

Children's Parliament **"The Weight on Our Shoulders"**

Consultation on the Child Poverty Bill
and Delivery Plan
February 2018



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Introduction

Children are experts in their own lives and as such Children's Parliament is interested in learning about the experiences that shape children's lives at home, at school and in the community. For roughly one in four children in Scotland¹, poverty is one of the biggest issues they face. It has a deep and lasting impact on children's development, educational attainment and aspirations.

As part of the wider consultation and engagement work around the development of the Child Poverty Bill and Delivery Plan, Scottish Government commissioned Children's Parliament to facilitate this consultation with children to explore their experiences and views of how poverty affects their lives.

With the duty placed on Ministers and public bodies in the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 to consult with children and young people, there is a legal as well as moral imperative to involve children in this process.

This report will help ensure that the experiences and views of children are reflected in the strategic and legislative developments taken forward by Scottish Government which aim to address child poverty. If Scotland is to become the best place for children to grow up, it is essential that all of our children have a childhood where they feel healthy, happy and safe and their life course is not limited by poverty.



¹ Latest 2015/16 Poverty and Income Inequality in Scotland figures, Table A1: Relative Poverty in Scottish Households 1994/5 to 2014/15, <http://www.gov.scot/Resource/0051/00515392.pdf>

About the consultation

Children's Parliament delivered workshops consisting of a range of creative activities to help children understand and discuss what poverty means and how it impacts upon children's lives.

As with all our work, the workshop began with an introduction to the idea of human dignity which sits at the heart of the UNCRC. By creating a 'dignometer', the children had a vehicle through which they could record the things that impact positively and negatively on their sense of dignity. The children then explored what children need to be healthy, happy and safe and how these needs link to the rights that children have as enshrined in the UNCRC and other human rights instruments.

Following this introduction, the workshop focused on the issue of poverty, beginning with a story about a boy named Sandy and what a typical day for him is like at home, in school and in the community. The children discussed whether or not Sandy's needs were being met, if his rights were being fulfilled and if his human dignity was being respected. The children spent time thinking about how they could change Sandy's story into a positive one, again focusing on what children need, what rights they have and how their human dignity is respected.

Next the children explored how poverty was experienced by children at different stages of childhood and what they might miss out on because their families were struggling financially. They created 'chatterboxes' to highlight what a child at each age would miss out on due to poverty and how they would feel as a result.

The workshop finished with the opportunity for the children to identify one important message about poverty. On a postcard, they drew pictures and shared their message about what Scottish Government should consider as they progressed with the Child Poverty Bill and Delivery Plan.

About the children

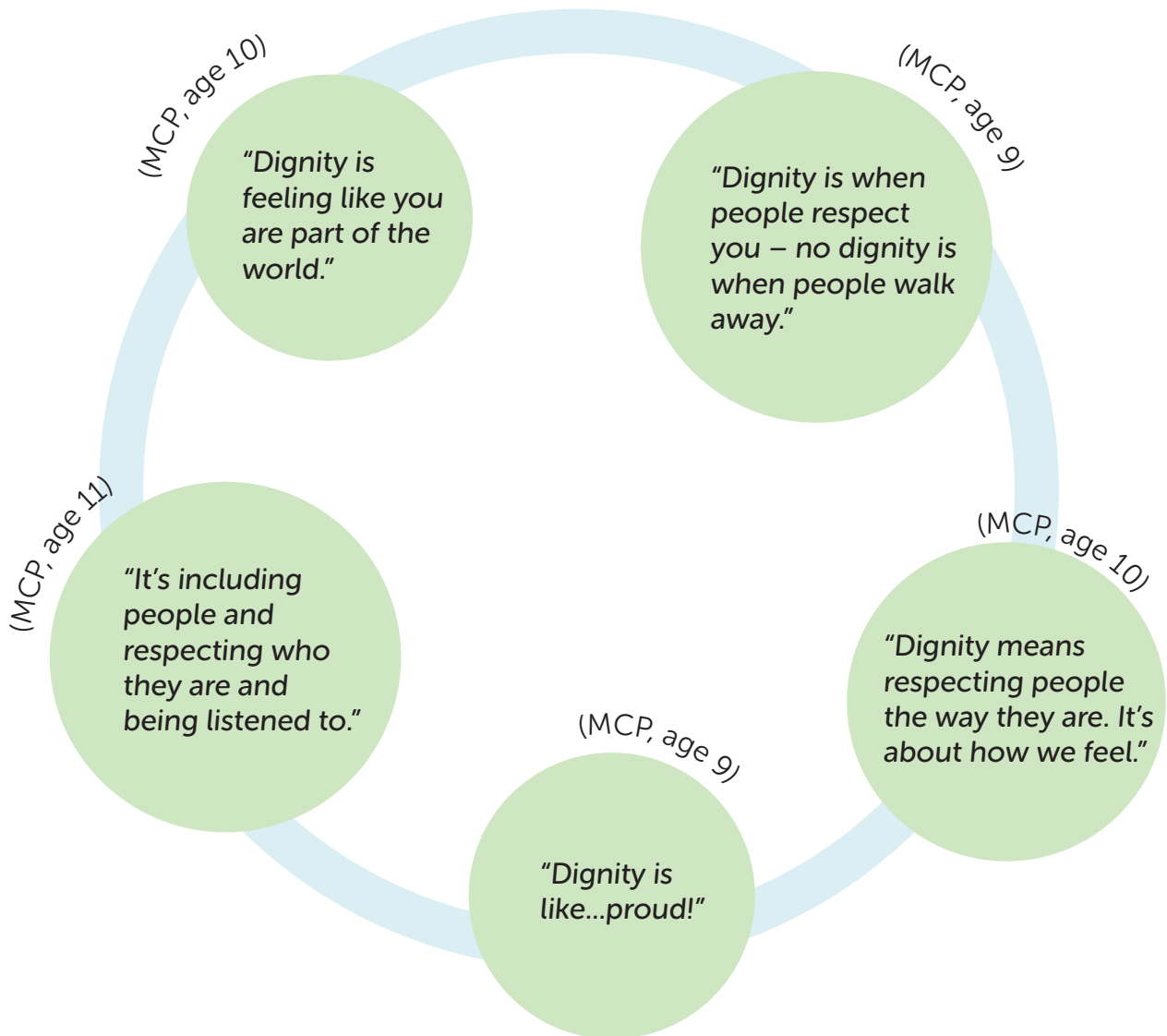
The consultation workshops involved 96 Members of Children's Parliament (MCPs)² between the ages of 8 and 13 years old: 47 boys and 49 girls took part. We worked in six settings – five primary schools and one secondary school in the following local authorities: Edinburgh, Aberdeen, Dundee, Fife, South Lanarkshire and the Scottish Borders. These areas were selected using SIMD data to identify areas where poverty might impact directly or indirectly on the children's lives. We sought to work with children from diverse backgrounds, experiences and abilities so that a range of views would be reflected in this report. The majority of children who were consulted with for this report have been directly or indirectly affected by poverty.

