

Tackling Child Poverty in Wales



A Good Practice Guide for Schools

The **End Child Poverty Network Cymru** is a coalition of charities and statutory agencies, focused on child and family poverty. Our vision is that no child in Wales should be living in poverty by 2020.

Children in Wales is the national umbrella children's organisation in Wales. Children in Wales aims to promote the interests of and take action to identify and meet the needs of children, young people and their families in Wales.

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Foreword

Like many people reading this Guide, I am very concerned to make sure that we improve the lives of Welsh children. Poverty is something that affects all too many young people in Wales and its affects are dramatic and often last well into adulthood.

This Guide has been produced by a network of agencies and individuals who want to tackle this poverty and it has my full support. It will be of practical use to schools and will help them to be aware of the issues young people face when they live in poverty. The majority of Welsh children spend a great deal of time in school and education is a critical arena in which poverty can be tackled.

This guide will help you to do that. It offers resources and references and a framework for evaluating how you are doing. It is firmly based on the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and contains quotes from children that really make the issues come alive.

I hope that all schools in Wales will use it and become part of the growing network that is determined to end child poverty in Wales.



Peter Clarke
Children's Commissioner for Wales

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Summary

Although levels of child poverty have fallen slightly over recent years Wales still has 27% of children living in poverty⁸ which is approximately 190,000 children. The UK Government and Welsh Assembly Government have both given a commitment to eradicating child poverty in the UK by 2020. This is a massive task which depends not only on governments but on all kinds of organisations and individuals playing their part.

The End Child Poverty Network Cymru is a coalition of charities and statutory agencies, focused on child and family poverty. Our vision is that no child in Wales should be living in poverty by 2020 and we work to achieve:

- Increased public and professional understanding of child poverty in Wales
- Public and professional support for measures to end child poverty
- Policies in place at all levels of government (local, Welsh Assembly and Westminster) which contribute to ending child poverty in Wales

The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, which has been formally adopted by the Welsh Assembly Government, states that education should develop each child's personality and talents to the full and that children have a right to have their human dignity respected.

This Booklet aims to:

- Raise awareness about child poverty among staff in school
- Further the understanding of the contribution that schools can make to the challenging task of improving the educational outcomes of children in poverty
- Provide a checklist that can be used as part of a school's self-assessment process
- Provide references and useful resources
- Help schools to evaluate their own practice and plan for the future

Using this Booklet

- This guidance is written within current government policy and funding frameworks ECPN will continue to lobby for changes to both policy, practice and funding in relation to both child poverty and education
- The main text summarises what we know about the links between child poverty and education
- The document contains quotes from young people in Wales giving their perspective
- Further information is available in text boxes throughout the document as well as on page 22 and includes addresses of relevant organisations
- We have not made separate recommendations for different settings (early years, primary, secondary). There are many common issues, but the actions which are possible will vary from one educational setting to another
- We hope the checklist on page 27 will be a helpful tool for schools to evaluate their own practice and decide on a realistic way forward

Section 1: Introduction

What is poverty?

There is no single, universally accepted standard definition of poverty however the European Union's working definition of poverty is:

'Persons, families and groups of persons whose resources (material, cultural and social) are so limited as to exclude them from the minimum acceptable way of life in the Member State to which they belong'.

This is now a commonly used definition of poverty in the industrialised world. It recognises that poverty is not just about income but about the effective exclusion of people living in poverty from ordinary living patterns, customs and activities. References to child poverty throughout the document refer to young people as well as to children.

Which children are at greatest risk of living in poverty?

UK Government figures⁸ show that the following children are at greatest risk of being poor:

- Children of lone-parent families
- Children in large families (more than three children)
- Children growing up in households where there is no-one in full-time employment
- Children from families of some minority ethnic groups
- Children in households with a disabled child or adult

Although not recorded in the Government's income poverty statistics children of asylum seekers and migrant workers are extremely vulnerable and live on an income far below subsistence levels, often for many years.²⁵

Are children affected by their experience of poverty?

Growing up in poverty is associated with poor outcomes. Poorer children are:

- More likely to be born early and have a lower birth weight^{10, 20}
- Fifteen times more likely to die in a fire at home¹¹
- Five times more likely to die in an accident¹⁶
- Three times more likely to be hit by a car¹⁶
- Ten times more likely to become a teenage mother⁹
- More likely to have higher levels of obesity^{18, 20}
- Less likely to stay on at school⁹
- More likely to have fewer qualifications especially children looked after by Local Authorities⁹

Research carried out in Wales suggests that poor children sometimes miss out because they are needed as carers at home or to work to increase family income.³⁴ They may also be stigmatised because they cannot afford proper school uniform, have free school meals, and are unable to buy essential items like pens and calculators that are needed for school.

“People don’t claim free school meals out of embarrassment. I would let people with money go ahead of me in the queue so they wouldn’t see” 12 year-old boy⁴

Why are schools important in tackling child poverty?

Children and young people spend a considerable amount of their lives in school and the importance of educational achievement for their future prosperity is considerable and well documented. Teachers and other school staff are central in the children and young people’s lives and have a pivotal role to play in their development and their everyday experience of school life.

“You’re stressed, you kick off, you’re kicked out of school. You get no education so you can’t get a decent job and you’re stuck in poverty” Young Person⁴

Many schools in Wales have developed practices which support poorer children without stigmatising them. A joint task group from the Welsh Assembly Government, the Welsh Local Government Association and key education organisations examined the factors which contribute to the gap in performance between schools, particularly those in prosperous and deprived areas. Their report “Narrowing the Gap”³⁷ & ³⁸ found that successful outcomes could be achieved even where school circumstances are challenging and demonstrated that deprivation does not necessarily lead to poor performance.

Although schools in more disadvantaged areas will have many pupils from poorer families there will be very few schools in Wales which are not affected in some way by issues of child poverty.

“Everything you do when you’re young affects you when you’re older – like school-if you don’t do well you’ll end up with a crap job and no money” Young Person⁴



Section 2: Family Income

A study carried out for the Department for Education and Skills⁶ found that the average cost of school per year for one child is £563 in primary, rising to £948 in secondary school. (This includes the cost of lunches, school transport, materials for coursework, trips, photos and contributions to school funds). For low-income families, especially larger families this is a considerable sum.

