools in Castlemilk. Over 170 Parents, families and children attended. Parents and children pitched ideas to those attending, on how to use £20,000 to reduce the cost of the school day. The parents from the two groups had been supported by OPFS over a period of months to suggest ideas on how to use £10,000 in their school to reduce the cost of the school day. Parents helped organise the day and took the lead in the activities.

Background

Children in single parent homes are at greater risk of poverty and material deprivation. In Glasgow 40% of households with children are lone parent families, with highest concentrations in areas of greatest deprivation. Parents from minority ethnic groups or with children with special needs or disabilities face additional barriers. There are 26,500 Lone Parent Families in Glasgow, half live in poverty. **In Castlemilk**

- 44% Children live in poverty - 38% higher than the Glasgow average
- LPHH are 54.4 % of families with children - 35% higher than Glasgow average
<http://www.understandingglasgow.com>
- 94% of single parents are mothers
- Average age 34yrs
- The Lone Parent Employment rate in Scotland is 58% but only 49.5% in Glasgow
- Almost half of lone parents report experiencing some type of domestic violence compared with 7.4% of couple families.
- 43% of children in lone parent families live in poverty, compared to 22% of children in couple families.
- **83 per cent** of the loss from the post-2015 UK welfare cuts (£10.7bn a year by 2020-21) can be expected to fall on **families with dependent children**. On average, couples with two or more dependent children lose £1,450 a year while lone parents with two or more lose £1,750 a year. [Sheffield Hallam University](http://www.sheffieldhallam.ac.uk)
- By 2020 Single Parents earning National "Living Wage" will be almost 30% below Minimum Income Standard. <https://t.co/txDMwptofv>



The project combined knowledge from three areas of work to support the project:

- The extra pressures on family budgets caused by the **cost of the school day**;
- Ongoing efforts to tackle the wide-ranging barriers facing **single parents**; and,
- The role that **participatory budgeting** (PB) can play in helping community members shape services to meet local priorities.

The Participatory Budgeting initiative

This Participatory Budgeting initiative was designed by One Parent Families Scotland, with support from Glasgow Centre for Population Health and NHSGCC Health Improvement. The project model originated from a previous EU funding bid which had been developed through the cities Poverty Leadership Panel's Child Poverty Group. It was delivered in partnership with Ardenglen Housing Association.

The idea was a response to research by CPAG on the Cost of the School Day which found that education is free but going to school can be expensive for parents. Things like school trips, uniforms, packed lunches, non-uniform day and breakfast clubs can all mount up and regardless of the amount can be an extra expense that many parents, especially single parents, just can't afford. Information from children finds that they are very aware of the costs of school and often go to great lengths to avoid worrying their parents about these. Some not taking letters home about school trips as they know their parents wouldn't be able to afford it or not turning up to school on non-uniform day as they don't have the same clothes or trainers as their friends. This can be very stressful for children and young people carrying this anxiety, when really we want them enjoying the experience of going to school, getting a good education, having positive friendships and being able to experience every opportunity that comes along. **Parents felt strongly that reducing the impact of the cost of the school day would contribute toward wider policies to reduce the attainment gap.**

The Schools

Both schools in Castlemilk, **John Paul II Primary and Miller Primary** already do a lot to reduce the impact of the cost of the school day but they acknowledged that they could do more and if there were different ways of doing things other than asking the parents to pay or to fundraise then that would be positive. Parents from both schools worked hard to consider ideas that would benefit the whole school rather than just certain children and ideas that could have a lasting impact rather than just reduce the cost for one year.

Ideas from Parents & Children

Both schools decide to allocate some of the money to this **year's school trips for the whole school**. Both schools have children who would not normally go on the annual trip which can vary in cost from £8 to £25 per child. Their plan for this was to pay for every child's trip this year; this takes away any anxiety for a child having to go home and ask for money, possibly having to ask their parents more than once and being asked in class when they are bringing the money in. We know that sometimes children's behaviour can be used as an incentive in school for going on the school trip and that children would rather be badly behaved and have this being the reason for not getting on the trip



rather than having to say their parent can't afford it. The parents felt they would be able to tell from numbers if cost was a barrier to children taking part in the trip and could look at sourcing funding for this in subsequent years. Parents have also as a group been talking about where they can apply for funding to possibly cover coach travel cost etc. and reduce the cost even further.

