NHS Health Scotland

Evaluability assessment of the Cost of the School Day programme

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Executive summary

Poverty affects a wide range of important life outcomes for children. The Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 committed the Scottish Government, local authorities and NHS Boards to ambitious targets to reduce child poverty by 2030. These targets are intended to be achieved through a combination of national and local action across Scotland.

Cost of the School Day (COSD) is a programme which has been developed by the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) in Scotland. The aim of the programme is to mitigate the impact of poverty on school children and contribute to equity in education by reducing or removing financial barriers to full participation in school, as well as poverty-related stigma that some children may experience. Since 2014, the programme has been rolled out in two local authorities, Glasgow City and Dundee City. The programme has not been evaluated to date.

NHS Health Scotland and the Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP) agreed to undertake an evaluability assessment of the programme. Evaluability assessments (EAs) are a way of thinking through whether and how to assess the impacts of policies, programmes or interventions. They are a way of weighing up the costs and benefits of an evaluation in advance so that the evaluations that organisations undertake are more useful.

The evaluability assessment process identified two overarching evaluation aims, which are underpinned by a series of evaluation questions:

- Understand the impact COSD has had on removing cost barriers for participation in school.
- Understand how to improve the programme and encourage effective wider adoption of a sustainable COSD approach.

The assessment identified a number of potential sources of evaluation data and opportunities for new data to be collected. It concluded that an evaluation of COSD was feasible and could best be achieved through a mixed-methods research approach, which combined qualitative data collection with secondary analysis of existing data sources.

Introduction

Background

Child poverty in Scotland

Approximately one in four children in Scotland live in poverty.[1] The Institute for Fiscal Studies predicts this will increase in coming years due to the impact of UK Government welfare reform.[2]

Poverty affects a wide range of important life outcomes for children. Experience of poverty contributes to inequalities in children's cognitive development and school achievement, social and behavioural development, and health.[3] Preventing, reducing and mitigating the impact of poverty of children is therefore a cross-cutting policy concern.

There has been a renewed focus on child poverty in Scotland in recent years. Recognising the impact of child poverty on children's development and achievement, the Scottish Government launched the Attainment Challenge in 2015. This and the subsequent policy announcements, such as the Pupil Equity Fund, are targeted at reducing the poverty-related attainment gap in school children. Further, in 2017 the Scottish Government set ambitious targets in the Child Poverty (Scotland) Act 2017 to reduce child poverty by 2030.[4] The associated Delivery Plan lays out the actions that the Scottish Government will take to meet these targets.[5] There is also a duty on local authorities and health boards to jointly produce a local child poverty action plan report under the 2017 Act.

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[1] Scottish Government. *Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland 2014-17*. Scottish Government: Edinburgh; 2018. www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/03/3017/0 accessed 08/06/2018 (accessed 08/06/2018).

[2] Hood, A. & Waters, T. *Living Standards, Poverty and Inequality in the UK 2017-18 to 2021-22.* IFS: London; 2017.

[3] Cooper, K. & Stewart, K. *Does Money Affect Children's Outcomes? An update. CASE paper 203*. LSE : London; 2017.
Sosu, E. & Ellis, S. *Closing the Attainment Gap in Scottish Education.* JRF: London; 2014.
RCPCH. *Poverty and Child Health.* RCPCH: London; 2017
www.rcpch.ac.uk/sites/default/files/2018-04/poverty20and20child20health20survey20-20views20from20the20frontline20-20final2008.05.20171.pdf (accessed 08/06/2018).

[4] www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2017/6/contents/enacted

[5] Scottish Government. *Every Child, Every Chance. Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan*. Scottish Government: Edinburgh; 2018. www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/03/4093 (accessed 08/06/2018).