How can schools help maximise family income?

While schools have no direct influence on family income, they can:

- Develop **partnerships with advice agencies** such as Citizens Advice Cymru who can provide free, confidential advice to help families claim their entitlements and help them resolve legal and financial problems
- Provide information for children and families about **school uniform grants**. The Welsh Assembly Government has introduced a grant scheme for the purchase of school uniform. The grant of £85 will be available to pupils in Wales who are eligible for free school meals and aged 11 at the start of the 2005/06 school year. Some Local Authorities also provide grants but eligibility and availability vary
- Consider **the financial impact of choosing a particular school uniform** as some parents face real hardship when purchasing school uniform for their children. Welsh Assembly Guidance on school uniform policy highlights the importance of:
 - Having a simple colour school uniform that can be bought from a variety of local stores so that parents can shop around and avoiding high cost items like blazers and caps
 - Indicating in the school kit list when items are required so that parents will not have to buy all the items at once
 - Avoiding using logos on all items of the uniform as this can be costly – limit logos to just one item or do not have them
 - Avoiding variation in colours for different year groups and frequent uniform changes as this can be expensive for parents

“...at our old school we used to just have black trousers, a black jumper and a white shirt because that was easy. We’ve talked to the teachers about it and like I say it’s easy because you can buy a pair of black trousers just about anywhere, from like maybe the cheaper shops, even charity shops like but I know like at Rebecca’s school you have to go to a special shop to get yours and then it’s hard” 16 year-old girl³⁹

- Provide information about the Welsh Assembly Government’s **Education Maintenance Allowances** for students who decide to stay on at school or college <http://www.emawales.gov.uk/portal/page?pageid=1464,1&dad=portal&schema=PROTOCO> and **Assembly Learning Grants** for students undertaking further education or higher education undergraduate courses <http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/alg/intro-e.htm>

“Another thing, when you go to secondary school and you are staying on you can buy this revision guide for £3.50 and it tells you everything you know about your GCSEs and what you need to know. Some people can’t afford to keep buying all these like guides when you have got say ten different subjects and you have to buy a couple of books for each one. It doesn’t come cheap.” Young Person³⁹

- Increase the uptake of **free school meals** by providing information about entitlement and availability and by introducing non-stigmatising provision, eg, swipe card systems. (Many children entitled to free school meals do not claim them due to fear of stigma and bullying)³¹

“I don’t because I realised when I was in Year 7 that the people who got free school meals were teasedI couldn’t handle that as I was already getting teased enough so I don’t get free school meals” 17 year-old girl²⁶

- **Find non-stigmatising ways to subsidise the cost of trips, activities and essential equipment.** Generally, activities that take place mainly or wholly in school hours must be free. Schools may invite voluntary contributions but all requests must make it clear that they would be voluntary. If no contribution is made the child should not be treated any differently

How can schools help their pupils make informed financial decisions?

Financial Literacy provides the foundation for enabling young people to make informed financial decisions that can help protect them from the experience of poverty when they are adults. This is particularly important for young people who are pushed into financial ‘independence’ at an early age because of the experience of being in care or because of family circumstances. **Personal finance education** may be delivered within the Framework for Personal and Social Education (PSE) published by ACCAC.

Sessions on Financial Literacy are available from a number of Citizens Advice Bureaux in Wales and your local CAB may be able to help with drawing up appropriate lesson plans or to deliver practical sessions in your schools on the basic essentials of financial knowledge that young people need today and in planning for the future.

The **Personal Finance Education Group**, otherwise known as pfeg (<http://www.pfeg.org/>) supports UK teachers working with children and young people aged 4 to 19 and aims to make sure that all young people leaving school have the confidence, skills and knowledge in financial matters to take part fully in society. Schools should be able to draw on their resources and materials in looking to deliver financial literacy education.

Materials to support financial literacy are provided by the Basic Skills Agency <http://www.money-bsa.org.uk/site/page.php?cms=8>. The Welsh Consumer Council website also has information and materials to download for teachers and pupils relating to consumer education and citizenship education <http://www.consumereducation.org.uk/indexeng.htm>

Section 3: Health and Wellbeing

Health has substantially improved in recent decades but unfortunately inequalities have widened and improvements in health have been relatively small in the more disadvantaged groups.¹⁰ Recent statistics²⁰ reveal that determinants of health that are related to lifestyle vary with deprivation. Smoking, the leading cause of death and avoidable illness in the UK, is two-thirds higher among adult residents in more deprived areas. Physical inactivity is also twice as common and obesity one and half times more common in deprived areas. This latter finding is also backed up by research commissioned by the Department for Health.¹⁸

Poorer families often struggle to give their children a healthy diet due to low income, lack of access to reasonably priced shops, or inadequate knowledge and information about healthy eating.²³ Research has also shown that parents may be under particular pressure during the school holidays because of the absence of free school meals.¹⁵ The food budget is often the only flexible part of the family budget and suffers if there is an unexpected expense.

How can schools help to support better nutrition?

- **Providing breakfast free** may have a positive impact on punctuality and attendance in school as well as on health and concentration. (From September 2006 all primary schools will have the opportunity to participate in the Welsh Assembly Government's free school breakfast scheme.) However, schools need to ensure that schemes are run in a way which makes them easily accessible for poorer children, for example, is school transport flexible to get the children to school in time? The breakfast time should be an enjoyable experience in order to attract the children to attend



“Apples keep you healthy but it’s expensive to have apples” Young child⁴

- **Making school dinners healthy and appealing** and encouraging more children and young people to stay for dinners could have a major impact on children’s health and wellbeing. For many children from low-income families the free school meal is their main meal of the day. Developing children and young people’s knowledge about nutrition and their cooking skills will have lasting benefits. Involving them in choosing dinner menus at school can help to motivate them to eat the meals.
- **Developing a whole school approach to health** possibly through the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes, a Welsh Assembly Government initiative which aims to encourage schools to develop a whole school approach to health. Co-ordinators help schools to identify what they need to do to become healthier and help them implement the action. Schools involved in the scheme will look at a whole range of issues, not just food and fitness.