The quotes and artwork in this report come directly from the children.

² All children who participate in our projects and consultations become Members of Children's Parliament. Unlike other parliamentary bodies, Children's Parliament is not an elected body. Rather it is a participatory one, engaging with children across a range of settings in order to include as many children as possible.

What is human dignity?

To begin this series of workshops, the children explored the idea of human dignity. When asked to describe what human dignity means, children said:



At Children's Parliament we describe human dignity as:

"Every human being is important and special. Respect for human dignity means that we should be friendly and kind to others and it is wrong to hurt other people or make them feel bad about themselves. When you learn what human dignity means to you, you are less likely to accept when other people hurt, discriminate or put someone down. No one has the right to try to take away your human dignity."

The children identified what can happen in children's lives that might impact on their human dignity, either positively or negatively. The children organised their ideas into 'dignometers'.



Having Dignity

The children identified the following things as having a positive impact on their sense of dignity:

Being Appreciated

- Being praised and celebrated
- Being encouraged to improve at school
- When someone says well done or thank you
- Compliments
- A simple smile
- Hugs
- Laughing
- Having good manners and being polite
- People saying you are good at your hobbies

(MCP, age 10)

"You deserve certain things in your life."

Having a voice, being listened to and taken seriously

- Being given your say
- Being listened to
- Not being interrupted or people changing your words
- People acknowledge your ideas
- Being taken seriously
- People trusting you
- Someone to share your ideas
- People taking into account what you're saying

Being protected and cared for

Being supported
Having shelter
Knowing and being safe
When people help you
Getting help
People care about you
People love you for who you are (friends, family, teachers, staff)
Being loved
Someone looks after you



Being Loved

Feeling Included

People include you
Getting involved with our community
Sharing
Being invited to a party
Seeing other people happy
Being valued
Someone who gives up time to help you
A good community
People who share
Loyal friends

Lack of Dignity

For children, the things that impacted negatively on their sense of dignity included:

Bullying

Getting bullied by peers
When people make fun of you and call you names
Being picked on
Talking behind your back
When your friends do something they think is funny but it really hurts the person's feelings
Discrimination - racism, sexism, sectarianism, sexual orientation
Family saying mean things

"Your family should be where you go when things go wrong, but if they don't treat you right then that is the greatest loss of dignity."

MCP, age 10

Not being listened to / being ignored

No one to speak to
Not being listened to
When someone stops you from talking
People ignore your ideas
No one listens to what you have to say
People talk over you
Shouting and swearing
If you get something wrong and people laugh at you
Rudeness

Not being taken seriously

People don't care about your opinions
Parents blaming children
When people talk for you
People saying you can't do anything right

Unprotected

No one protecting you
Nobody who you trust
No one who's there for you
Being hit
When people walk away
Seeing your parents fight