Cost of the School Day programme

Cost of the School Day (COSD) is a programme which has been developed by Child Poverty Action Group Scotland (CPAG) in Scotland, inspired by a programme developed in North East England by Children North East.[6] The aim of the programme is to mitigate the impacts of poverty on school children and contribute to equity in education by reducing or removing financial barriers to full participation in school, as well as poverty-related stigma that some children may experience. It achieves this by encouraging school and local authority-level action. Since 2014 two Scottish local authorities have worked closely with CPAG to roll out the programme, which has developed as two waves of activity. The COSD programmes for Glasgow City and Dundee City are described below. A third wave of the programme has also been developed since 2015, involving dissemination of the learning to other Scottish local authorities, via resources, consultation and training.

COSD Glasgow City

In 2014, the Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG) worked with partners in Glasgow City[7] to deliver wave 1 of COSD. CPAG staff led focus groups with pupils and staff from eight schools in Glasgow City.[8] Through this they explored current barriers to full participation in school that lower-income families experienced. This identified a range of school costs creating barriers, such as school uniforms, transport to and from school, materials required for certain subjects, fun events such as non-uniform day, and the cost of after-school activities and trips. Social attitudes toward poverty that may stigmatise children from low-income backgrounds were also highlighted as an issue.

Following this research the participating schools were supported to identify actions that they could take to both reduce poverty-related stigma and to remove or reduce financial barriers for families. Example actions included:

- providing financial support to families and subsidising school-related costs
- providing support to allow pupils access to resources necessary for learning, such as ICT
- challenging poverty-based stigma through staff training.

Glasgow City Council also identified local authority level action, such as an increase in and automation of the school clothing grant and a reconsideration of proposed

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[6] Mazzoli-Smith, L. & Todd, L. *Poverty Proofing the School Day: Evaluation and development report*. Research Centre for Learning and Teaching, Newcastle University; 2016. https://eprint.ncl.ac.uk/file_store/production/232454/86F983AD-4159-4FE1-9F37-3B567F2182C2.pdf (accessed 8/06/2018).

[7] The partners were: Glasgow City Council Education Services, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, Glasgow Centre for Population Health and NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde.

[8] In total Wave 1 involved consultation with 339 pupils and 111 teachers across eight schools – four primary and four secondary.

new boundaries for free school transport which were likely to disadvantage families on low incomes.

Wave 2 of COSD began in 2015 in Glasgow City. This wave of activity aimed to disseminate the learning from wave 1 across Glasgow schools and to encourage adoption of COSD in other schools. Activities included:

- dissemination of the Wave 1 report
- delivery of training to teaching staff and parent teacher councils
- development of resources, including toolkits
- guidance to all schools on school costs from Education Services
- a standard COSD input to all Glasgow teachers on the first day of school year 2016/17.

These activities were supported by the COSD Steering Group.[9]

COSD Dundee City

Following the recommendations generated by the Dundee Fairness Commission[10] and after securing funding from the Scottish Government, via the Attainment Challenge Fund, Dundee City have been working with CPAG to deliver COSD. Wave 1 activities began in 2017. CPAG consulted with staff, pupils and parents from 15 schools and nurseries in Dundee City.[11] The inclusion of parents was a new addition to Wave 1. The CPAG workers also supported schools to develop action plans. Wave 2 of COSD is due to start in 2018 – again the focus will be on targeting and supporting other Dundee schools.

COSD Wave 3

Since 2015 there has been growing interest in COSD across Scotland, and CPAG have provided advice and support to other interested local authorities. CPAG have been promoting the learning gained through COSD activities across all local authorities in Scotland, and identifying opportunities for action that could be taken at a national level to reduce cost barriers in schools. To support this national work, NHS Health Scotland provided funding in 2017/18 to provide advisory support to other local authorities, develop a national toolkit of resources and engage in awareness raising activity at a national level. Further funding has been provided by

[9] Membership of steering group: Glasgow City Council Education Services, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership, Glasgow Centre for Population Health, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, One Parent Families Scotland, Dalmarnock Primary School.