- Provide information on the Welsh Assembly Government's **free swimming in the school holidays** for children and young people aged 16 and under.

Further information on the **Assembly's Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative** is available on the Assembly's website at <http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/breakfast/whats-new-e.htm> or contact the Assembly's Primary School Free Breakfast Initiative Mailbox: Breakfastinfo@wales.gsi.gov.uk)

Think Healthy Vending – Assembly Guidance on Vending Machines in Schools provides advice for healthy schools officers, dieticians, school caterers, Headteachers, teachers and governors on vending machines in schools. <http://www.cmo.wales.gov.uk/content/work/schools/vend-book-eng.pdf>

The Assembly has produced a Circular '**Nutritional Standards for School Lunches**', which provides advice for schools on the statutory nutritional standards required for school lunches.

"Recipe for Change: A good practice guide to school meals", Edited by Carrieanne Hurley and Ashley Riley includes many practical ideas that school meal providers can adapt for use in their own community. CPAG, Dept WS, 94 White Lion Street, London N1 9PF, email enquiries to book.orders@cpag.org.uk

Network of Healthy School Schemes have produced a report '**Possible School Activities**' which outlines a number of ideas, which schools could consider as part of their health promotion work ([http://www.hpw.wales.gov.uk/English/topics/healthpromotingschools/schools_htm/BS%20WNHSS%20\(E\)1a.pdf](http://www.hpw.wales.gov.uk/English/topics/healthpromotingschools/schools_htm/BS%20WNHSS%20(E)1a.pdf)). A health promotion web-site produced by the Health Promotion Division of the Welsh Assembly Government www.cmo.wales.gov.uk has activities and information to download as well as resources and information to help with lesson planning (including printable worksheets). It also has some key reports and papers relevant to school based health promotion.

More information on the free swimming initiative and where children can swim for free is on the Assembly's website at <http://www.wales.gov.uk/subculture/content/swim/index-e.htm>.

How can schools help improve children's emotional wellbeing and mental health?

Living in poverty can increase the stress levels on family members which can in turn result in less support and preparation for academic work and higher levels of adolescent mental health problems. Schools have a vital role in promoting children's mental health, making sure that mental health problems are recognised early and that children can access help and support.

Many schools are now beginning to take a whole-school approach to emotional literacy as well as the other core skills in the curriculum. Improving a school's emotional environment can have an impact on learning, well-being and behaviour. Emotional literacy is about how people interact with each other in a way that builds understanding of their own and others' emotions, then using this understanding to affect their actions. Young people need support to understand what they are feeling, there needs to be an emphasis on developing good relationships between teachers and their pupils and between pupils. Children can be encouraged to express thoughts and emotions, to respond to each other, work together cooperatively and be supported to resolve conflicts amicably.

"If my dad wants money and my mum hasn't got any, they argue" Young Person⁴

PATHS is a school based programme for the 7 – 11 age group which focuses on self-control, emotional understanding and problem solving.

www.channing.bete.com/positiveyouth/pages/PATHS/PATHS.html. Although an American programme it is being used in the UK including by the Local Health Board in Flintshire.

The **Incredible Years Dina Dinosaur Classroom Curriculum** is also helpful in building emotional literacy in the early years. There is a classroom version for the whole class which runs through the three years of key stage one. www.incredibleyears.wales.co.uk

Antidote provides information and training on how schools can use emotional literacy and provide emotional literacy audits. The School Emotional Environment for Learning Survey SEELS, a research-validated tool can enable schools to identify areas of strength to build on, and areas that need to be addressed. <http://www.antidote.org.uk/index.htm>

The Welsh Assembly Government will be producing Guidance for schools and LEAs on how to promote mental health among pupils and recognise and deal with more advanced mental health problems in the autumn.

“I worry about my mum and if she’s like unhappy and stuff like that. Sometimes I worry about if we haven’t got enough money, I worry about that.” 15 year-old girl²⁶

How can schools recognise and support children and young people who have experienced domestic abuse?

In every school in Wales there are children experiencing or who have experienced domestic abuse, which can affect their ability to concentrate and have long-term consequences. Domestic abuse can ultimately result in families becoming homeless and living in temporary housing or shelters. Recent statistics on homelessness reveal that 16 per cent occurred because of violence against members of the household, mostly arising from the violent breakdown of a relationship with a former partner.²¹ Schools can tackle the issue of domestic abuse in PSE work to help change attitudes and provide support for those suffering domestic abuse.

“It (domestic abuse) just takes over I couldn’t concentrate, I was always worried about my mum....” Young Person³⁵

The Welsh Assembly Government ‘**Good Practice on Domestic Abuse**’ contains indicators to help schools identify children that may be experiencing domestic abuse at home. It also explores how schools can meet the needs of children experiencing abuse and how the issue can be tackled in PSE. They have produced a leaflet for children ‘**Is this happening to you?**’ to be used as an additional resource. Copies of both items and posters are available from the Assembly.

Section 4: Helping poorer children to succeed at school

While some low-income children do very well at school, in general there are clear links between poverty and lack of attainment.⁹ This leads to reduced employment prospects and a cycle of disadvantage. Poor children tend to become poor adults.

