

Tackling the Impact of Poverty on Education

Case Study

Empowering Families

Welshpool Primary School



Welshpool Primary School is in Powys. It has 272 learners with 36% eligible for free school meals

Using the **checklist**, the school identified a need to **raise awareness** of how to seek and access support for a range of issues including **finances, housing** and day to day issues regarding their child's **health and wellbeing**. The school have daily **'meet and greet'** times where the Family Liaison Co-ordinator, Head and Deputy circulate on the playground and are available to chat with families. Children are also collected from parents on the playground each day by class teachers. Conversations during these times gave staff **valuable insight** which could then be fed into the checklist. Families were also found to be struggling with their own **mental health** when managing **poverty related issues** and it became clear that these families needed more time to explore this than the short time available on the playground.



The school has a **community room** where sessions with families can be held. As part of the **Action Plan**, the school started working closely with the **local Citizen's Advice** team. Staff completed **training** to support parents with the using **online tools** available from Citizen's Advice and also set up a **referral system** for families requiring more specific support. The school also set up a similar system of referral to the **local council**. Citizen's Advice have provided **banners** which are displayed in the school to **signpost** parents to the online benefit checker toolkit and wider services available.

The school also runs a **parent and toddler group** and **drop-in** sessions for **health and wellbeing** advice with involvement from the **school nurse** and the local **health visitor**. Parents can receive guidance and **support** with their children's health and **referrals** to relevant teams can be made if needed. These sessions also enable more general conversations about **family health and wellbeing**, providing opportunities for **signposting**.

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As a result, staff are more **confident** with **supporting families** to deal with poverty related issues. They feel **empowered** as they can now offer possible solutions rather than just sympathise. More families are aware of how to manage the **system of support** that exists locally. This has been reflected in the type of daily conversations had on the playground.

Future plans include hosting virtual live advice sessions with the Citizen's Advice team in the community room. There are also plans for a **parent support group** with Mind. A **mother and baby** group is also planned including baby massage in order to engage with parents **from the very start** leading up to their child starting school.

When **evaluating** the action taken, the school reflected that hearing what families needed **first hand** on the playground has been invaluable. Using this to inform and involve relevant actors enabled the **multi-agency** working that continues to grow. They now feel more confident with reaching outside of the school to build a **network of support** and encourage other schools to do the same to reap similar benefits.

[Find out more about the programme here](#)

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Engaging in School Life

Pembrokeshire Learning Centre



Pembrokeshire Learning Centre is a PRU and ALN provision, based in schools across Pembrokeshire. On average, 48% of pupils are eligible for free school meals.

Using the **checklist**, the school identified a need to provide **alternative ways** of engaging disadvantaged learners and their families. The Pembrokeshire Learning Centre (PLC) is a **pupil referral unit** based across 3 sites. Using the **Checklist**, PLC identified the need for to develop better ways to maintain **good communication** with families and to limit learner **absences**. They also sought ways to improve **engagement** with parents/carers to be **more involved** in the life of the school and their child's education.

In one particular case there was a **lack of communication** with the school by a parent who had no internet or mobile phone credit, so was unable to access school messages or apps, resulting in a poor relationship with the school.



As part of the **Action Plan**, the school introduced the **ClassDojo App** to parents at the **admission meeting** and guided them through the process. Staff also make regular **positive phone calls to all parents/carers** of learners in all of PLC's provisions, giving positive updates on learners. and has resulted in **better engagement with families**. In the above example the family were provided with a laptop to enable both the learner and parent to engage better with the school and to improve communication via the ClassDojo App.

During **introductory visits** to the PLC, parents/carers were made aware of free access to school transport, free school meals, grant applications etc. A **flexible homework policy** introduced by the learning centre, to meet the needs of individual learners has been successful.

PLC promoted events provided by the **Pembrokeshire Parent Partnership Service** across the region to encourage and **provide opportunities to meet with other parents** and provide a social network of parents/carers. They also put on more events within the centres, with **regular coffee mornings and open afternoons**.



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The promotion of the ClassDojo App resulted in an **increase in the number of parents** signing up to the App, to **over 95%, giving parents/carers access to staff support** and being able to chart their children's **progress** in school. The loan of a laptop to one family made a huge difference, to both the **engagement** by the parent with the Centre and the progress made by the learner. A similar result has been achieved with regular **phone calls** and updates to parents.