[10] Dundee Partnership. *A Fair Way to Go. Report of the Dundee Fairness Commission*. Dundee Partnership: Dundee; 2016. www.dundeepartnership.co.uk/sites/default/files/fairnessreport-screen_0.pdf

[11] COSD Wave 1 included 11 primary – two secondary and two nursery schools in Dundee City. In total 485 primary school pupils, 71 secondary school pupils, 205 members of staff, and 198 parents and carers were consulted.

the Scottish Government into 2018/19 and it is included as an action in Every Child, Every Chance.[12]

NHS Health Scotland held a conference in 2016, 'Facing up to child poverty in schools', to showcase COSD along with approaches developed by other local authorities. One outcome of that event was the establishment of a practice network, which is a peer support and learning forum for local-authority representatives with a remit to progress action on addressing the cost barriers of school. This nationally focused work encompasses Wave 3 of the COSD programme.

[12] Scottish Government. *Every Child, Every Chance. Tackling Child Poverty Delivery Plan.* Scottish Government: Edinburgh; 2018. http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2018/03/4093 (accessed 8/06/2018).

The evaluability assessment of COSD

COSD is now in its fifth year and there is interest in evaluating the programme to both understand its impact and to identify how the programme could be improved for future roll out. NHS Health Scotland and Scottish Collaboration for Public Health Research and Policy (SCPHRP) agreed to lead CPAG through an evaluability assessment to consider how the programme could best be evaluated. Over the following sections, we describe the results of an evaluability assessment that was conducted in early 2018.

An evaluability assessment is a systematic way of thinking through whether and how to evaluate new policies, programmes or interventions. They provide an opportunity to weigh up the value of an evaluation, in terms of informing future decisions, against the potential costs and feasibility of collecting the evidence.[13]

There are four stages to an EA:

1 Develop an initial theory of change. A theory of change is a visual description of how an intervention is intended to change desired long-term outcomes, through impacting on inter-linked short and intermediate outcomes. It also provides an opportunity to identify potential external factors that might impact positively or negatively on implementation and outcomes, and also the potential unintended consequences (both positive and negative) of the intervention.

2 Agree evaluation questions.

3 Identify data and evidence sources which could be used to answer the evaluation questions.

4 Develop and appraise evaluation options to inform recommendations.

The Cost of the School Day EA uses a mixture of stakeholder workshops and individual follow-ups to progress through the four stages:

Workshop 1, 27 March 2018

- Developed a theory of change.

Workshop 2, 24 April 2018

- Refined the theory of change.
- Discussed evaluation audience.
- Discussed evaluation questions and priorities.

[13] Craig, P. & Campbell, M. *Evaluability Assessment: A systematic approach to deciding whether and how to evaluate programmes and policies*. What Works Scotland: Edinburgh; 2015.

Individual follow-up April–May 2018

- Further refined the theory of change.
- Refined evaluation questions.
- Explored potential data sources and evaluation options.

Workshop 3, 4 June 2018

- Discuss draft report and recommendations.

A list of EA participants can be found in Appendix 1.

The following sections present the outputs from the EA process.

Theory of change

In this section we describe both the programme and the rationale for how it is intended to contribute to the desired outcomes. The visual summary of this theory of change for the COSD programme is presented in Figure 1 on page 12.

Programme description

As described in the background section above, the COSD programme is delivered across three waves. In Wave 1 school communities are supported by CPAG staff to identify financial barriers to equal participation and stigmatising policies and practices at a school level. Then participants consider how these might be reduced or removed. Schools are then supported to develop action plans to implement the identified changes.

Wave 2 provides a package of less intensive support, including training and resources, to encourage other schools in the same local authority to undertake COSD activities, such as undertaking local consultation within schools, development of school action plans and changes to existing policies and practices. It is intended that COSD activities will be led by the school, with some coordination and support at a local-authority level.

Wave 3 targets other local authorities and schools across Scotland, interested in adopting COSD-inspired activities. CPAG provide consultation, resources and training to encourage these areas to lead their own COSD activities.

Intended outcomes of the COSD programme

The activities from across all three waves of the programme are intended to contribute to two chains of outcomes, which are interlinked, described below.