- The rate for both boys and girls leaving school without qualifications has improved in Wales but is still the highest in the UK²
- Children from unskilled backgrounds are one third as likely to get five good GCSE's and five times less likely to go on to further or higher education than children from more affluent families⁹
- Recent research¹ has shown that social mobility has declined, rather than improved in Britain since 1997. Researchers concluded that the link between educational attainment and social mobility was central to this low social mobility

“You need encouragement ~ someone behind youthe love of your family, advice and helpso you can believe you can do it” Young Person⁴



There are a number of reasons why poorer children do not do as well as they should:

- Lack of material resources (see section 1), space and support to complete their homework and limited income can restrict access to activities and services and the everyday activities and opportunities of their peers
- Living in overcrowded and inadequate housing²⁵
- Potentially less parental involvement in education, influenced by the parents' own experience of education and levels of qualifications. One key factor affecting a child's attainment is having a mother with good educational qualifications¹³
- Expectations and influence of the child's peer group
- The impact of stigma, bullying and not feeling respected
- Strains on family life caused by living in poverty. For some children, stresses at home lead to emotional or behavioural difficulties and an increased risk of non-attendance or exclusion
- Higher levels of special educational needs²⁵
- Living in a deprived area is associated with poor educational attainment⁹
- At secondary age, school being seen as boring and irrelevant
- There is an increased likelihood of them becoming a parent at an early age⁹ and failing to complete their education as a result
- In the introduction to this document we identified the children most likely to be poor. These children are also vulnerable to underachievement and poor educational experiences and specific action may need to be targeted at them. These groups are examined in more detail under point ten on page 18

What helps poorer children to succeed?

1. **“Narrowing the Gap”**³⁷ found that successful outcomes could be achieved even where school circumstances are challenging and demonstrated that deprivation does not necessarily lead to poor performance. The report identified the following characteristics of better – performing secondary schools:
 - Belief in continuous improvement
 - Support from the LEA through long-term targeted funding, value-added attainment data, staff training and benchmarked data
 - Community focus and good links with other agencies, voluntary and community groups
 - Customer listening (to learners and their families and communities)
 - Effective planning and communication with a sharp focus on priorities and efficient use of time
 - Committed leadership and strong management
 - Being part of a broader strategy of community regeneration

Phase two of the study³⁸ has examined practice in a range of primary schools across Wales which are successful in difficult circumstances. These schools were characterised by strong leadership; a positive mindset; an effective teaching team; the engagement and commitment of pupils and their parents; efficient and effective organization and management and support from all those connected with the school.

2. **Early Years provision**⁷ has a crucial role in improving outcomes for children and it is well documented that children’s earliest experiences have a real influence on their achievements as they grow up. Initiatives such as Sure Start have been designed to give disadvantaged children better opportunities from an early age, but these are not available in every area. Many children and parents need ongoing support to help them maintain early gains.
3. **Educational Programmes** have been designed to help disadvantaged children to catch up with their peers. Those with good evidence of success include Highscope, CASE and Catch Up (Dyfal Donc). In addition, schools that effectively support poor children are characterised by a culture that recognises achievement in areas outside the academic curriculum. This includes the transfer of “soft skills” (social skills, emotional intelligence, independent living skills). Highscope research in the US showed that the benefits could last into adulthood, with positive effects on relationships as well as better employment and reduced likelihood of offending.²⁸

For more information about CASE (**Cognitive Acceleration in Science Education**) see www.kcl.ac.uk/depsta/education/case.html. The **Catch Up (Dyfal Donc) Primary School Programme** is available in Welsh and English and is effective in training teachers and learning assistants to deliver literacy programmes effectively. www.catchup.org.uk

ContinYou support and promote out-of-hours activities through programmes, such as breakfast clubs and citizenship awards.

4. **High but realistic expectations from teachers** can influence the ambitions of children, eg, seeing further or higher education as a realistic goal.

5. **Admissions policies** which produce a good social mix can raise standards across the board. In a pilot study researchers found that if children from middle-class backgrounds attend school predominantly with children from the same background they will do less well than if the school has a social mix.¹⁷ The same applies for children from deprived homes who attend school alongside children in similar circumstances.¹⁷
6. **Starting a Homework Club** gives children who do not have space, facilities or assistance at home the support they need to do their homework.
7. **Whole-School approaches to Participation and Inclusion**
We know from disadvantaged children and young people that it is not just the material aspects of poverty which cause damage but also the feelings of isolation, and of not being respected and valued. Approaches which model respect for children from diverse backgrounds and which involve pupils in decisions about matters which affect them, can help to foster motivation and enjoyment of learning. Young people also want teachers who understand their situations and try to help them resolve problems.

“Teachers being more understanding and more willing to talk to you to sort out problems” Young Person responding to NCH consultation on pupil support and inclusion

School Councils are one element of pupil participation but they can be seen as being tokenistic if they are not part of a general ethos of involving pupils in the life of the school. In order for all pupils to have access to the School Council elected representatives should meet only after proper discussion in classes. Examples of participation include: involving pupils in the development of school policies around equality, behaviour, bullying; involving pupils in staff recruitment; peer support, mediation projects and peer mentoring. The most disadvantaged children may need the most encouragement to participate.

The Assembly has issued guidance and the **Disability Rights Commission (DRC)** has produced a **‘Code of Practice for Schools’**, which explains the new legal duties of schools not to discriminate against disabled children. <http://www.drcgb.org/publicationsandreports/pubseducation.asp>

The **Commission for Racial Equality** has produced **‘A Guide for Schools’** to help schools meet their duties under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000. It can be downloaded at http://cre.sitekit.net/publs/cat_duty.html

ACCAC has curriculum guidance, **‘Equal Opportunities and Diversity in the School Curriculum Wales’** which outlines ways of promoting equal opportunities across the curriculum.

‘Index for Inclusion’ published by the Centre for Studies on Inclusive Education (2003) contains a set of materials to help schools identify and remove barriers to learning and participation. <http://inclusion.uwe.ac.uk/csie/indexlaunch.htm>

The School Council: A children’s guide - is a comprehensive step-by-step guide, produced by Save the Children to develop and maintain a school council. It provides case study material; ideas for elections; meetings; and information on roles and responsibilities.

The NSPCC has produced a guide for schools **‘Peer Mediation in the UK: A Guide for Schools’** <http://www.nspcc.org.uk/inform/Downloads/PeerMediationInTheUK.pdf>.

The Welsh Assembly Government has made regulations requiring the establishment of school councils in all maintained junior, secondary and special schools in Wales which must be implemented by November 2006. It is anticipated that guidance will be issued in Spring 2006.

The Welsh Assembly Government has developed Guidance to schools and LEAs on Inclusion and Pupil Support, which is due out in Spring 2006.

