

# Candidate 4 evidence

## Higher Assignment

### Child Poverty - ways to reduce this.

#### Introduction:

Child poverty is when a child is growing up in a family with an income below 60% of the average. This means that they lack essentials including food, healthcare and education. The key drivers of child poverty are low pay, worklessness, the cost-of-living crisis and inadequate benefits. As a result of child poverty, teenagers may need to work part-time which disturbs their studies and can lead to poorer educational outcomes. It has been shown that children who grow up in lower-income families are more likely to leave school at 16 with fewer qualifications which can limit them from getting a high-paid job. Other impacts of this include social exclusion, experiencing of bullying by peers and poor physical health like obesity. Child poverty is still a huge problem, in 2021/22 it was shown that there was still 4.3 million children still living in poverty in the UK. This highlights the need to help the large amount of children who are suffering. Racial inequality is involved in child poverty. To illustrate, 46% of children from black/ethnic families were living in poverty in 2021/22 compared to 26% of white British families. This is a huge problem that needs to be addressed as children are being treated unequally. Low pay being one of the main drivers of child poverty means that even if a child has at least one parent in work their pay may be severely low. For example, 71% of children who are in poverty have at least one working parent. This proves that they need a pay rise as they cannot afford everything their child needs. Although child poverty is a huge problem across the UK, it has been discovered that children in England suffer the most. In 2021/22 31% of children in England were in poverty compared to only 24% in Scotland. Yet this is not a significant difference it still shows that children in England are struggling more. These facts magnify the need to address child poverty efficiently and effectively.

#### Option 1: Free School Meals.

Currently, free school meals are provided to children who are eligible, this can be if their parents receive any benefits including Income-based Job Seeker's allowance, Income Support, Child Tax etc. However, now all children who are in Primary 1 to 5 receive free school meals no matter their financial circumstance in Scotland. This would help even more children if it was implemented across the whole of the UK.

#### Option 2: Increase the Child Benefit.

The child benefit is an allowance which is paid to one parent each month, only one parent can be the recipient of this money. The first/only child receives £24 and the second child receives £15.90.

#### Option 3: Reduce the costs of school (uniform, activities etc.)

There are many additional costs that come with school including lunches, uniform, activities, transport, stationary and even general clothing for dress-down days. There is already a scheme to support this called 'Cost of the School Day' however more needs to be done to help.

**Recommendation:**

According to a variety of sources, evidence suggests that the best way to reduce child poverty is for the UK government to provide all children in the UK with free school meals.

**Solution 1 - Arguments For:**

One reason for providing all children in the UK with free school meals is they improve children's ability to learn and concentrate. If children haven't eaten they tend to feel tired, emotional and unfocused. This means that they will find it difficult to retain important information that is explained in lessons. In 2020, it was shown that children from lower-income households were more than nine months behind their more affluent peers. However, Source A shows that when universal free school meals were introduced in two areas in England in 2009-11, 11 year olds were found to make around two months more progress than other pupils in similar areas. This shows that free school meals are crucial as they improve children's learning outcomes.

Another reason why free school meals for all is a clever idea is they help families who are struggling with rising costs. Due to inflation, many parents can find it difficult to afford things for their child which means they may not receive a hot and healthy meal. It has been reported that parents saved £450 a year with their child receiving free school meals. If families are struggling financially, they may have to cut down on the food they consume. Source B shows that in 2022, 4 million children were living in households experiencing food insecurity. This can be extremely harmful for children if they do not get the correct nutrients needed to grow up healthy.

Free school meals are important as they have been linked to a reduction in child obesity rates. Source A shows that from 2006/07 to 2021/22 the child obesity rates increased by around 10%. However, in 2015, it was found that the introduction of free school meals for 4 to 7 year olds was linked to a 7.4% reduction in child obesity rates. This shows that overall the introduction of free school meals helped to prevent child obesity. The reason why free school meals are healthy is because they are required to meet a food standard. Packed lunches are considered as unhealthy as parents can put any foods in them that may contain unhealthy ingredients. Source C shows that only 1.1% of packed lunches in England schools met the school food standards. This proves that free school meals benefit children massively as they are healthy.

