

Back to school survey results briefing

By Save the Children & Family Action

Introduction

In August 2009 Save the Children and Family Action commissioned YouGov to carry out a survey amongst parents to better understand the pressures that 'back to school' costs present families during the summer and when schools return. The survey shows that meeting extra costs during the 'back to school' period could be a widespread problem amongst UK families.

The results of the survey clearly shows that many parents, particularly those on low incomes (less than £12,000) face real difficulty in meeting living costs and additional costs during the 'back to school' period. These results and Save the Children's and Family Action's experience of working with children and their families shows that the government needs to introduce measures that support families meet additional costs at specific times of the year and ensure that existing measures (such as free school meals and clothing grants) are more widely available.

Parents with an income below £30,000

Over 51% of parents surveyed with an income below £30,000 said they can't afford everything. Suggesting that even for those not on the lowest incomes, back to school costs present real difficulties. 52% of those that can't afford everything said they are going to have to cut back on essentials (such as paying bills or their food budget).

The parents that can't afford everything were asked what items they are going to have problems affording. 43% say they are likely to have problems buying the full school uniform, while 26% say they won't be able to buy their children the full PE kit and 19% the books and equipment which their children need.

35% of parents who can't afford everything are worried that their children will get in to trouble at school for not having everything. 28% are worried that their children's education will suffer because they cannot afford everything they need.

Parents with an income below £12,000

The survey reported that 59% of parents questioned earning under £12,000 say they will not be able to afford everything their children need. Of those who won't be able to afford everything they need 49% say they will have to miss out on buying certain back to school items.

Respondents were asked which items they would have problems affording. 50% said new shoes and 49% said a new winter coat. 28% say they will actually have to miss out on buying a new winter coat for their children while 17% say they won't be able to buy new shoes. 21% said they will miss out on buying books and equipment which their children need for school.

45% of parents surveyed in this income bracket who are unable to afford everything are worried it will mean that their children stands out for not having everything that other children have. 38% said they are worried their children will get into trouble at school because they don't have everything they should.

Save the Children and Family Action Grant Scheme

In partnership with Family Action, which has an established grants programme, we're delivering £150,000 funded by British Gas to those families most in need in the UK with small grants of between £100 to 200.

The grants are being distributed to around a thousand families in England, Wales and Scotland to help them pay for essential items such as new school uniforms and beds. Many of the families experience high levels of financial hardship at particular times of the year.

How is child poverty measured?

Statistics on child poverty in the UK are often based on Households Below Average Income figures derived from an analysis of the Family Resources Survey. It uses relative incomes on both before and after housing costs adopting a 60% of median income as a proxy for the

poverty line. The after housing costs measure provides the best indicator of disposable income and based on this there are 4million children living in poverty in the UK¹.

In addition 1.4 million children are living in severe and persistent poverty in the UK based on Save the Children's measure of severe poverty².

Save the Children's conversations with families show that being in poverty has a negative impact on their health, environment, wellbeing and access to services. For more information about how a lack of money can damage every aspect of children's lives, see our 2008 report, [Why Money Matters: Family income, poverty and children's lives.](#)

Our research has shown the real impact severe poverty has on families:

- Three quarters can't replace worn-out furniture
- Nearly half do not have enough bedrooms for children of different sexes to have separate bedrooms when they are 10
- Nearly a quarter can't afford to send their children on school trips
- A quarter can't afford to send their children to a toddler group, nursery group or playgroup at least once a week.³



¹ DWP (2009) *Households Below Average Income Statistics 2007/08*

² Save the Children (2007) *Severe child poverty in the UK*

³ Save the Children (2007) *Severe child poverty in the UK.*

Notes on the survey

All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from YouGov Plc. Total sample size was 1063 parents with a net-household income of less than £30,000. Fieldwork was undertaken between 6th - 11th August 2009. The survey was carried out online.

Save the Children

We're the world independent children's charity. We're outraged that millions of children are still denied proper healthcare, food, education and protection. We're working flat out to get every child their rights and we're determined to make further, faster changes. How many? How fast? It's up to you.

Family Action

Family Action has been a leading provider of services to disadvantaged and socially isolated families since its foundation in 1869. We work with over 45,000 families a year by providing practical, emotional and financial support through over 100 services based in communities across England. A further 150,000 people benefit from our educational grants and information service. See www.family-action.org.uk for more details.