

## The minimum cost of education: What does going to school really cost families?



By Georgina Burt, Development Manager (Cost of the School Day) at Child Poverty Action Group

For the last three years through the [UK Cost of the School Day](#) project, [Child Poverty Action Group](#) has been talking to and listening to children and families to understand how poverty affects children's time at school.

What we've heard time and time again is that despite the free state education system, going to school in England involves a lot of hidden costs.

For the first time, we have worked in partnership with the Centre for Research and Social Policy at Loughborough University to calculate what going to school in England is really costing families. Based on the Minimum Income Standard, this research draws out what parents and carers with school-aged children think are the essentials needed to send a child to school in the UK – and the costs associated with these items.

The research showed that school uniform – including P.E. kit and bags, transport to and from school, packed lunches and learning resources such as calculators and revision guides are some of the most costly items that families are required to pay for. Parents and carers in focus groups also agreed that a minimum education includes some fun and social school experiences such as going on a trip, attending a prom or taking part in a non-uniform day.

Taking the list of essential items needed, this research has shown that the minimum cost of sending a child to primary school is **£864.87 a year**, or **£18.69 a week**, and **£1,755.97 a year**, or **£39.01 a week** for a secondary aged child. This means the total cost of meeting a child's minimum educational needs across all 14 years of school is **£18,345.85**.

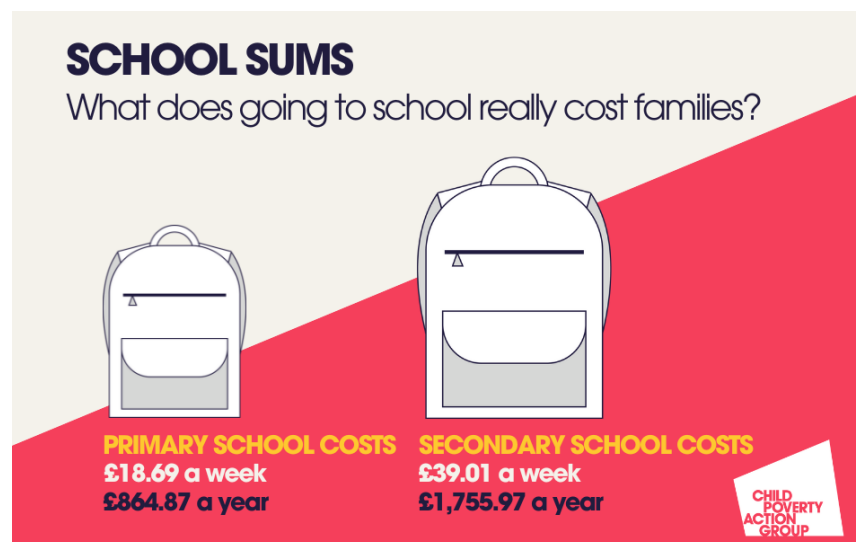
It is important to note that these figures are the minimum costs associated with going to school, detailing only those items that focus groups agreed were necessary. In reality, for children to take part in all that going to school offers the real cost families face can be much higher.

For families experiencing poverty and hardship, these costs are putting households under additional financial pressure. In instances where families are unable to meet these costs children miss out on key parts of the school day, stand out from their peers and find it harder to learn and achieve at school.

We know that lots of schools across England are already poverty-aware and are taking practical steps to support families and bring down school costs. However, it's clear that at a time of rising costs and stretched household budgets families need more support.

Together, we need to do more to acknowledge the costs families face in relation to their child's education and explore what more can be done to ensure that all pupils are able to make the most of their time at school. For schools who are interested in taking action we've developed lots of [practical toolkits and ideas](#).

We do also recognise that schools can't solve this alone, and many are already doing all that they can within the constraints of their budgets and staff capacity to support families.



Alongside the minimum costs, this research also highlights that where you live in the UK makes a difference when it comes to the cost of education.

Families in Scotland and Wales who are eligible for support face lower education costs than equivalent families in England, with greater support available to them through uniform grants, support with curriculum costs and a more generous approach to free schools.

In what is supposed to be a universal childhood experience, this research shows that far more support is needed so all children have the essentials required to take part in school and learn. We are calling on the UK government to lower costs families face by providing free school meals to all children, introducing nationally available uniform grants and providing free bus travel for all children.

The full report is available here: [The minimum cost of education](#).

## Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign Update



*By John Hacking, Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign (GMLWC) Coordinator at GMPA*

### **Celebrate, Learn & Share – Good Employment in the VCSE Sector**

In recent years GMPA has worked alongside colleagues in the GM Growth Company to promote and develop the GM Good Employment Charter which has as one of its key elements the need for Charter members to pay the Real Living Wage (RLW). We're looking forward to advancing this agenda further during GM Good Employment Week, which runs from 19th to 23rd June.

During that week, as the organisation running the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign, GMPA will be delivering an event jointly with Greater Manchester Centre for Voluntary Organisations (GMCVO).

The event is a session for the voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) sector. It will be a great opportunity to celebrate and promote good employment in the VCSE sector.