Being neglected

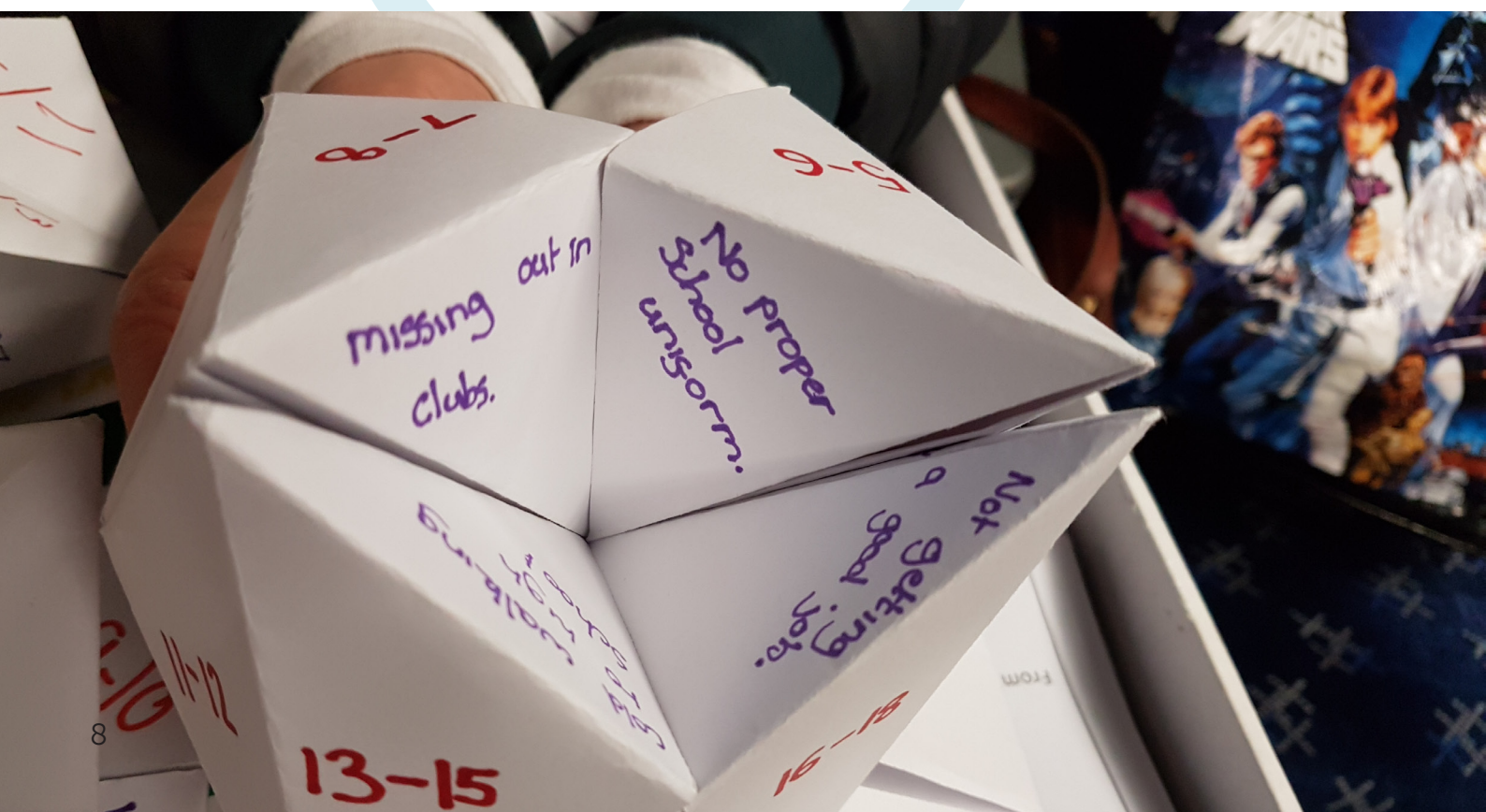
Forgotten
Being pushed aside / left out
Unsure of what will happen
People leave you out
Neglect
Feeling lonely
Feeling cold
All by yourself

Other

Being poor and homeless
No opportunities
No education
No family or friends
Poverty