The activities are to raise awareness of child poverty, the drivers and consequences, and to help identify ways of addressing poverty-related stigma and financial barriers to equitable participation in school. They are intended to lead to the following outcomes:

- Increased understanding of the drivers and consequences of child poverty and costs associated with the school day among school staff and parent councils (PCs). And an increased knowledge of what schools can do to address these.
- Through the changes in the knowledge and awareness of school staff and PC members it is hoped that staff, PCs, and school policy and practice will be changed to become more poverty aware.
- It is hoped that the changes in policy and practice will lead to:
    - reduction or removal of cost barriers to equitable participation in school and after-school activities

    - change in how schools and PCs use available funding towards mitigation of child poverty within schools
    - reduced poverty-related stigmatising attitudes and behaviours within school communities
    - a culture within schools which encourages openness about pupil's situations.
- It is theorised that these short-term outcomes would in turn contribute to:
    - increased participation in school and after-school activities
    - reduced school-related financial pressure for families
    - reduction in the experience of poverty-related stigma within schools
    - pupils and parents feeling able to acknowledge and discuss financial barriers within school and seek support.
- The above medium-term outcomes will then contribute to:
    - equitable access to education and related activities
    - increased attendance at school
    - a reduction in income-related exclusion and improved experience of school and improved mental health and wellbeing of pupils. Thus contributing to the Safe Healthy Active Nurtured Achieving Respected Responsible Included (SHANARRI) indicators.[14]

Further anticipated outcomes of raising awareness of poverty and financial barriers to participation among staff are activities aimed at increasing accessibility and awareness of school-related entitlements (e.g. free school meals, clothing grants) and income maximisation support among families. These activities are expected to contribute to the following outcome chain:

- In the short term, families will have an increased awareness of income maximisation support available and of eligibility for school-related entitlements; the accessibility of these services and entitlements will also be improved. It is hoped this will contribute to increased uptake of services and entitlements.
- In the medium term it is hoped this will lead to maximisation of family incomes, and, alongside the reduction or removal of financial barriers associated with school described above, an increase in family disposable incomes.
- In turn increasing family disposable incomes and reducing school-related pressures is theorised to contribute to reduced financial stress among parents, and thus contributing to improved parental health and wellbeing.
- By improving parental health and wellbeing it is theorised that this will contribute to improved outcomes for children, represented by the SHANARRI indicators in the programme theory of change.

It is theorised that via these two outcome chains the COSD programme will contribute, alongside wider efforts, to reductions in the poverty-related inequalities in

[14] The SHANARRI indicators are the eight indicators of wellbeing that underpin the Scottish Government's strategy for improving children's wellbeing, and are a key component of the Getting it Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) approach: http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/Young-People/gettingitright/wellbeing

both attainment and post-school destinations and health and wellbeing over the longer-term.

Through the development of the theory of change for the programme some important assumptions about how the programme is implemented, and impacts on outcomes, were identified. An evaluation may want to test these assumptions.

Assumptions:

- Those staff, pupils and parents who have participated in Wave 1 will share their new knowledge with others to help change school culture.
- The programme will engage those staff, pupils and parents with the most stigmatising attitudes and behaviours and will change these positively.
- Increasing opportunities for participation will translate into increased participation and that increased participation will translate into increased attainment.
- People are receptive to the COSD changes, and accept that poverty is an issue to be addressed in their school.
- Other practitioners, staff, parents agree and support that COSD will impact on attainment as a result of attending training or engaging in the programme.
- Appropriate action will happen on the back of training, sharing practice, etc.
- People will take up benefits and entitlements once they know that they are eligible.

Read from left to right.

Cost of the School Day (COSD) programme

- Wave 1: CPAG supported school-level engagement
- Wave 2: Local authority and school-led COSD activities
- Wave 3: National -level activities

- School staff and parent councils have increased understanding of the drivers and consequences of child poverty and school costs, and what they can do to address these.
- Staff, school and local authority policies and practice are more poverty sensitive.

- Reduction or removal of cost barriers to participation in school and after-school activities.
- Schools/parent councils secure and use available funding to mitigate child poverty within their setting.
- Reduction in povety-related stigmatising attitudes and behaviour among staff and pupils.
- Schools have a culture which encourages openess about pupils' situations.
- Promotion of entitlements and financial supports available to parents.