Good employment includes the provision of secure and flexible work, fair pay, inclusive recruitment practices and opportunities, and more. At the event we will explore the Greater Manchester Good Employment Charter and the Real Living Wage, highlighting the benefits of good employment to employee welfare, organisational performance and creating a more inclusive economy.

The session will also provide a networking opportunity for VCSE organisations to learn from each other and to access industry resources and support. There will also be an opportunity to ask questions about implementing good employment practices and in particular the Real Living Wage at your organisation.

#### **Who should attend?**

- VCSE organisations who have received RLW accreditation and/or Good Employment Charter membership.
- VCSE organisations who want to learn more about RLW accreditation, Good Employment Charter membership or good employment generally.
- Partners from other sectors including commissioners and funders.

The event is on **Friday 23 June**, 2023 from 9:30am to 12:45am at the St Thomas Centre, Ardwick Green North, Manchester, M12 6FZ.

To book a place email: [dawn.seguntoluhi@gmcvo.org.uk](mailto:dawn.seguntoluhi@gmcvo.org.uk)

For further information about the event email [john@gmpovertyaction.org](mailto:john@gmpovertyaction.org)

In other news, at the time of writing, there are **648 accredited Real Living Wage Employers** in Greater Manchester, **up 35** since the last update in March 2023.

We are therefore well on track with the action plan target of 650 accredited employers by the end of 2023.

[Learn more about the Greater Manchester Living Wage Campaign.](#)

# A social safety net to protect people from hardship



By Katie Schmuecker (Principal Policy Advisor) and Graeme Cooke (Director of Evidence and Policy) at Joseph Rowntree Foundation

**Deepening poverty is shrinking people's worlds.** The grinding pressures of not being able to afford essentials leaves people more isolated, impacting on both physical and mental ill-health. This is about money, of course, poverty always is. But it is also about having someone and somewhere to turn to when times are tough.

## A financial safety net

It is beyond doubt that we need to strengthen the financial safety net of our social security system. That's why the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and Trussell Trust, along with over 90 other organisations, are calling for an ['Essentials Guarantee'](#) to be built into Universal Credit (UC). This would legally require the basic rate of UC to never fall below the amount needed for a basket of basic essentials like food, energy, toiletries and cleaning products.

But fixing our national systems isn't enough. This is why we are exploring the idea of a *social* safety net that protects people from hardship by bringing together local support for increasing people's incomes (via income maximisation, welfare assistance and cash-first approaches) with building community power and reshaping services.

## A social safety net

The social safety net operates at the point where the local state and community life meet. It is forged, owned and shaped in neighbourhoods by the local state, civil society, businesses, communities and citizens themselves.

It is rooted in community power and strengthening the capacity and assets of communities to do the genuine preventative work of building networks of human relationships and practical support that protect people from hardship. This incorporates all aspects of community life – people helping each other, clubs and associations, informal and formal voluntary organisations and local businesses – and it can reach parts that the state cannot. It provides the relationships, purpose and connection that make it more likely that life goes well. It also creates the infrastructure that enables people to participate in local decision making and the co-design of services.

But this is not about the state getting out of the way. This work will only succeed where community power meets a like-minded local state. That requires an openness to shifting culture and ethos toward more relational, human centred and no-wrong-door ways of working that support people to get the help they need when they need it. It also requires a commitment to building community wealth and power.

## Knitting it together

There are many local levers to help protect people from hardship. Local welfare assistance and crisis support, income maximisation, primary healthcare, social prescribing and advice services are all essential. We can strengthen the social safety net by reshaping this offer and knitting it with the fabric of neighbourhood life, and the human to human kindness, help and support that exists there. This is happening already in some places, but it's often fragile, partial, thin or disjointed.

Ambitious local areas don't need to wait. Our recent work with [New Local](#) on how places can and are designing out hardship offers a framework to places who want to go further and faster. It shares much in common with GMPA's own excellent work on [local anti-poverty strategies](#).

### **A framework to tackle the most severe forms of hardship locally**

#### Building a strategy and coalition

1. Build learning and reflection into the heart of local action.
2. Develop a galvanising shared agenda to connect and grow local action on the root causes of poverty.

#### Shifting power and redesigning the system

3. Shift power to people and communities with experience of poverty.
4. Redesign services and support to make sure people get the right help at the right time.

#### Creating the conditions for sustainable local change

5. Unlock more stable and long-term funding that incentivises collaborative and coordinated action on poverty.
6. Seek to inform and influence the national policy conversation on poverty.

## What next?

We want to continue to explore the idea of a social safety net, looking at national policy changes that will help create the conditions for it to flourish. In addition, we want to work alongside a few places to test out how to realise, build on and unlock the potential of places to protect people from hardship. We'd love to hear what you think.