Not feeling cared for

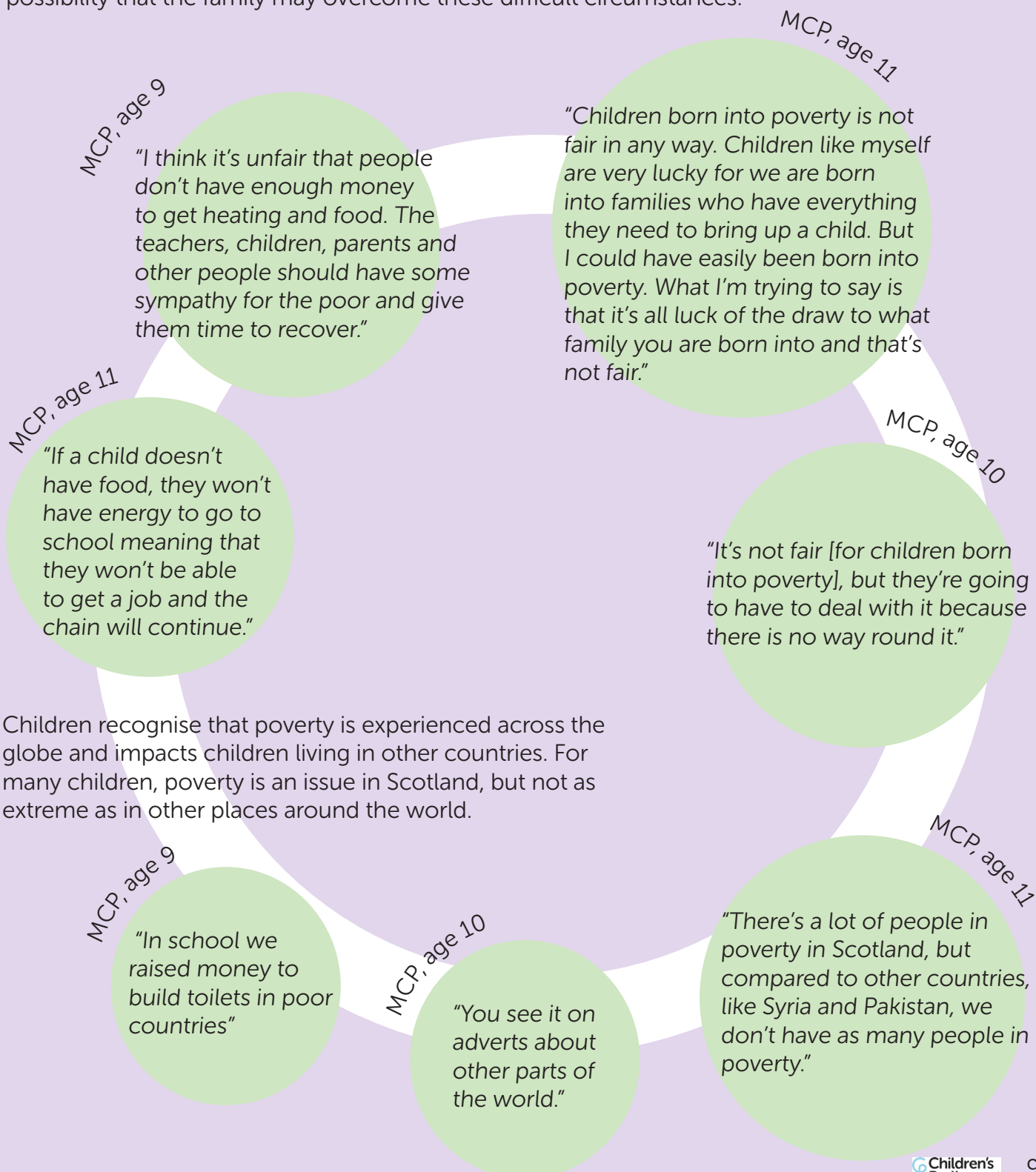
When you feel unwanted
When someone tells you you're not good enough
Family not treating you right
Not being looked after properly



What is Child Poverty?

Poverty is one of the things children highlight as having the potential to take away their human dignity. To children, 'poverty' means **poor people, not having enough money to buy things, and the difference between rich and poor people.**

Children recognise that poverty is not experienced the same way for all families. There are some children who are born into poverty and it is the reality for that family for generations. For others, it is a temporary experience due to ill health, unemployment or family breakdown, but there is a possibility that the family may overcome these difficult circumstances.



Children recognise that poverty is experienced across the globe and impacts children living in other countries. For many children, poverty is an issue in Scotland, but not as extreme as in other places around the world.

Because poverty is often framed as something that happens elsewhere in the world, these workshops created a space in which to consider how poverty is experienced here in Scotland.

MCP, age 10

"We don't have that many in Scotland [living in poverty] but for a small country, we have a lot."

MCP, age 9

"It's not like the biggest problem right now [in Scotland], but if something was to happen that meant there wasn't enough money, it might get worse."

MCP, age 13

"It made me think about poverty in a bigger way. It doesn't just mean homelessness, it means much more."

Children wonder why poverty is still such a big issue in Scotland, and in the world generally, when so much has been said to have been done to address it previously. Some children express disbelief and frustration about the fact that so many children and families are struggling. They want laws and systems to be put in place that will make a meaningful difference to people's lives and reduce the number of children living in poverty.

MCP, age 10

"They're doing stuff, but there's still people in poverty. That means what they're doing is pointless because it mainly helps the rich."

MCP, age 12

"I think you should move poverty up as a priority because it's becoming more likely to happen."

MCP, age 12

"There are so many people that do not have money. As we know, money is an everyday necessity, especially for those with children or no job. I personally feel that we could do much more!"

Education
is
free
but
a lot
of things
are not

Healthy, Happy and Safe

Children's rights are about ensuring that children are healthy, happy and safe and that they have a say in their lives. The UNCRC provides a set of minimum standards against which we can measure how we're doing and below which we must not fall. Children feel it is especially important for children and adults to be aware of children's rights and view them as a way to ensure that children live free from harm and are able to thrive.

"I think more people in Scotland (especially kids) need to know about their rights. If something unfair happens, then they know what to do."

MCP, age 11

"People only have one life, so you need to have a good one! Once it's gone, it is gone."

MCP, age 10

Below are children's examples of what they feel children need to be healthy, happy and safe throughout their lives, from before birth to young adulthood. These characteristics are not simply a checklist; they are the basis for a life lived with dignity.