- Increased participation in school and after-school activities.
- Reduced school-related financial pressures for families.
- Pupils and families experience less povety-related stigma.
- Pupils and parents feel able to acknowledge and discuss financial barriers and ask for support.
- Increased uptake of income maximisation support among families.
- Increased awareness of eligibility for (school) entitlements among families.
- Increased accessibility of (school) entitlements.

- All pupils have equitable access to education and related activites.
- Increased attendance in school.
- Pupils from lower income families experience less income-related exclusion.
- Contributes to improved experience of school and mental health and wellbeing of pupils.
- Families incomes are maximised.
- Increased uptake of entitlements.
- Increased family disposable income.
- Reduced anxiety/ stress related to finance/school costs for parents.
- Contributes to improved parental mental health and wellbeing.

Contributes to the eight SHANARRI wellbeing indicators

- Children learn **responsibility** through educational experiences.
- All children feel **included** in school regardless of familiy income.
- All children **achieve** their full potential regardless of background.
- Children are **healthy, active** and **nurtured** through participation in educational experiences.
- Children feel **respected** in school.
- Children are **safe**.

- Reductions in poverty-related inequalities in attainment and post-school destinations.
- Reductions in poverty-related inequalities in health and wellbeing.

The group also identified contextual factors which may impact on both implementation and also on the desired outcomes.

Contextual factors:

- Wider education policy and associated funding, e.g. The Attainment Challenge.
- Welfare reform and the continuing rollout of Universal Credit across Scotland.
- Longstanding interest in both local authorities in tackling poverty (Dundee Fairness Commission and Poverty Leadership Panel, Glasgow).
- Funding from the Pupil Equity Fund (PEF) may be driving some of the changes also.
- Other socio-economic policies.
- Existing and longstanding relationships between the NHS, local authorities and the third sector (e.g. via community planning partnerships).
- Specific funding became available to support the work (e.g. Dundee applied for Attainment Challenge money).

Evaluation questions

A number of key evaluation questions were identified through the workshops that reflected the outcomes highlighted in the logic model and the priorities of stakeholders. These evaluation questions related to both the effectiveness of the intervention in delivering the intended outcomes (impact evaluation questions), and the process through which the intervention was delivered (process evaluation questions). Stakeholders recognised that it would be difficult to attribute changes in longer-term outcomes to the intervention activities, and therefore agreed that the impact evaluation questions should focus on short to mid-term outcomes. The impact evaluation questions were further prioritised by stakeholders.

There are two overarching evaluation aims:

- [Impact] Understand the impact COSD has had on removing cost barriers for participation in school.
- [Process] Understand how to improve the programme and encourage effective wider adoption of a sustainable COSD approach.

Impact evaluation questions

Primary questions:

- Does or did COSD lead to reduction or removal of the cost barriers to full participation in school (i.e. school and after-school activities)?
- How did schools, including parent–teacher councils (PTCs), change what they do as a result of COSD?
- Does or did COSD impact on teachers' and schools attitudes and practices?
- What were the local authority level changes in policy as a result of COSD?

Secondary questions:

- Does the reduction or removal of cost barriers improve children's experience of and participation in school?
- Did the COSD contribute to a reduction in children's experience of poverty-related stigma?
- Does the reduction or removal of cost barriers to full participation in school reduce financial pressures on families and increase parental engagement with schools?

Tertiary question:

- What are the wider policy impacts of COSD both nationally and within other local authorities and how did these come about?

Process evaluation questions

Primary questions

- What helped or hindered COSD from achieving intended outcomes across different waves?
  - What were the contextual factors or elements that contributed to uptake, implementation and impact of COSD in both areas?
- What benefit does consulting with parents and children have for successful implementation?
- What are the key elements for success within the CPAG support wave or model?
- What would a sustainable COSD programme look like?