Another idea was to allocate money to **the annual Book Fayre**. In a school roll of around 200 children approx. 40 buy a book from the book fayre, children will all be brought down by their class teacher but most don't leave with a book. There could be various reasons for this but the parents felt again if they could cover the cost of book for every child they could see if numbers increased but they could also continue this through the year by inviting the children to bring the book back in 3 months for a classroom book swap and having **a book club as a new after-school club** using the books the children had received from the Book Fayre. They also felt this could be combined with World Book Day where parents often feel pressured to spend scarce money on a dressing up outfit for that day at school, perhaps they could make a mask in school of their favourite book character and wear that on the day rather than dressing up. Not only would each child get a book regardless of their ability to pay but a new after-school club meant the children would have something to do after school rather than their parent possibly paying for them to go along to another club.

Castlemilk - Your School You Decide PB Event! [Decision Day](#) (Watch the Video)
Miller & John Paul II Primary School Voting fun day in Maureen Cope Community Hall, Castlemilk.
Saturday 18th March 2017

In total **10 ideas** were pitched by the parents and children to the two school communities at our decision day event on the 18th March, where around 170 people attended and 116 parents, carers and children voted for their favourite ideas. Parents were able to get some money for each idea they had pitched for and were delighted with the outcome on the day.

Miller Primary Ideas

Idea
1) School Trips (£4,500)
2) School Uniforms (£2,500)
3) After-School Clubs (£1000)
4) Book Fayre (£1,000)
5) Computer (1,000)

John Paul II Primary Ideas

Idea
1) Sensory Room (£1,500)
2) School Trips (£2,500)
3) After-School Clubs (£2,000)
4) Mini Bus (£2,000)
5) Playground Art (£2,000)



PB Event - In Conversation

Interviews by David Reilly, Development Manager, [Scottish Community Development Centre](#) & Community Health Exchange

The Adults

Catherine McDonald, Mary Eardly, parents who between them have 6 kids at the John Paul II.

- **Catherine McDonald:** *"I came because I'm really interested in the primary schools, I'm on the parent council and I do a lot of fundraising. It's important to me. I've never been to anything like this before. There could have been more parents but it went well, I think it's gone well. We got a say in deciding what is best for our kids. I pitched for a sensory room which think is really important. It's a small room for children with additional needs, however other children can use it. We can all have a bad day and if a child is feeling like that they can go into the sensory room and I'm living proof that it calms them right down. I did two pitches, I was passionate about them and I'm a qualified teacher so it was no bother. It was quite noisy, an issue for the next time is to make sure that people talking can reach the back."*
- **Mary Eardly** *"I think it went well, there has been a bigger turn out than I thought there would be, which makes it a lot better. People came for the school. It's better when the parents decide, because we know better than the school. We know what helps our kids. The school doesn't really know the children as much as us. Love that the children voted! It's good that children voted, they should be allowed to vote as long as they know what they're voting for."*
- **Catherine McDonald:** *"It affects them, it's their life in school. They know what they want. One of my children uses the sensory and I saw her vote for it. She knows that room helps her. So what I've just pitched for, my daughter agrees with. What a nice feeling. That makes me feel so happy that I'm doing something that's going to affect my own child as well as other children in our school. We should be really thankful for Marie (OPFS) and Fiona (Ardenglen H.A.) for putting in all the hard work to make this happen; they've been phenomenal. I'd love this next year. It's been quite educational going through the process, I've learned a lot."*

Mark Ingram, Miller Primary School, 1 child at school, one to come. Joanna Young, parent and Lorraine Booth Millar Primary Head teacher.

- **Joanne Young** - *"I think it's gone really well, we were a bit nervous about how many people would come along but there were so many parents and lots of children from Miller here today. I wasn't expecting to pitch to a full crowd over a microphone. But other than that everything went as we would be told it would, how it was all explained. I presented on after-school clubs and book club. I last spoke publicly ten years ago in college, I felt nervous as hell. I was relieved when it was finished. Glad there was a child following me because she was definitely the best."*
- **Mark Ingram** - *"I did two pitches. For school trips and school uniforms. I certainly think it's a good idea to have parents up speaking in front of the whole community. It gives parents at the school an idea of the ideas we have going ahead. "This seems actually quite fair. People*



are actually getting to have their say. If they don't like an idea, don't vote for it. It's as plain and simple as that. "