Before Birth

Healthy mum who eats healthy food, does not drink or smoke
Materials to be ready for the baby (e.g. cot and a baby blanket)
Ultrasounds

Baby

A name	Toys
Bath	Good care
Cot	Family time
Breastfeeding milk	Nappies
Baby food	Baby gates

Toddler

Play and toys	Childminders
Milk	Naps
Potty training	Love and care
Help to learn to walk and talk	Doctor
Vaccinations	Healthy food

5 Years Old

Access to school	Safe school
Clothes and shoes	Zebra crossings
Friends	Lollipop person
Pets	Be in nature
Encouraging Parents	Access to outdoors
Time to play	

8 Years Old

School supplies
Support
Clubs to meet new people
Sports, games and art
Stationery
TV / Xbox
Pocket money
School trips

12 Years Old

Relationships and friends
Entertainment
Phone and headphones
Education
Deodorant
Sports

12+

Bras
Sanitary towels and
tampons
Friends
Relationships
Money

Social media
Internet access
Keys
Privacy



How poverty impacts life at home

For children, a home should be a **safe, peaceful** and **happy** place to live and grow up in. Poverty can affect children and their families' home life in different ways. Families living in poverty may not be able to afford basic items which are essential to ensuring children's rights are upheld and their human dignity uncompromised. Poverty can also impact upon both children and adults' physical and mental wellbeing as well as the relationships between family members in the home.

To children, it is important to have a **warm, heated** home to feel happy, healthy and safe. For families living in poverty, it can be difficult to pay for gas and electricity bills or purchase credit for pre-paid gas and electricity meters when running low. Being cold for long periods of time can have a significant impact upon a child's health and wellbeing which may, in turn, affect their day-to-day experiences at home, school or in the community.

"Children would be worried about affording basic things."

MCP, age 9

"People who do not have heating means they will get cold and ill. They will not focus in school because they are cold and unwell when they are doing work."

MCP, age 10

"My mum had a job, working all the time, but now she doesn't get as many shifts so we're struggling at the moment."

MCP, age 9

Children living in poverty may not have **warm, clean clothes** and **shoes**, and therefore feel **cold, uncomfortable** and **unhappy**. It can be difficult for families with little money to buy new clothes for their children or to be able to wash them regularly. Being "**manky**" and **dirty** can make children feel **embarrassed, unequal** and **different** to other children.

Families affected by poverty may not have money to buy enough food for everyone in the family. **Not having enough food** can affect a child's **body weight** and **growth**, resulting in the child being **undernourished**. Not having the healthy food or eating too much **junk food** can result in a child becoming **overweight** and **unhealthy**. Children who have not had breakfast or proper meals might feel **hungry, ill, tired** and **unable to focus** at school.

Living in poverty can affect a family's ability to purchase personal healthcare items such as **toothbrushes, toothpaste, medication** and, for families with young children, **nappies**. Families may also struggle to access health appointments and routine vaccinations if they do not have a car or enough money for public transport.

Children may be affected by poor health and hygiene in different ways throughout their childhood. A baby or toddler might feel **dirty, smelly** and **stressed** if their nappies are not changed very often. Older children might not be able to afford items such as **deodorant** and, for girls, **sanitary items**. Being unclean might make children and young people feel **anxious** and **self-conscious**.

MCP, age 11

"You need to have the right medicines. If you're ill and can't get to the doctor, you need to be able to buy some medication from the shop."

MCP, age 11

"About 11 or 12, when your body starts to change and you get your period, you may not be able to buy all the things you need – tampons and stuff. I think a girl would be really anxious and cautious because she'd be constantly worried that she'd get her period. She'd be really self-conscious."

For young people and parents, not being able to afford **condoms** or access other forms of **contraception** may also bring about feelings of **anxiety** and **stress** in terms of personal relationships and family planning.

MCP, age 9

"If they [families] can't afford to have the heating on, children will be cold and uncomfortable."