Currently, free school meals are only provided to those who are eligible. This is if their parents receive benefits however, there is still a huge number of children who are not eligible but living in poverty which means they are missing out on meals. Source D shows that in 2023, there was 900,000 kids who are not eligible for free school meals but are suffering in poverty. This shows that free school meals are imperative to support children.

**Solution 1 - Argument Against:**

However, free school meals have negatives. Source E shows that it is suggested that children in England who receive free school meals go on to earn less than their peers in future, with half of them earning £17,000 or less at the age of

30. This does not determine that all children who receive them will earn less but is used as a wealth indication. Children from more affluent backgrounds are more likely to go to independent schools rather than children from lower-income families. Those who attend independent school have a better chance at getting a higher-paid job.

**Solution 2 - Arguments For:**

One reason for increasing the child benefit is it helps to cover various extra costs. Parents may find it hard to afford necessities for their children including food, clothes and toys. Source D shows that 28% of parents receiving the child benefit said they now spend it on day-to-day expenses, up from 2% from 2012. Additionally, the benefit covers extra costs. Source E shows that in 2013, the child benefit covered 19% of extra costs which meet the basic needs of a child. Many children rely on this to support them as the take-up rate of the benefit is 93%. This proves that an increase in the child benefit would help a huge amount of children as the take-up rate is already very high.

Another reason for increasing the child benefit is it helps to reduce poverty. An increase would help middle-income families who although have a stable income may be stuck in poverty due to rising costs. This can leave families struggling to afford things like electricity and rent. Source F shows that organisations believe that the government should increase the child benefit by £20 per week, per child. If these measures were implemented, it would lift 1.2 million people from poverty, 900,000 children and 300,00 adults. This shows that an increase would lift a huge amount of people out of poverty. In addition, Source E shows that 2.2 million households, including 2.5 million children are currently unable to afford rent or mortgage payments. Also, this can count as National Insurance contributions which go towards your state pension.

**Solution 2 – Argument Against:**

However, the child benefit can be bad because there is a High-Income Child Benefit Charge. This means that if a parent's salary is above £50,000 they have to pay additional tax. This can be frustrating because it targets the parent who earns over £50,000 even if they are not the recipient of the money. Source G shows that in 2019/20, approximately 373,000 individuals were affected by the HICHC.

**Solution 3 – Arguments For:**

Although school itself is free, there are several additional charges including lunches uniform, stationary, transport and activities. It has been discovered that children from lower-income families are more likely to arrive late to school. Source D shows that in 2021/22, 22.5% of pupils were 'persistently absent' and missed out on 10% of school sessions. Children arriving late consistently effects their educational outcomes. A main reason why they may be arriving late is the cost of transport, many parents may struggle to afford this for their children. In Scotland, all 5-21 year olds have access to free bus travel which allows them to get to school, college, work etc. However, children in the rest of the UK do not have this which means they can struggle with commuting costs. It would help children significantly if this was implemented in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Another option to reduce the costs of school is cutting uniform costs. Many children have to go to school with uniform that is faulty or the wrong size. Uniform was created to ensure that all children feel equal however, when children do not have the correct uniform it heightens the feelings of social exclusion and embarrassment. Source E shows that 1 in 5 children go to school without an item of school clothing. This suggests that the prices of uniform are too high. Also, even if parents can afford uniform, they may have purchased incorrect uniform as schools can have specific clothing/shoes requests. Source D shows that parents claim they are spending an average £422 a year on secondary and £287 on primary uniforms. This highlights the struggle for parents having to purchase expensive uniform, with branded items costing even more.