- **Lorraine Booth** - *"It also means it's open to more people. If, as a parent, you have reading issues or dyslexia, sending forms to the school is more difficult. Whereas here you are coming along, hearing it first-hand and then you are literally putting a token in a tin and I think more people are involved because of that." [3 tokens per person, including children, with no age limit].*
- **Joanna Young** - *"There isn't an age limit on a child going to a school so if they go to the school they should have a right to know where the money is going. We don't live in their house, we don't know how to reduce the cost of them going to school - they do. If they need a new school uniform at Christmas but their parents can't afford one, they should be able to say that this is what benefits me rather than us adults who don't live in that environment telling them that's best. Regardless of their age."*
- **Mark Ingram** - *"At the end of the day, it's for the kids – they should have the last say. I've never been to anything like this before but I certainly would in the future."*
- **Lorraine Booth** - *"I think this event can definitely lower the cost of the school day because the ideas parents have come up with are about reducing uniform, school book, trip costs. So even if parents aren't here they will benefit from it. Academically, your after-school clubs helps because children keep learning. In a baking club you are measuring, weighting and working with numbers. In arts and crafts you are using fine motor schools, you're learning new skills."*
- **Joanna Young** - *"The after-school clubs help children learn when they wouldn't maybe be able to at home. Maybe they can't afford ingredients for a cake. They can come to the club and the ingredients are all there. If there's no cost, kids might be more likely to give it ago."*
- **Lorraine Booth** - *"Today children have learned lifelong skills about democracy, that their vote counts. Doing this in a big public way with children and adults together is a really important value. "*
- **Chuck, with his son a pupil at John Paul II Primary** - *"We came to this community funding decision making day to make a decision to benefit our school and have a bit of fun its brilliant today, it's very nice. I wish we could have days like this more often. I've been to events before but not like this. Today is special because it's like a fusion of fun and also community funding. All the projects are good but the majority will carry the day. The mini bus transport for kids during term, the sensory room, afterschool project. There are lots of ideas. For me, transportation is really important because the school are spending so much more on it. It's very nice that children could vote. A lot of times we underestimate children but I can tell you most solemnly that they have minds of their own. They feel very important which is very good for their upbringing. It's great to have them vote, because after all the decision will affect them directly."*



The Children

- **Amy Ingram, P4 in Miller Primary** - *"Today I was telling the people about computers for parent's room. So that parents have a computer to write forms online. I felt excited to stand up and tell everyone. Not nervous at all. I would just vote anyway [if people said I was too young to vote]. You should be able to vote if you're 7 or 8 or under 20! I would want more of these."*
- **Leah Robertson, P4 Miller Primary** - *"I came because it was for my school and my mum wanted to come to see what it was about. We were doing face painting, BBQ, Balloon making and votes. We voted what you want for our school! I thought school trips, books and more school clubs were good ideas. Today was excellent! "*
- **Ryan, P3 Miller Primary** - *"Today was excellent. I liked when we got to choose. It's important that we get to choose. I choose trips, uniforms and afterschool clubs. Today was really good."*
- **Niall Porter, P5, (with Sister Melissa Porter)** - *"I think it's amazing today. I liked the BBQ. I liked voting for school trips. Today was awesome."*

Partner

Fiona McGovern, Ardenglen Housing Association

"Today has been a huge success! I don't think I've seen the hall quite so busy. There are lots of people who haven't been in the hall before who are amazed at the activities that we deliver. We're receiving positive feedback, with two lone parents telling us that they were going to join one of our groups. The other positive is, that through working with the parents for this project we have identified two parents who are our tenants and are interested in getting involved in our management committee. Both massive outcomes and I'm absolutely delighted with that.

There been a bit of curiosity because participatory budgeting is new. We are on the step of trying to change people's mind-set that it's important that they have their say in their community.

I don't think there should be any age limits to voting. We spout about equality so why should we exclude children; the cost of the school reports says that it's those children who are affected most by poverty and so their say should be heard. After all, it's about their future.

Today can make a difference, the parents are thinking of ways to make the money go a bit longer.

For example, for word book day, instead of parents having to pay £12-15 for an outfits, children and parents are going to come into the hall and make outfits together, that'll help with Halloween as well. It's about bringing it back to basics. "

The Participatory Budgeting project was a new initiative for the local community but it was builds on existing programmes which the Housing Association. has been proactive in.



Shared outcomes include:

- Provided opportunities for local parents to have a say in what happens in their local school,
- Provided an effective link between the local community and local democratic processes,
- Increased accessibility of small scale funding to grass roots groups and initiatives, including those that have not been funded previously or recently.
- Encouraged active involvement of parents in ways to reduce the impact of low income in very practical ways

At an individual level, the PB process was utilised to promote empowerment, confidence, pride and aspiration. It was also shown to markedly increase community group membership and wider civic participation among marginalised community members in Castlemilk and single parents in particular. The project challenged the conventional approach, whereby often the voices of the loudest citizens are often most readily heard. It enabled the voices of disadvantaged families, particularly one parent families to be heard, acknowledged and their collective voice, skills and experiences turned into positive local action.

Marion Davis & Marie Spalding

One Parent Families Scotland

100 Wellington Street, Glasgow, G2 6DH

Tel: 0141 847 0444

marion.davis@opfs.org.uk marie.spalding@opfs.org.uk



**One Parent
Families Scotland**

13 Gayfield Square, Edinburgh EH1 3NX

Tel: 0131 556 3899

www.opfs.org.uk

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