Gas Bill
~~£227.64~~

Reduced
£102.17

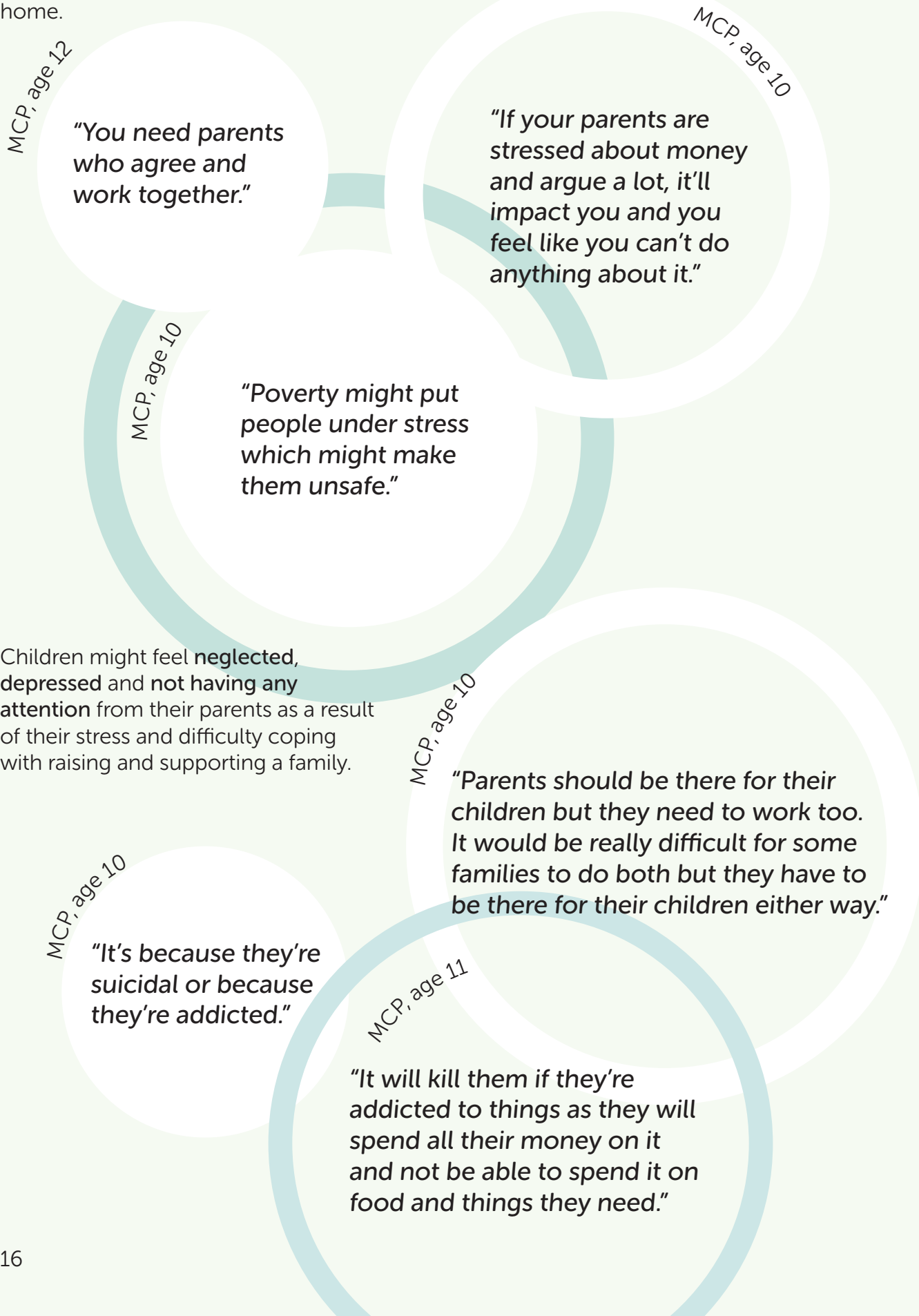
Wow!

AMAZING!

Energy Bill
~~£319.75~~

Reduced
£200.08

To be healthy, happy and safe at home, children feel it is important to have supportive and encouraging relationships with their parents. They recognise that parents sometimes need support to care for their children properly. The hardship of poverty and the anxieties about money can have a significant impact upon children and parents' mental health and relationships within the home.



Children may also have caring responsibilities at home, looking after their brothers and sisters if parents are at work and unable to afford childcare. Children may have little **privacy** or **space to themselves** at home if they share rooms (or beds) with siblings and / or parents which children may find **stressful**, **uncomfortable**, and **irritating**. Families affected by poverty may also not be able to buy toys, games, children's books or **something to cuddle into** which could make children feel **bored** and **sad to be missing out on having fun** at home.

MCP, age 11

"If children are abused or neglected, they need help to recover, otherwise it might affect their adult lives."

Children's recommendations:

- Provide extra support for single parents.
- Reduce the price in gas, electricity and utility bills.
- Put more money towards benefits.
- Create flexible working policies for parents.
- Build more council / social housing for families.
- Provide money / support to families in need of food.
- Open more foodbanks.
- Make clubs free or cheaper so more children can attend and socialise.
- Help people keep track of what they're spending.
- Talk with children who are living in poverty and listen to their suggestions!



How poverty impacts life at school

The impact of poverty on a child's life extends beyond the home into life at school. The anxieties and adversities children experience at home can have a profound knock-on effect on children's experiences at school. Children may be **absent a lot**, perhaps due to **not feeling very well** or difficulties at home. Children may be anxious about **getting into trouble for being late** or **missing the school bus** despite this not being their fault. Children feel it is important to have trusting, supportive teachers who they can talk to about worries or problems they might be having. Teachers should understand what goes on in a child's life outside of school and communicate this with other teachers.

MCP, age 9

"I think that even though school is free, it will be hard for them to concentrate because they're thinking all about what they're going to do next and how to get money."

MCP, age 10

"If you have a teacher who you trust, it's okay but you might feel stuck if you don't have anyone to tell."

Kids that don't have food may not focus at school.

There are many additional costs involved with going to school which may be significant barriers for families living in poverty.

MCP, age 11

"Education is free but a lot of school things are not."

Being unable to afford **new school uniform** at the start of each school year or replacing lost or outgrown items might mean that children feel **unhappy** and **different from others** who have proper school uniform. In some cases, **not wearing the dress code** can result in the child **not going to school** as the child can be sent home to put on the correct uniform which they do not necessarily have. Children might feel **confused** and **upset** in such a situation, or perhaps **frustrated** and **angry**.

School **supplies** such as **schoolbags**, **pencil cases**, **stationery** and **books** are items families living in poverty may struggle to afford. This can impact upon a child's ability to complete schoolwork at home, and might result in the child feeling **annoyed**, **left out** and **scared to get in trouble**. Using computers and internet at home for school projects or homework can be required and children who do not have access to these may feel **upset** and **anxious** about not being able to complete their homework.

MCP, age 9

"About once a year we get one big project which we need the internet for at home. For those who don't have it, they have to do the homework after school with the teacher."