Secondary questions

- What benefits do the different types of staff training have in successful implementation (i.e. on changing attitudes and practice at a school level)?
- Who is best placed to deliver the core elements of COSD (i.e. staff within schools, third-sector agencies)?
- What influenced schools to participate in COSD (is it only seen as an issue for schools in SIMD1 and 2)?
- To what extent is the Glasgow guidance for schools impacting on practice?
- Was the initial investment available in Dundee and Glasgow an important factor?
- Does COSD produce any unintended consequences?
- What roles have local and national partners had in the implementation and impact of COSD?
- What are the limits of a school or teacher's ability to address the structural causes of child poverty and mitigate the impacts on children?

Intended audience of the evaluation

Audience	Communication aim
Schools	To encourage schools to adopt the COSD approach and to become more poverty sensitive in their decision making and practice.
Local authorities	To encourages local authorities to adopt the COSD approach and to influence policy making and decision about funding allocation.
Scottish Government	To encourage the Scottish Government to advocate and endorse COSD approaches across Scotland and to consider what national action and policy decisions could be made to support the aims of COSD.
COSLA	To get COSLA to advocate and endorse COSD approach.
Education Scotland, ADES and EIS	To encourage both to support the roll-out of COSD nationally.
Parents	To increase awareness of COSD, the barriers this can create for children and families, and to encourage more open discussions about cost barriers between families and schools.
Organisations outside Scotland	To disseminate the learning outside Scotland.

Data sources

Existing data sources

Routinely collected administrative data: Data on attendance and uptake of entitlements and benefits (including school clothing grants, education maintenance allowance and free school meals) are available from local authorities and schools. Schools may also hold data on the costs of school activities, including extra costs for classes, after school activities and trips, and participation rates.

COSD programme documentation: Various reports document the activities and progress of COSD to date. These include:

- the local authority and school-level reports generated at Wave 1
- evaluation data collected from teacher training participants,
- minutes of steering group meetings.

Wider policy and strategy documentation: Various sources could be drawn on to assess the influence of COSD on a broader scale. These include:

- grey literature that may reference COSD, such as national and local policy and planning documents
- minutes of local and national committees with an education or inequalities remit
- submissions to national or local government and parliamentary consultations.

Social media and mainstream media: Schools and other bodies have been sharing COSD activities on social media with the hashtag #costoftheschoolday and so social media may provide a rich source of examples of actions undertaken to date and the reach of the programme. Similar references to COSD in the mainstream media may also highlight the reach and impact of the project to date in raising awareness of child poverty and the impact it can have on child outcomes.

Additional potential data sources

Interviews with teachers and head teachers in participating schools: Interviews with teachers could be used to explore whether any changes have occurred within schools as a result of COSD activities from a staff perspective. Teachers would be well placed to comment on:

- the impact of COSD in terms of any changes to their own attitudes regarding poverty
- changes in their professional practice and the wider school culture regarding inequalities
- any reductions in school costs that have occurred as a result of COSD.

Teachers could also provide key insights into the barriers and facilitators to implementing and sustaining COSD activities within their school.

Interviews with pupils at participating schools: These interviews would largely provide insight into the impacts of COSD on those outcomes primarily experienced by pupils. These would include:

- changes in everyday school-related costs
- participation in school and after school activities
- experiences of poverty-based stigma.

Pupils would also be able to provide information on any unintended consequences of COSD, such as inadvertent stigmatisation of pupils from low-income families.

Interviews with parents and parent councils at participating schools: Parents would be able to provide insight into the impact of COSD on a range of outcomes, including:

- changes in awareness, accessibility and uptake of school entitlements
- changes in school related costs
- any resulting changes to families' disposable incomes and financial pressures.

Interviews with key informants: Key informants in this context would include:

- CPAG staff responsible for delivering COSD
- members of the COSD planning and steering groups
- professionals working in the design and delivery of education services
- other professionals working at a regional and national level with a remit to tackle child poverty.

Collectively, these informants would be well placed to provide information on the impacts that COSD has made at a local authority and national level as well as the barriers and facilitators to achieving these outcomes.