The introduction of the **Class Chart App** has enables staff to **monitor learner's absences and eligibility for free school meals** and follow these up with parents/carers.

When **evaluating** the Action Plan, the centre identified that many areas were already covered by the Centre and the checklist exercise gave them the **opportunity** to improve how they supported learners living in poverty.

[Find out more about the programme here](#)

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Getting it Right for Learners

Pembrokeshire Learning Centre



Pembrokeshire Learning Centre delivers the Specialist Provision in Pembrokeshire, catering to learners with complex needs, through PRUs and ALN provision.

Staff and Governors at PLC went through the **Check List** and gave consideration to each of the 5 topics. PLC have an **ethos** of providing 'whatever it takes' to support learners to learn and access a full education. Strategies to support learners in poverty or disadvantage are already in place. PLC used the Price of Pupil Poverty as a **evaluation/measuring tool**.

Although there was a good awareness of poverty amongst staff, they would benefit from **refresher training** on what poverty looks like for their learners.

PLC have a relaxed **school uniform** policy. There is no requirement for branded uniform, only that clothing is plain and of a dark colour.

It was noted that there were learners within PLC who were entitled to but were not accessing **FSMs**. There was also a need to ensure families could access food during school holidays.

For **KS4** learners, it was identified that **housing** support and how to access it would be valuable.

As part of their **Action Plan**, PLC arranged refresher training with Children in Wales, giving staff an overview of the day to day impact that poverty has on learners' lives in school. PLC gave a presentation to staff and governors on implementing the Action Plan.

Information on grants, local support services and Applications for e-FSM, has been added to the admissions pack, to ensure those who are entitled to FSM can **access** them and families know where to get help, eg community projects, food banks. PLC has undertaken **monitoring** and tracking of e-FSM, to enable staff to know which learners to target for support.

Healthy breakfasts, water and mid-morning **snacks** are available to **all learners** in PLC settings, funded through LA budgets. A scheme on growing **produce** has been embedded into the curriculum and this is linked to cooking and making food.

To support female learners PLC considered how best to use the **period poverty** grant. The outcome was to provide both sanitary product and underwear, to be available to all female students in all KS3 and KS4, including accessible toilets.

All KS3 and 4 staff were trained to deliver the **Youth Homelessness** programme.



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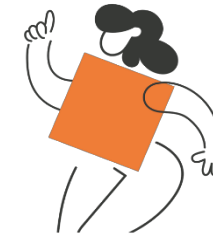
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Following refresher training provided by Children in Wales, all staff across PLC provisions have a fuller **understanding** of what poverty looks and feels like for their learners and able to better **tailor** their support to individual learners.

Staff can alert parents, via the Dojo App, to sources of **support** (eg PDG Access, food banks) and help with applications for these and free school meals. Every child across PLC is **ready to learn** during the school day and not distracted by hunger, having had a healthy breakfast and midday snack.

Support was given to parents/carers over the phone, resulting in a further 10 learners accessing **free school meals**.

There is **reduced absenteeism** by female learners, who are able to access sanitary products in all female and disabled toilets across the provision.

The Youth Homelessness programme is delivered to all KS4 learners and they have access to a support platform.

[Find out more about the programme here](#)

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Informing Families

Welshpool Primary School



Welshpool Primary School is in Powys. It has 272 learners with 36% eligible for free school meals

Using the **checklist**, the school identified a need to provide **'one stop' information** of how to seek and access support for a range of issues including **finances, housing** and day to day issues regarding their child's **health and wellbeing**. The school have daily **'meet and greet'** times and the Family Liaison Co-ordinator has an **open door policy** with has an office at the front of the school that is clearly visible on entry. However, she was finding that families were sometimes just requiring advice from her as to where to find information and she wanted to find a way for this to be given that was **quick and easily to hand** if she was not able to speak to them straight away or if their time was limited beyond a quick drop in.



The school has a **bank of information** and links to hand but getting the information to parents was being given on a need basis and often families would then need to see the Family Liaison Officer if they needed something else or more, which did not seem an **efficient use** of anybody's time.