**Solution 3 – Argument Against:**

[REDACTED]

The main way of getting the money to reduce these costs is through fundraising. It can be hard to get donations because many parents can struggle to give a donation, even if the suggested donation is £1 on dress down day, this can be hard for lower-income families. This limits the finance to help and raise money to make improvements within the school.

**Evaluation of Sources:**

The most useful source is Source D, the Child Poverty Action Group. They are a non-profit organisation (their website domain is cpag.or.uk) who collect and analyse data about child poverty. They take donations and do their best to find solutions to reduce child poverty, they use their data to provide reports/articles constantly. These are detailed with lots of information and contain statistics and visual charts. A recent report on 10/10/2023 was 'Cost of the School Day evaluation' which detailed project aims to help prevent child poverty. Their website has no spelling errors which makes it easy to understand.

However, a source which was less useful is Source A. The statistic on the reduction of obesity rates was from 2015 which means it is out-dated. This means that the obesity rates might have changed since then, it says there was a 7% reduction however this could have increased by now.

**Decision:**

The most convincing solution for reducing child poverty is Solution 1 which is providing all children with Free School Meals. This is because there are many benefits of children receiving them including, improved concentration, helping families with rising costs and reducing obesity rates. This is in comparison to the two other solutions of increasing the child benefit and reducing the costs of school, this is because they are harder to achieve. Increasing the child benefit might not be successful as many parents spend it on other things which means their children are not getting the correct care. The option of reducing school costs would also be difficult as the main form of donations is through fundraisers which is hard to achieve as many parents do not have enough money to donate meaning the school does not have enough to make improvements. Overall, free school meals is the most successful option as it would be easier to achieve as all P1-5 children already receive them in Scotland.

**Source Sheet**

**Source A** <https://www.nesta.org.uk> Published 22/06/2022.

When universal free school meals in primary schools were introduced in two areas in England in 2009-11, 10–11-year-olds were found to make around two months' more progress, on average, than similar pupils in comparison areas. From 2006/07 to 2021/22 the child obesity rates increased by around 10%.

In 2015, it was found that the introduction of free school meals for 4- to 7-year-olds was associated with a 7.4% reduction in child obesity rates.

**Source B** <https://foodfoundation.org.uk>

In 2022, 4 million children were living in households experiencing food insecurity.

**Source C** <https://www.leeds.ac.uk>

Only 1.1% of packed lunches in English schools met the school food standards.

**Source D** <https://www.cpag.org.uk>

In 2023, there are 900,000 kids who aren't eligible for free school meals but are suffering in poverty.

28% of parents receiving child benefit said they now spend it on day-to-day living/general expenses, up from 2 per cent in 2012.

Parents surveyed by the charity 'The Children's Society' claim they are spending an average £422 a year on secondary and £287 on primary uniforms, with branded items costing more. In 2021/22, 22.5% of pupils were 'persistently absent' and missed 10% of school sessions.

**Source E** <https://www.theguardian.com> published 04/08/2022,

Children in England who receive free school meals go on to earn less than their peers, even when they achieve the same qualifications, with half of them earning £17,000 or less at the age of 30, according to research.

2.2m households, including 2.5 million children, are currently unable to afford rent or mortgage payments.

<https://cpag.org.uk> and JRF's Flagship report 'Cost of a Child' shows that in 2013, the child benefit covered 19% of extra costs which meet the basic needs of a child.

1 in 5 children attend school without an item of school clothing.

**Source F** <https://www.ippr.org> Published 16/11/2022.

IPPR, the Trades Union Congress and Child Poverty Action Group together believe that the government should increase the child benefit by £20 per week per child, remove the two-child limit on universal credit and legacy benefits and end the total family benefit cap.

These measures together would lift 1.2 million people from poverty, 900,000 children and 300,000 adults.

**Source G** <https://www.taxrebateservices.co.uk>

In 2019/20, approximately 373,000 individuals were affected by the HICBC.