8. Effective measures to deal with bullying

Children with any characteristics which mark them out as “different” from the majority can be subject to bullying, prejudice and discrimination, either on a personal or institutional level. Large numbers of children highlighted to the Children’s Commissioner for Wales that bullying was their most pressing concern.³ Handled insensitively, free school meals and not having the proper school uniform can be flash points for bullying.

“Let’s say what happens in our school if you haven’t got the right sort of shoes, you get bullied or called names and that. That’s why we don’t wear trainers any more. [But] even with shoes they will say the same. If you don’t wear like [brand name] they are like snide” Young person³⁹

Studies done by Save the Children⁴ and the Welsh Child Poverty Task Group³⁴, looking at poverty from a child’s perspective, found that children reported feeling bullied, isolated and left out. Staff need to be aware of the stigma children and young people feel in respect of poverty and the impact this has on their experience at school. Other groups, such as disabled children, Looked After Children, Gypsy/Travellers and children from minority ethnic groups, are also vulnerable to bullying. This can lead to school refusal or underachievement. Children and young people feel strongly that schools should do more to tackle bullying.

“The big boys annoy me and tease me because I’m special needs. They are a pain” Young person³³

The Welsh Assembly Government are supporting schools to develop policies in relation to their anti-bullying guidance ‘**Respecting Others**’. The Assembly is also putting together a Welsh Anti-Bullying Network to coordinate efforts to combat bullying.

(<http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/circulars/c2303-respecting-others-e.pdf>).

The **Anti-Bullying Alliance** which is backed by the DfES has details of helplines, downloadable materials including lessons and assembly plans. www.anti-bullyingalliance.org

CHIPS (ChildLine in Partnership with Schools) offers training & information for staff and pupils to set up peer support schemes as well as information on all issues, including bullying awareness, that affect pupils’ wellbeing in Wales. For further information contact mrees@childline.org.uk Tel. 0207 650 6883

Beatbullying provide professionals with anti-bullying tool kits and produce paper and electronic publications, resources and educational materials, e-mentoring and e-learning schemes co designed by and for young people. <http://www.beatbullying.org/>

9. Effective measures to deal with school disaffection and truancy

Children who are excluded from school are vulnerable to social exclusion,³⁴ offending³² and educational underachievement³⁶ which may increase the risk of poverty in adult life. Vulnerable groups, such as children in the care system, some minority ethnic groups, and children with special educational needs, are overrepresented in school exclusions.⁹ Effective solutions for school disaffection are therefore important in combating poverty. Despite the correlation between absenteeism and deprivation, there is considerable variation between local authorities,²² so school policies can have an impact. Truancy rates also correlate with social class and with unemployment among parents.³⁴ Truancy is linked with poor academic achievement¹³ which may lead to further disengagement, isolation and homelessness.

The most widely used strategies in the UK to foster motivation in pupils at risk of disengagement are individual education/behaviour plans, home-school dialogue, emotional literacy activities and reward systems. Youth workers and social work trained support workers based in secondary schools have been shown to make a difference.³² Transition projects, which support children moving into secondary school, have had promising feedback from school staff.²⁴ The Welsh Assembly Government has funded various pilot schemes across Wales which attempt to tackle disaffection. Examples include the “Dinosaur schools” programme in primary schools in Gwynedd; school-based behavioural and pastoral teams in Ceredigion; nurture groups in Pembrokeshire; alternative curriculum support in the Vale of Glamorgan; additional support for Looked after children; counselling and mentoring to address children’s emotional, social and educational needs in Torfaen and “Skill Force” which applies an Armed Forces approach to discipline and outdoor pursuits. Further information is available on the Assembly’s website.

“..... cos sometimes people do wag school cos their parents don’t get a job, it makes them feel depressed and angry and it’s not only the parents.” 15 year-old boy³⁹

Teachers cannot always be aware of children’s home circumstances, but they can talk to pupils and parents and signpost them to appropriate agencies if they need support services. Schools need to be part of a closely linked network of statutory agencies, voluntary and community groups which can intervene at an early stage to support troubled pupils and their families. The changes to the curriculum for 14 to 19 year olds may have the potential to combat disaffection by making the curriculum more relevant if properly resourced. It is important that any alternative curriculum still leads to qualifications.

INCLUDE is a charity dedicated to tackling social exclusion among young people through a combination of multi-agency working, individual support for the young person and engagement with the family and wider community. <http://www.include.org.uk/> Other voluntary organizations also provide this type of support.

The Welsh Assembly Government has developed Guidance to schools and LEAs on Inclusion and Pupil Support which is due out in Spring 2006.

10. **Additional support for vulnerable groups**

- **Minority ethnic children** - A report by English as an Additional Language Association in Wales¹² showed that minority ethnic pupils in Wales had lower attainment than the national average, but that there was great variation. Indian pupils had the highest attainment and Yemeni and Somali pupils the lowest. Family income was a significant factor, along with parental level of education, level of proficiency in English, racism and discrimination, cultural factors, prolonged absences and the knowledge and confidence of teachers
- **Asylum seeking children** not only face living on an income far below subsistence levels²⁵ they also have the additional pressures of past trauma and uncertainty about their futures²⁷
- **Disabled children** – are more likely to be living in poverty and may also face problems with access, inclusion and lack of appropriate equipment.²⁵ Many disabled children leave school without qualifications, which impacts on their future employment prospects
- **Gypsy/Traveller children** have the lowest attainment of any group and high rates of exclusion.⁹ Frequent moves, parental attitudes to formal education and lack of understanding of their culture by schools are some of the obstacles they face¹⁴
- **Young carers** have responsibilities at home which can make them late for school, unable to complete homework, or anxious about home when they are in school
- **Children in the care system** may have had frequent moves, and may be lacking in confidence and motivation because of their circumstances. They are at high risk of underachievement and exclusion⁹
- **Teenage pregnancy** is associated with an increased risk of poor social, economic and health outcomes for both mother and child⁹. Teenage parents may find it much easier to drop out of education than to juggle parenting and academic work, unless they have the right kind of support, including appropriate childcare

Guidance and further information relating to the groups listed above is available from the Welsh Assembly Government in Guidance being developed for schools and LEAs on Inclusion and Pupil Support which is due out in Spring 2006. It includes guidance on the education of young parents.