MCP, age 12

"I think children should have better access to books for education purposes. To accomplish this, I think all schools should have a library with more non-fiction books as I believe this could really help children in getting better marks, grades and education."

Hunger can heavily impact upon a child's ability to function at school. Breakfast clubs and milk schemes can be helpful for children who do not get breakfast at home, but these sometimes come with a cost which some parents cannot afford. Some children may not have enough money for school dinners or, for those at secondary school, to buy food at lunchtime.

MCP, age 10

"Some people don't get milk at break because their parents can't afford it. You have to pay each term."

MCP, age 9

"Lots of children don't have money to buy food and school dinners are going up."

MCP, age 10

"Children should get breakfast so they're not hungry and tired and can focus on their work."

Poverty can also impact upon children's participation in opportunities such as **school trips** and **residential**s. Children feel it is unfair that there are children who cannot afford to go on school trips. They may feel **embarrassed**, **disappointed** and **lonely** because they get left behind when everyone else is away.

MCP, age 11

"I think that it is very important that you know that children living in poverty are missing out on opportunities. I believe that there should be a fund put in place so that children who are living in unfortunate circumstances can go on trips. These trips would be available for anyone in different circumstances and are vital for social interaction."

Feeling disengaged at school and struggling to fully participate in the classroom may also have consequences for the child's future. Feeling **worthless** and **isolated** in school may affect a child's experience as part of the school community, perhaps missing out on opportunities such as being part of the pupil council or leadership team. **Poor education** might lead to **not getting into university or college** or **getting a good job**, continuing the child's feelings of being left out, hopeless and worthless.

Children's recommendations:

- Reduce cost of school trips and residential
- Create a way for children to get cheaper school supplies
- Provide free / cheaper school uniforms for children
- Provide food cards to children for school dinners / lunch money
- Make bigger libraries at schools with better access to educational books
- Provide young people with career / further education support
- Provide schools and colleges with more money for libraries, school materials and free meals
- Give young people more financial support to attend college or university
- Talk with children who are living in poverty and listen to their suggestions!

No money for
trips in
school



Electronics



Education



How poverty impacts life in the community

Poverty is not something that simply affects one family; it can impact the whole community. To children, it is important that communities are **safe, clean** and welcoming places to grow up, with **well-lit streets** and **outdoor spaces** and **parks** to play in. Being able to **play** in the community parks is particularly important for children. For children experiencing difficulties at home, parks can **"help them get away from their problems"**. (MCP, age 9)

The burden of poverty on communities can affect both the physical environment as well as the relationships between people living in the area.

MCP, age 11

"If it's dark, then you might get jumped. It's not safe – there should be streetlights that work."

MCP, age 9

"People should pick up their dog poo."

MCP, age 11

"Communities should be clean and safe so children feel safe."

MCP, age 10

"Children shouldn't have to worry every time they leave their house."

Children feel that having **positive relationships with neighbours** and others members of the community are important and the power of small gestures such as a **simple smile** or **hello** to make them feel included and respected within the community.

MCP, age 11

"You need a nice environment with good neighbours."

MCP, age 10

"Children should not have to be scared of people."

When families have what they need and are not struggling, the whole community benefits and children feel safer, healthier and happier in the area where they live. **Community foodbanks, clothes banks and housing shelters** can provide support to families unable to afford enough healthy food, good quality and warm clothing, rent or a mortgage. However, these services may not be used by some families, due to the stigma and embarrassment associated with them.

MCP, age 9

"You need clubs to keep you happy. If you stay at home, you get bored."

MCP, age 10

"People in poverty might be scared to ask for help or go to a foodbank because they don't want to look weak. They want to be seen as strong."

Poverty can also impact upon a child's opportunity to join in with **clubs** and **activities** in the community. The majority of sports clubs or social activity clubs come at a cost which families struggling with money might not be able to afford each week or, in some cases, the upfront payment at the beginning of the term. Missing out on clubs and activities can have both physical and social / emotional consequences. Children unable to participate in sport clubs may be **unfit** and **unhealthy**. Children's social life and mental health may also be affected as children may feel **left out** and **isolated** if **stuck at home**. Children may also feel **jealous** of other children who are able to attend the clubs, and perhaps **embarrassed** about their situation.

As well as clubs, children miss out on **going to parties**. Some children might not get invited to parties and for those that do, the cost of **buying a present** for the child might be too much for the family to afford. Similarly, families living in poverty may find it difficult to **host parties** given the costs attached such as paying for activities, food and party bags for other children.

Families in both rural and urban areas may also encounter difficulties joining sports clubs and activities and social events if they do not have **access to a car** or enough money for **public transport** to get there.

MCP, age 9

"If your dad is at work and your mum doesn't drive or you don't have a car, you might not be able to do things outside of your village because you can't get there."

Young people affected by poverty may also miss out on social, educational and professional opportunities if they are unable to afford travelling on their own by public transport. For those aged 17 and above, the opportunity to **learn to drive** and perhaps **purchase a car** are also significant costs which may be out of the question for those living in poverty.

Children and young people living in poverty may miss out on socialising with friends in public spaces and online if they do not have access to a mobile / smart phone. For many children, phones are essential for **communicating with friends** and to keep in **contact with parents** when out in the community. **Phones** (as well as tablets and laptops) also enable children and young people to keep in touch with friends on **social media**.