The Family Liaison Officer decided to make a **'one stop shop'** online in the style of the Padlet available to schools from the **Price of Pupil Poverty project** for information that maybe needed by families to support with finances, housing, health and wellbeing etc. She then produced a **flyer** with a **QR code** linking to it which she takes out with her on the playground and has **readily to hand** in her office and around the school.



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As a result, the Family Liaison Co-ordinator has something **easily at hand** if a parent calls in and she cannot see them there and then. This may then be enough or they can take up something with her at another time. It is also given as a **future reference** point following support. **Families feel 'seen'** straight away and relationships are strengthened. It also means that the Family Liaison Co-ordinator can **better dedicate** her time running sessions and offering face to face support. Keeping the link **updated** to keep information valid and **relevant** and is now all that is needed for this to continue.

When **evaluating** the action taken, the school reflected that it can often be the **simplest solutions** that are the **most powerful**. The **checklist** proved to be a really useful tool in recognising this as it showed that despite the hard work of the Family Liaison Co-ordinator, there was an issue that needed addressing to make the system more efficient and **time spent** in a **better way** for all.

[Find out more about the programme here](#)

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Making Good Progress

Stepping Stones PRU



Stepping Stones is one of Pembrokeshire Learning Resource Centres (LRCs) based in Neyland and caters for learners with complex needs/school phobia at KS3 and KS4.

A learner at Stepping Stones PRU was selectively mute, potentially autistic, small for their age, with poor personal hygiene and low self-confidence. The learner refused to eat in front of others and was wary of adult males.

Many staff and **services** were involved with the learner including social care, paediatrician, Action for Children and the school nurse.

The **check list** identified that a number of issues needed to be addressed. These involved arranging an autism assessment, tools to encourage eating, addressing personal hygiene and strategies to promote communication and trust in other adults.

As the learner was at KS4 level, options for **Transition** also needed to be considered.

As part of the **Action Plan**, a male member of staff was identified to build a strong relationship with the learner, to encourage interaction and willingness to 'have a go'. ELSA was offered on a 1:1 basis, with sessions linked to the garden, art and addressing emotions. The school supported an autism assessment and liaised with the autism lead within the county.

A number of approaches were used to encourage eating and exploring food. These included providing a quiet room to eat, offering food requiring low motor skills at the beginning. Lunch was offered in a takeaway container to eat at home and food parcels were provided. The learner was buddied up with another learner to encourage cooking with another and explore recipes for healthy eating in Btec. Free sanitary and hygiene products were made available.

Voluntary work was arranged at an animal rescue centre, with parental support, leading to working with a dog to teach agility skills. This encouraged her to speak to the dog and another person, who was leading.

A laptop, art materials, calculator, stationery and a school bag were provided, to encourage engagement in education.

There were high levels of communication with post-16 providers but learner was not responding to emails regarding interviews. This was resolved by staff linking to providers and arranging visits and formal interviews.

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The input from staff and services to support the **Action Plan** for this learner has resulted in increased confidence, self-expression and communication. Staff have seen improved engagement with a range of activities, such as animal care, visiting the library and kyaking and the learner's fear of trying has been replaced by a growth mindset, improved concentration and social interaction skills.

They have shown a willingness to accept support from staff, including males and has built new relationships with learners in and outside of school.

The learner's attendance has improved and they have shown a conscientious attitude to studies, resulting in them achieving GCSE qualifications in English, maths and numeracy. They have exceeded their own initial aspirations, and given them a new focus on further qualifications. The outcome is that the learner has had the confidence to change her transition choice, moving from an engagement course to a Level 2 in Pembrokeshire college and work experience at a riding stables.

Staff commented that the learner looks healthier and happier.

[Find out more about the programme here](#)

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Ready to Learn

Welshpool Primary School



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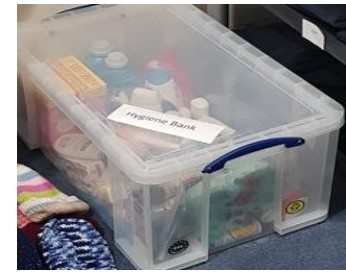
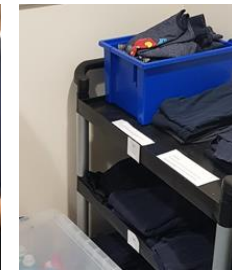


Welshpool Primary School is in Powys. It has 272 learners with 36% eligible for free school meals

Using the **checklist**, the school identified a need to improve the **overall presentation of groups of learners**. Groups of older learners also needed to have a better understanding of personal grooming and greater access to the products needed. The school has a flexible approach to **school uniform** with regard to logos and also works hard to ensure that parents are supported to apply for the **Pupil Development Grant** where entitled. Discussions with parents revealed however that factors such as **too few items**, a lack of suitable washing facilities and time due to **long working hours** meant that providing regular clean uniform and clothing was often an issue. Parents also reported that outgrown items were often passed on informally through a parent led Facebook group.