- **Children in temporary accommodation** may have had frequent moves. Research by Shelter showed that children in temporary accommodation had missed an average of 55 days of school over a year¹⁹. Children described the problems they faced moving homes and making new friends and being bullied. Shelter Cymru³⁰ estimates that 20,000 children in Wales are living in poor housing which can lead to bad health and poor social and educational development.²⁵ Due to the lack of space, poor conditions and overcrowding these children often do not have a quiet place to do homework, can experience emotional stress, insecurity and isolation, and may, for example, have their sleep disrupted by other family members

“...for four months we didn’t go to school, we went to six houses, no seven houses and six new schools;] don’t like moving because every time I make new friends and then I have to move again and again and again.” 10 year-old girl¹⁹

Shelter Cymru has produced the “**Housemate**” pack which is available free to all secondary schools in Wales. It contains materials to photocopy aimed at the PSE Curriculum. It includes information on raising awareness of homelessness and information that could help them have a successful leaving home experience. www.sheltercymru.org.uk, www.housemate.org.uk

- **Gender**
Girls’ attainment levels are higher and exclusion rates lower than for boys. This suggests that the way the curriculum is delivered is not optimal for boys.³⁶ However, women are at greater risk of poverty than men.²⁵ Schools can increase girls’ aspirations and challenge girls and boys perceptions of gender differences by addressing both the taught and hidden curriculum. The hidden curriculum is about the values and ethos within a school that are learnt and encouraged, although not necessarily consciously. Schools may need to consider what children are asked to do based on their gender, for example classroom duties, sports, grounds cleaning, helping prepare meals etc. In order to ensure that the diverse needs of both boys and girls are met schools may need to consider curriculum content, teaching style, classroom management and assessment



Section 5: Parental Involvement in School

Parental involvement in a child's education has been shown to be a factor in better attendance, better attainment and more positive attitudes to learning.⁹ A good level of education in the mother also has a beneficial effect.¹³

Many poorer parents have had unrewarding experiences of education, may have left school without qualifications and may be uncomfortable in school settings. Some may lack confidence in dealing with professionals. Parents with poor literacy skills will struggle to help a child with schoolwork.

Studies show⁵ that articulate and middle class parents have clear advantages in making their views known and accepted. Poorer parents are more likely to be in contact with schools when they feel their child has been treated unfairly e.g. in relation to their child's behaviour.

“My mum helps me to do the spellings, coz she's got a dictionary and she's Arabic but she doesn't know much English so we got an English dictionary from school and she borrowed it” Seven-year old Boy⁴

What do parents need in order to get involved?

- **Encouragement and being made to feel welcome in the school.** Parental involvement in the early years can make the biggest difference, but children still need their parents' support when they are older
- Some schools **offer home visits** when children first start school at nursery or reception level. Meeting each child in his or her own home environment can be invaluable in gathering information that will enable the children to settle into their new school and help staff assess their level of need in the classroom. It also means that the parent has focused time with the teacher or learning support assistant which helps to build a good relationship
- **Providing parents with information and ideas on how they can help their children learn** as research shows that giving parents clear structures for helping their children makes a difference²⁹ The Basic Skills Agency provides bi-lingual flyers on how parents can help their children with literacy and numeracy
- **Understanding of parent's circumstances** and sensitive handling of issues such as: the cost of uniform, equipment and trips (see Section 1); culture and language issues for minority groups and poor literacy. Some parents who have had a poor experience of school themselves are more likely to feel that their opinions are discounted so extra work may need to be done to reach out to them and develop a positive relationship
- **Involving parents at an early stage with attendance or discipline problems,** offering help and support where parents are unable to tackle the problem themselves. It can be useful to telephone parents and give them positive feedback when their child has a good week rather than just when the child is having a bad one. This can also help develop a positive relationship with the parents. Parents may be struggling to manage behaviour at home as well and may feel completely helpless to influence behaviour at school. They may need referral to agencies which can offer advice and

support. The need for early intervention and support from effective services cannot be overstated, as the fining or imprisonment of parents may have a negative impact on children as well

- **Home-school agreements** can clarify what schools expect of parents but will only be effective if they are the result of a genuine discussion and negotiation between teachers, parents and learners. Poorer parents who are already under stress could see them as an added pressure and another opportunity to be blamed.⁵ Parents who have poor literacy or are not fluent in the language of the school may sign agreements without even understanding what is in them
- **Support workers**³² can make a considerable difference to the school experience for children, reduce the numbers of fixed-term exclusions and have a positive impact on home-school communication
- **Opportunities for parents to learn alongside their children or separately.** Schools can develop partnerships with adult education bodies and voluntary and community groups to provide these opportunities. This could include basic skills, computing or skills related to parenting
- **Parenting contracts and parenting orders** – Parents that were consulted by NCH said they would welcome parenting support on a voluntary basis but that it is not always readily available. If parents are only offered a parenting course as part of a parenting order they are less likely to start the course in a positive frame of mind and course facilitators will be left to deal with feelings of hostility before constructive work can begin

Estyn (2003) **Advice on School Partnerships**: A report on good practice in primary schools
<http://www.estyn.gov.uk/publications/schoolpartnershipsprim.pdf>.

Welsh Assembly Circular 27/99: Home-School Agreements, Guidance for Schools
http://www.wales.gov.uk/subieducationtraining/content/schoolperformance/governance/27_99_e.htm

The **Family Links Nurturing Programme** is a well evaluated programme for use with 3-13 year olds pupils which aims, amongst other things, to foster links between school, home and the wider community. It includes training in positive discipline for both school staff and parents ensuring that attitudes, techniques and language used at home and school are consistent. For details contact info@familylinks.org.uk

Parents As First Teachers is a preschool programme which fosters understanding of child development. Partner agencies can deliver this programme.