## Policy and research updates

**We are providing a summary of the latest news and policy developments to keep you up to date with what is happening across the UK.**

The Extent of Furniture Poverty in the UK uncovers the vast scale of furniture poverty across the country, using original data to show how many people are living without the essential furniture items such as a cooker, a fridge or a bed. It shows that **9% of both adults (4.8m) and children (1.2m) are in furniture poverty**, with 9 million items missing nationwide. [Read more.](#)

**Mental health of half (48%) of people in England and Wales is negatively affected by financial impact of cost-of-living crisis**, rising to nearly three quarters (73%) for those with existing mental health problems. [Read more.](#)

**Poorer households are being left behind in the “broadband slow lane”** despite relying more heavily on the internet at a time of rising prices, risking their future job prospects, a new LGA report reveals. [Read more.](#)

A new survey exploring the impact of the cost-of-living crisis on education staff in the UK has revealed **more than 50 per cent of workers have spent their own earnings on supplies** for the classroom. [Read more.](#)

**Millions of Britons** and around one-in-six Londoners are **looking to change jobs in the next six months** according to new research, in a sign that the UK’s labour market could get even more competitive. [Read more.](#)

New research suggests that **employers are increasingly offering support for their staff to pay household bills** amid the ongoing cost of living crisis. The number of businesses giving increased financial support has risen sharply in the past year, according to a study by jobs site Totaljobs. [Read more.](#)

New analysis of Energy Bills Support Scheme (EBSS) data reveals that in some areas of the country **more than one in twenty payments were not delivered** or vouchers left redeemed. [Read more.](#)

The Resolution Foundation has said that **food prices would continue to rise** even as energy costs are set to fall, with pressures from food inflation exceeding energy prices by the summer. [Read more.](#)

**Pension opt-out searches up 36%** in face cost-of-living crisis. [Read more.](#)

An independent survey commissioned by Chetwood Financial collected insights from over 2,000 UK adults regarding their savings habits and how they are using available financial services to improve their financial well-being. **Two in five (40%) respondents** surveyed reported that they **didn’t have enough money to put away savings** each month. [Read more.](#)

Citizens Advice warned **those on universal credit were six times more likely to have stopped their broadband** in the last 12 months, compared with those who had not received the benefit. [Read more.](#)

**Details have been published of the Labour Party’s policy handbook** which is expected to form a blueprint for the party’s manifesto for the UK’s next general election. The socio-economic duty has been included. [Read more.](#)

## Job opportunity



*Healthy Me Healthy Communities (HMHC)*

**Healthy Me Healthy Communities is a not-for-profit social enterprise founded in 2012 making a positive difference to people’s health, lives and local communities.**

An exciting opportunity has arisen for a skilled, driven and experienced person to lead our income generation work. The Income Generation Manager will be a valuable member of HMHC's Senior Leadership Team, working to deliver the organisation's strategic development plan, secure new income and develop beneficial partnerships.

This is a permanent, full-time role (35 hrs a week, Monday-Friday) which will be home-based with meetings at Gorton (M18 8PE) 2-4 times a month and bi-annual staff events. The salary is £33,901.87.

The application closing date is Thursday 8 June and interviews will be held on Thursday 15 June.

Job description: <https://www.hmhc.co.uk/vacancies>

Online application form: <https://forms.office.com/e/XHcZwVmEqm>



# Upcoming events



## How can different levels of government work together to deliver levelling up?

Wednesday 7 June 2023, 11am-12pm

The government's [Levelling Up the United Kingdom](#) white paper contained ambitious proposals to deliver a devolution deal to every area of England that wants one by 2030, but the proliferation of regional authorities and directly elected mayors across England can make co-operation and co-ordination difficult. This event will consider what structures and ways of working could help support cross-government action on levelling up.

How well have mayoral combined authorities (MCAs) worked with central government? Do mayoral combined authorities need a single point of contact in Whitehall or is it better to work directly with different departments? Have MCAs successfully encouraged cross-council working on levelling up? How have local councils found the experience of working with their MCA? And can further devolution help break down siloed working and policy making?

To explore these questions, the IfG has brought together an expert panel including:

- Councillor Bev Craig, Leader of Manchester City Council
- Professor Francesca Gains, Professor of Public Policy at The University of Manchester
- James Grundy MP, Member of Parliament for Leigh (Greater Manchester)

**The event will be chaired by Thomas Pope, Deputy Chief Economist at the Institute for Government.**

[Learn more and register to attend \(in person or online\).](#)

## New Economy North Social

Wednesday 21 June 2023, 6pm-8:30pm

Join New Economy North (made up of CLES, IPPR North, Neon, MetroPolis and The People's Powerhouse) to explore the outcomes of the local elections, what this means for politics at a regional and local level, what it says about democracy in the England and hear from people with a few thoughts on this. Then add your own.



There will be loads of time for questions and for chat, drinks and snacks with fellow progressive policy bods from across the North. We'll be announcing our exciting speakers over the upcoming weeks.

So, sign up, bring a friend and spread the word.

[Learn more and reserve a spot.](#)

## For more information about Greater Manchester Poverty Action

please visit our [website](#), follow us on [Twitter](#) or visit our [Facebook](#) page.



We want to find new ways of working together, share the network's successes and provide a voice for the people living in poverty in our region but we can only do this with your help and support.

Copies of previous newsletters are available on our [website](#) If you would like to submit an article please [get in touch](#).

NB GMPA does not have full-time dedicated administrative support so please do not expect an immediate response.