As part of their **Action Plan**, the school set up a **uniform bank** at the school, where donations of outgrown uniform are brought, laundered on site and placed into bundles for each age range. These are then available through the **Family Liaison Co-ordinator**, who works closely with families in order to recognise and respond to their needs. The school also works with the **community**, raising awareness of the issue with local groups and receiving donations of packs of underwear to include also. The uniform bank runs alongside and often in conjunction with the **parent led** Facebook group which enables the passing on or low cost purchase of uniform directly, including with parents from the high school.

In addition to this, the school receives community donations to a **hygiene bank**, where products needed by older learners are put into packs. **Workshops** are held regularly to increase awareness as part of the **Health and Wellbeing Area of Learning and Experience**, with learners given a pack to take home. Packs are also available on request, with take up and advice given logged to contribute to the school's **picture of the whole child**.



As a result, the school has observed an **increase** in the number of learners arriving at school dressed in **suitable uniform**, as well as an increase in older learners arriving well-groomed and **ready to learn** without fear of unwanted attention from peers. Future plans include the establishment of a **coat bank**, as learners have also been observed arriving at school wet or cold due to unsuitable outerwear.

When **evaluating** the action taken, the school reflected that the strength of their **relationships** with parents and the community had been a key factor in success, allowing understanding of the issues faced and enabling **'buy-in'** from the start. Linking the hygiene bank with **awareness** workshops was also judged to be a key factor, as **knowledge and understanding** then went hand in hand with receiving the products themselves. **Advice** to others includes prompt application for **grants** needed for resources at the outset and ensuring a **steady pace** for roll out.

[Find out more about the programme here](#)

Tackling the Impact of Poverty on Education

Case Study

Supporting Families

Maindee Primary School



Maindee Primary School is in Newport. It has 539 learners with 30% eligible for free school meals.

The school identified a need for staff to receive training around **poverty awareness** and to ensure that consideration to poverty issues were made when addressing **policies** and the **curriculum**.

The school were conscious that with the position of **trust** they held with their families and their links with **supporting services** they were well placed to **signpost** services for their families to access but needed staff to have full awareness of what help is available and a **central bank** of information to draw from.

The school were also concerned that even with good breakfast club numbers the most vulnerable learners were noted as missing the opportunity of a **healthy start** to the day due to waking up late or having to get themselves to school and the lack of fresh produce within the school's donated food hampers was also an area they wished to address.

The lack of **provision for pre school children and families** was also a concern.



School staff received **training** on poverty, signs of poverty and signs of exploitation.

Staff questionnaires were used to gather data and to collate information about links to organisations, with subsequent fact finding of available services to fill any knowledge gaps. A **Community Padlet** now stores all referral forms for services in one place.

Breakfast bars have been bought for every class and the school now participate in the **FareShare** programme to support learners and their families with healthy eating.

The school also applied for and secured funding through their PTA to start a **Mothers Together** project and also hold other family/parental meetings and events at the school so that parents can access a **safe space** with **safe faces**.

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As a result, parents are signposted to relevant services that can help when issues arise. Every child receives breakfast and new links with the Health Inclusion Team have enabled monthly drop in **health sessions**.

Future plans include growing the Well-being and Equity Team at the school and having some services permanently based at the school throughout the week. **Learnings** from the process include recognising that sending out information using home language videos using young interpreters in the early stages is beneficial.

Sharing and growing links with external providers has enriched the support that the school can offer to families in need and led to additional support from, for example, student **youth workers**, the **Health Inclusion Team** and the local **Police**. **Pupil voice** was also encouraged by the opportunity for the most vulnerable learners to speak to the Children's Commissioner for Wales.

[Find out more about the programme here](#)