The **Incredible Years Parent Programme** works to encourage parents to build better relationships with schools. www.incredibleyears.wales.co.uk

The DfES Standards website on **parental involvement**, gives a checklist of ideas for involving parents www.standards.dfes.gov.uk/parentalinvolvement/pwp

Flyers on how parents can help their children with literacy and numeracy may be downloaded from the **Basic Skills Agency** website at <http://www.basic-skills-wales.org/basastrategy/en/home/index.cfm>

Further Information

ACCAC Qualifications, Curriculum and Assessment Authority for Wales is the National Assembly for Wales's principal advisory body on all aspects of the school curriculum, examinations, assessment and vocational qualifications. ACCAC, Castle Buildings, Womanby Street, CARDIFF CF10 1SX, Telephone: 029 2037 5400 Email: General enquiries info@accac.org.uk; 5-14 Division 5-14@accac.org.uk; 14-19 Division 14-19@accac.org.uk; Vocational Qualifications: vocational@accac.org.uk; Publications: publications@accac.org.uk

Barnardo's Cymru has 39 services, offering support to the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children, young people, families and communities in Wales. Barnardo's Cymru Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff CF24 5DT, Telephone: 029 2049 3387, Fax: 029 2048 9802, www.barnardos.org.uk

Basic Skills Agency is the national development organisation for literacy and numeracy. It aims to support teachers of basic skills across sectors and age groups share practice and disseminate ideas and innovation in basic skills teaching and learning. Basic Skills Agency Wales Hotline: 0845 602 1654, Email: walesenquiries@basic-skills.co.uk, www.basic-skills-wales.org/bsastrategy/en/home/index.cfm

ChildLine has a free 24 hour helpline for children & young people tel: 0800 1111. There is downloadable information for teachers, parents & young people on many issues from the website www.childline.org.uk

Children in Wales' website has information about Local Framework Partnerships, Children's Information Services Local Authority Services for Children & Families and details of other voluntary organizations that support children and families. Visit www.childreninwales.org.uk

Advice Guide is the online CAB service that provides independent advice on rights - including benefits, housing, employment and debt, consumer and legal issues. Information is in English, Welsh, Bengali, Gujarati, Punjabi, Urdu and Chinese. There are useful fact sheets to print off. www.adviceguide.org.uk/

Commission for Racial Equality works to reduce discrimination and promote equality and to influence policy and practice. CRE Wales, 3rd Floor, Capital Tower, Greyfriars Road, Cardiff CF10 3AG, Tel 02920 729 200, fax 02920 729 220, www.cre.gov.uk/wales

Communities that Care Cymru, is a prevention programme based on an understanding of risk and protective factors which aims to tackle and reduce: Youth crime and anti-social behaviour; Drug (including alcohol) abuse; School failure and School age pregnancy. Communities that Care Cymru, 10th Floor, Alexandra House, Alexandra Road, Swansea. SA1 5ED. Tel:01792 234733. www.communitiesthatcare.org.uk.

Contact a Family is a UK-wide charity providing support, advice and information for families with disabled children. They offer information on specific conditions and rare disorders and enable parents to get in contact with other families, both on a local and national basis. Contact a Family Cymru, The Exchange Building, Mount Stuart Square, Cardiff CF10 5EB, Tel: 029 2049 8001, Fax: 029 2049 5001, e-mail: wales@cafamily.org.uk

ContinYou, is a community learning charity that uses learning to tackle inequality and build social inclusion. It includes a range of programmes and services offering opportunities to

people who have gained the least from formal education and training. ContinYou, Anchor Court, First Floor, Keen Road, Cardiff CF24 5JW, Telephone: 029 2047 8929, Fax: 029 2047 8930, info.cardiff@continyou.org.uk, www.continyou.org.uk/index.php

Domestic Abuse helpline numbers

Domestic Abuse helpline: 0808 8010 800; Black Association of Women Step Out (BAWSO): 029 20437390; Welsh Women's Aid: Aberystwyth: 01970 612748; Rhyl: 01745 334767; Cardiff: 029 20390874 www.welshwomensaid.org

End Child Poverty Network Cymru, C/o Children in Wales, 25 Windsor Place, Cardiff, CF10 3BZ, Tel: 029 20342434, email: lucy.akhtar@childreninwales.org.uk, www.endchildpovertycymru.org.uk

English as an Additional Language Association in Wales, EALAW is a national body in Wales committed to the advancement of language and curriculum development for pupils learning English as an additional language. EALAW, c/o EMLA Service, Dynevor Centre, Dynevor Place, Swansea SA1 3ET, Telephone number: 01792 465406, Fax number: 01792 463263

Estyn is the office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Education and Training in Wales which aims to raise standards and quality of education and training in Wales through inspection and advice. Estyn, Anchor Court, Keen Road, Cardiff CF24 5JW, Tel: 029 2044 6446, Fax: 029 2044 6448, e-mail: enquiries@estyn.gsi.gov.uk, www.estyn.gov.uk/

Health Promotion Division is responsible for the development and delivery of evidence based health promotion policy, strategy and programmes. For more information about the Welsh Assembly Government's health promotion work in schools, please visit www.healthschool.org.uk. Health Promotion Division, Office of the Chief Medical Officer, Welsh Assembly Government, Cathays Park, Cardiff, CF10 3NQ, www.hpw.wales.gov.uk

INCLUDE is a national charity dedicated to tackling social exclusion among young people through a combination of multi-agency working, individual support for the young person and engagement with the family and wider community. Regional Manager: Pam Breach, c/o HTV Media Centre, Culverhouse Cross, Cardiff CF5 6XJ, Tel 02920 595923 Fax 02920 598462

Incredible Years Wales: The Welsh Centre for Promoting the Incredible Years Programmes, School of Psychology, Room 801 – 804, 8th Floor, Alun Roberts Building, University of Wales, Bangor, LL57 2UW, Tel : 01248 383 758, Fax: 01248 382 652, E-mail : d.williams@bangor.ac.uk

National Association of Teachers of Travellers works to promote and improve the education of Travellers. www.natt.org.uk/index.php

NCH Cymru works with schools around disaffection, schools exclusions, transition to secondary school, young people's groups and the 'Parents as First Teachers' programme. NCH Cymru, 68a Cowbridge Road East, Cardiff, CF11 9DN, Tel: 02920 222127, www.nch.org.uk

National Public Health Service Wales, (NPHS) brings together the public health resources of the five former health authorities in Wales, which includes input from academic departments, with those of the Public Health Laboratory Service in Wales, which includes the

Communicable Disease Surveillance Centre.
<http://www.wales.nhs.uk/sites/home.cfm?orgid=368>

NSPCC Cymru/Wales Child Protection Helpline 0808 100 2524 E mail: helplinecymru@nspcc.org.uk The helpline is bi-lingual and can be contacted by anyone who has a concern about a child.