Additional teacher training evaluation data: Additional quantitative data could be collected to evaluate the effectiveness of the teacher training implemented in Wave 2 of COSD. Teachers' attitudes toward poverty and behavioural intentions regarding the use of poverty-sensitive practices could be measured at baseline and then immediately after the training, and at a six-month follow-up, to assess whether any changes have been observed on the intended outcomes.

Appendix 2 provides a table summary of how both existing and potential data sources could be drawn on to inform each of the impact evaluation questions.

Evaluation challenges to consider

Evidencing outcomes

Most evaluations face the challenge of evidencing how a programme or intervention is contributing to longer-term outcomes. The further along the chain of intended outcomes you seek to evidence the greater the influence of wider external factors is on the outcomes of interest. This makes it difficult to disentangle the contribution of the programme being evaluated alongside other factors which will also influence these outcomes.

This challenge is acute for COSD. COSD is currently being delivered in a very busy policy landscape which has led to large investments in closing the poverty-related attainment gap in recent years, through initiatives such as the Attainment Challenge and Pupil Equity Fund. It would therefore be difficult to disentangle the contribution of COSD, even at a school level, to reducing the attainment gap. Furthermore, recent evidence suggests that UK Government welfare reform will lead to a rise in child poverty in the coming years.[15]

Using a theory-based approach to evaluation is one way of meeting this challenge by:

- developing a plausible theory of change for you programme
- identifying and accounting for external factors
- then demonstrating that a programme is delivered as intended and contributes to changes in the short and medium outcomes in a logical sequence.

This allows an evaluation to plausibly conclude the programme is contributing to longer-term outcomes.[16]

Through the COSD EA process participants were encouraged to prioritise the outcomes of most interest, in light of the evaluation challenges and after consideration of the evidence behind the theory of change for the programme. There is good systematic review-level evidence that demonstrates that experience of poverty impacts negatively on attainment, health and wellbeing.[17] Therefore, efforts to prevent or mitigate child poverty will contribute to improved attainment, health and wellbeing. Given this evidence, and an understanding of the wider policy context, it

[15] Hood A, Waters T. *Living Standards, Poverty and Inequality in the UK 2017-18 to 2021-22.* IFS: London; 2017.

[16] Centre for Excellence in Evaluation. *Theory-based Approaches to Evaluation: Concepts and Practices.* Ontario; 2012. www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/audit-evaluation/centre-excellence-evaluation/theory-based-approaches-evaluation-concepts-practices.html (accessed 08/06/2018).

[17] Cooper K, Stewart K. *Does Money Affect Children's Outcomes? An update. CASE paper 203.* LSE: London; 2017

was agreed that an evaluation should prioritise evidencing impact on the following short-medium term outcomes:

- School teaching and management staff have an increased understanding of the drivers and consequences of child poverty and school costs, and what they can do to address these.
- Staff and school policies and practice become more poverty sensitive.
- Reduction or removal of costs barriers to participation in school and after school.
- Reduction in poverty-related stigmatising attitudes and behaviours in school communities.
- Increased participation in school and after-school activities.
- Reduced financial pressures for families.

Data availability

There were a number of potentially useful data sources identified above. However, through examination of the evaluation questions it is apparent that these would offer a limited contribution to an evaluation. This means that an evaluation would be reliant on collecting bespoke data. As outlined above, most of the evaluation questions would best be answered collecting qualitative data. There are a limited number of groups an evaluation would seek to collect evidence from. Namely: teachers, school management, parent teacher councils, parents, pupils, and key informants in local and national government. Therefore, combining both process and impact evaluations would help to reduce resource implications.

Programme implementation

As described above, the COSD programme has been running for several years, and it is now four years since the initial Wave 1 schools in Glasgow were engaged. Given this, the fact that the majority of pupils and parents who participated will have moved on, and there will have been a degree of staff turnover, it is recommended that an evaluation of Wave 1 does not include Glasgow City. Given the similarities in the Wave 1 model across both Dundee and Glasgow, evaluation learning should be transferable. However, an evaluation of Waves 2 and 3 could feasibly include both authorities.