Feelings of being **left out**, **jealousy**, **embarrassment** and **fear** of others knowing they **don't have the same** material possessions can be linked to experiences of being bullied, a reality faced by many children living in poverty. Children might be made to feel "**weird**" or "**cheap**" if they do not have the latest technology such as **games consoles**, **laptops**, **tablets** and **phones** or **new designer clothes**, **shoes** and **make-up**.

MCP, age 10

"You need phones because nowadays people like to talk with others on social media."

MCP, age 11

"If you didn't have a lot of money, you might be jealous of other people, especially if they're bragging or showing off."

MCP, age 11

"If one of your friends has a lot of money, they might make fun of you."

MCP, age 8

"People get bullied if they don't have fancy clothes."

MCP, age 9

"If you're not dressed in good clothes, they might pick on or bully you."

Yet, despite the negative impact poverty can have on children's friendships and social lives, children express great empathy and compassion when considering the value and meaning of friendship more broadly.

MCP, age 11

"If they're your actual friend, they don't care about whether you're rolling in money or not."

MCP, age 10

"They're not a true friend if they make fun of you."

MCP, age 9

"No matter how poor you are, it shouldn't impact on your friendships."

MCP, age 10

"They could share with you if you don't have much to make you feel better."

Children's recommendations:

- Ensure children and their families have access to computers and the internet.
- Make social activities and clubs cheaper for families.
- Open more food banks or make food less expensive.
- Provide shelters for people without homes.
- Provide money to communities affected by poverty.
- Spend more money on streetlights and cleaning parks.
- Provide cheaper public transport to children and their families.
- Talk with children who are living in poverty and listen to their suggestions!



As a world, we all come in different shapes and sizes. We should work together to help us be who we want to be!
WE CAN'T LIVE WITH POVERTY

Final Messages

The purpose of this consultation is to bring the voices of children forward to influence how we make real our commitments to improve wellbeing and our ambition to eradicate poverty, particularly for our youngest citizens. In addition to the key points raised throughout this report about how poverty impacts on children's lives at home, at school and in the community, there are also these final messages to help guide our next steps in tackling poverty.

For children living in poverty, they can carry a weight on their shoulders. This weight extends beyond life at home and it does not disappear when they go to school, participate in clubs or move into employment. Children recognise how poverty can impact upon all areas of life – they highlighted the connection between poor nutrition, housing, and other indicators of poverty with their success at school, ability to take part in activities, mental and physical health, and ability to develop and maintain positive relationships.

The experience of poverty has a deep impact upon children's relationships. Children want to have positive relationships at home, at school and in the community, but they describe how poverty can make developing and maintaining relationships difficult. A child may find it difficult to open up to and connect with people due to embarrassment, anxiety or fear about their situation or because they lack the words and emotional awareness to share their thoughts and feelings. Children feel that poverty adds another layer of difficulty to their relationships with parents, siblings, friends, teachers and community members.

Children view poverty through a lens of fairness. Children believe all children should have what they need in order to live and grow up healthy, happy and safe and they do not want anyone's life to be defined by poverty. Children have a deep sense of empathy for people who are struggling, and want everyone to be treated with dignity, regardless of their socio-economic status. To children, poverty does not reflect the character of a person, rather it is a condition that was unfairly put upon them.

MCP, age 12

"I would hate to be a child in poverty because when they go to school they might be unwanted, they might not have any friends and they might walk around by themselves and they might get bullied because they might not have any food and they might need to go to a foodbank. Or they might live on the street with their family and they might not get any sleep because they are worrying."

MCP, age 12

"I think that children should be treated fairly and should always have what they need for a normal kid's life."

MCP, age 9

"It doesn't matter if you're rich or poor, it shouldn't affect how people treat you."

Children want to be part of the solution. The children want adults to listen to what they have to say and take their views and ideas seriously. It is essential that adults commit to taking time and creating spaces for children to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings and, once they have heard from children, to use the information to take action.

About Children's Parliament

Children's Parliament is Scotland's Centre of Excellence for children's participation and engagement.

Children's Parliament works for a future where all children in Scotland are actively engaged in shaping our world so that everyone is healthy, happy and safe. We believe all children should live and grow with dignity and be valued for what they can offer the world.

We work creatively through projects, consultations and training programmes to improve communication between children and adults and to build relationships based on mutual respect and understanding. This enables us to explore our world together. We provide children with opportunities to share their experiences, thoughts and feelings so that they can influence life at home, in school and in the community through change at a local and national level. Our interest is in working with children, the adults who love and care for them, and the wider community in which they live in order to support our country to meet its obligations to our youngest citizens.

Children's Parliament uses a rights-based approach and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as the foundation for all of our work.

In 2017, Children's Parliament turned 21 years old. To celebrate our birthday, we reviewed our work and published "What Kind of Scotland?". This reflective and celebratory report highlights the voices of Scotland's children:

<https://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/what-kind-of-scotland/>

"My advice is plain: listen to the little people and you will make Scotland a child-friendly country! In the case of child poverty, the best person to ask is a child. What we think should make an impact on Scotland!"

MCP, age 9