Pyramid Trust Cymru helps primary school children to build their skills, confidence and self-esteem. Pyramid schemes are run as after school clubs, usually for a ten-week programme. Pyramid Trust Cymru, Room 7, 10th Floor, Alexandra House, High Street, Swansea SA1 5ED, Telephone: 01792 641177, enquiries@pyramidtrustcymru.fsnet.co.uk, www.nptrust.org.uk/index.html

Samaritans in Wales Samaritan volunteers can be contacted on 08457 90 90 90 or Email jo@samaritans.org. Alternatively, local branch contact details are listed on the website on http://www.samaritans.org.uk/know/in_wales_popup.shtm. A bilingual Youth Pack is available for teachers to download from the website. It introduces young people to a range of issues that affect emotional health and wellbeing.

Save the Children work in the areas of Child Poverty and Education in Wales. It offers a range of free and priced materials and services to teachers and youth workers and there is further information on the website at www.savethechildren.org.uk. Save the Children, Phoenix House, 8 Cathedral Road, Cardiff CF10 9LJ, Tel: 029 20396838

SEN dispute resolution –NCH Cymru and SNAP both give support on SEN dispute resolution. Please see contact details above and below.

Shelter Cymru is the housing and homelessness charity. Shelter Cymru believes that bad housing wrecks lives and that everyone should have a decent, suitable home. The organisation helps people find and keep a home and campaigns for decent housing for all. For further information on the Education Service contact Shelter Cymru, 25 Walter Road, Swansea SA1 5NN, 01792 469400, email: agordrysau@sheltercymru.org.uk, www.sheltercymru.org.uk.

SNAP Cymru offers information and support to families of children and young people who have special educational needs. SNAP, 10 Coopers Yard, Curran Road, Cardiff CF10 5NB, Tel: 029 20 388776, Fax: 029 20 371876, Email: centraloffice@snapcymru.org, www.snapcymru.org

Welsh Assembly Government, Schools Management Division, Department for Training and Education, Crown Building, Cathays Park, Cardiff CF10 3NQ, Tel 029 2082 6051
<http://www.learning.wales.gov.uk/>

Welsh Consumer Council has developed resource materials to support the delivery of Personal and Social Education and Citizenship via a regularly updated, bilingual consumer education website: www.consumereducation.org.uk. Welsh Consumer Council, 5th floor Longcross Court, 47 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0WL Tel: 029 20255454 and Fax: 029 20255464 and Email: teleri@wales-consumer.org.uk

Welsh Refugee Council offers advice, support, casework and advocacy for asylum seekers and refugees. Offices in Newport, Swansea and Wrexham. Welsh Refugee Council, Phoenix House, 389 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 1TP, Tel: 029 2048 9800, Fax: 029 2043 2980, Email: info@welshrefugeecouncil.org, Website: www.welshrefugeecouncil.org

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Annex A: Quick Checklist

Throughout this booklet various educational issues affecting children in poverty are identified and suggestions are given for tackling these. We hope this quick checklist will be a helpful tool for evaluating the school's practice and identifying areas for development.

Maximising family income (pages 6-7)	Yes	No	In part / Take into consideration
Consider developing partnerships with advice agencies			
Provide information about school uniform grants, Government's Education Maintenance Allowances and Assembly Learning Grants			
Consider the financial impact of choosing a particular school uniform			
Provide information about entitlement to free school meals and introduce non-stigmatising ways of providing them			
Find non-stigmatising ways to subsidise the cost of trips, activities and essential equipment			
Deliver personal finance education within the Framework for Personal and Social Education (PSE)			

Health and well-being (pages 8 – 10)	Yes	No	In part / Take into consideration
Participate in the Welsh Assembly Government's free school breakfast scheme			
Make school dinners healthy and appealing			
Develop a whole school approach to health possibly through the Welsh Network of Healthy School Schemes			
Provide information on the Welsh Assembly Government's free swimming in the school holidays			
Tackle the issue of domestic abuse in PSE work			
Promote mental health among pupils by adopting an emotional literacy programme such as PATHS			

Helping poorer children to succeed (pages 11 -16)	Yes	No	In part / Take into consideration
Consider the recommendations of “Narrowing the Gap”			
Consider adopting an educational programme designed to help disadvantaged children catch up with their peers			
Developing high but realistic expectations of disadvantaged children			
Adopt admissions policies which encourage or support a good social mix			
Start a Homework Club at your School			
Adopt a whole-school approach to participation and Inclusion			
Develop staff awareness of the stigma children and young people feel in respect of poverty			
Establish effective measures to deal with bullying			
Ensure that all pupils over 15 are aware of their housing rights and options, how to avoid homelessness, and where to seek advice or tackle the issue of homelessness in PSE work			
Introduce strategies to foster motivation in pupils at risk of disengagement			
Provide additional support for vulnerable groups			
Increase girls’ aspirations and challenge girls and boys perceptions of gender differences			

Parental Involvement in School (pages 17 - 19)	Yes	No	In part / Take into consideration
Provide both verbal and non-verbal “messages” which make parents feel welcome			
Offer home visits when children first start school at nursery or reception level			
Develop partnerships with community education and children’s voluntary organizations			
Provide informal drop-in sessions for parents and toddlers on the school premises			
Develop home-school agreements which have been negotiated rather than imposed			
Involve parents at an early stage with attendance or discipline problems			