Evaluation resources

At the time of undertaking the EA there were no confirmed resources to support an evaluation. Therefore, we have been unable to assess the feasibility of evaluation options alongside available resources when developing the recommendations below. These recommendations should, therefore, be considered a guide. When resources have been confirmed it may be necessary to review and re-prioritise the recommendations to inform an evaluation.

Recommendations

Any evaluation will be subject to the limitation outlined above. For these reasons we would recommend the following approach providing adequate resource is secured.

Evaluation of Wave 1: It is recommended this focus on the schools who have participated since 2017 in Dundee City. The aim would be to evaluate both the process and impact of this wave, answering the evaluation questions above. A mixed-methods approach is most appropriate. This could include using administrative data from schools, reviewing the school-level reports produced as part of the programme, key informant interviews and focus groups with a selection of teaching staff, parents and pupils in a sample of participating schools.

Evaluation of Wave 2: It is recommended this looks at the Wave 2 work in both Glasgow City and Dundee City. Again a mixed methods approach seems most appropriate. This could include analysis of the evaluation data collected after delivery of staff training, key informant interviews, and focus groups or surveys of teaching staff who have participated. Again the focus would be on evaluating both the process and impact of Wave 2.

Evaluation of Wave 3: The focus of this strand would be on assessing the impact of COSD beyond Glasgow City and Dundee City. This could include key informant interviews and desk-based research to analyse policy documentation, grey literature and media.

Appendices

Appendix 1: List of EA participants

John Dickie, Child Poverty Action Group Scotland

Sara Spencer, Child Poverty Action Group Scotland

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Peter Allan, Dundee City Council

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Appendix 2: Table summarising how different data sources could be used to answer evaluation questions

Evaluation questions	**Data sources**							
	Administrative data	COSD documents	Policy documents	Teachers	Pupils	Parents	Key informants	Teacher training data
How did schools, including parent-teacher councils (PTCs) change what they do as a result of COSD?	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y		
Does or did COSD impact on teachers' and schools' attitudes and practices?		Y		Y	Y	Y		Y
What were the local authority-level changes in policy as a result of COSD?			Y				Y	

Evaluation questions	**Data sources**							
	Administrative data	COSD documents	Policy documents	Teachers	Pupils	Parents	Key informants	Teacher training data
Does the reduction or removal of cost barriers improve children's experience of and participation in school?	Y			Y	Y	Y		
Did the COSD contribute to a reduction in children's experience of poverty-related stigma?					Y			
Does the reduction or removal of cost barriers to full participation in school reduce financial pressures on families and increase parental engagement with schools?	Y				Y	Y		

Evaluation questions	**Data sources**							
	Administrative data	COSD documents	Policy documents	Teachers	Pupils	Parents	Key informants	Teacher training data
What are the wider policy impacts of COSD both nationally and within other local authorities, and how did these come about?							Y	
What helped or hindered COSD from achieving intended outcomes across different waves?				Y			Y	
What are the key elements for success within the CPAG support wave or model?				Y			Y	
What benefit does consulting with parents and children have for successful implementation?				Y			Y	

Evaluation questions	**Data sources**							
	Administrative data	COSD documents	Policy documents	Teachers	Pupils	Parents	Key informants	Teacher training data
What benefits do the different types of staff training have in successful implementation (i.e. on changing attitudes and practice at a school level)?		Y		Y			Y	Y
Who is best placed to deliver the core elements of COSD (i.e. staff within schools, third sector agencies)?				Y	Y	Y	Y	
What influenced schools to participate in COSD (is it only seen as an issue for schools in SIMD1 and 2)?							Y	
Is the Glasgow guidance for schools being adhered to? If not, why?				Y			Y	

Evaluation questions	**Data sources**							
	Administrative data	COSD documents	Policy documents	Teachers	Pupils	Parents	Key informants	Teacher training data
Was the initial investment available in Dundee and Glasgow an important factor?							Y	
What were the contextual factors or elements that contributed to uptake and implementation of COSD in both areas?							Y	
Does COSD produce any unintended consequences?		Y	Y	Y			Y	

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