

The briefing: school uniform grants

18 August 2017



We think there should be a minimum rate for school uniform grants across the country – but councils shouldn't have to make even more cuts to their budgets to fund them.

What are school uniform grants?

These grants to help low income families cover the cost of school uniform and essential items such as school bags, shoes and PE equipment.

The problem is the vary widely from local authority. You can find out what your own local authority pays [here](#).

How much should they be?

John Swinney said they should be around £70, but research from the Poverty Truth Commission said £129.50 would be a better amount.

Ensuring a consistent school uniform grant to all the poorest families would cost £13 million.

Council budgets have been hammered by £1.5 billion of SNP cuts since 2011. We think the SNP should stump up fresh cash to pay for a minimum rate.

As Scotland's pupils go back to school, Scottish Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, is this week focused on education.

To read more about our summer campaign, click the image below:



It's time to scrap charges on exam appeals

17th August 2017

It's time to scrap charges on exam appeals

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What are exam appeal charges?

In 2014 the SNP Government introduced a fee if an appeal, or an exam 'review', is carried out but no change is made to the grade awarded.

Before then, appeal costs were met centrally. Now, they come out of school budgets – already being hammered by SNP cuts.

What happened next?

Appeal rates for state schools fell through the floor. Now a private school pupil is three times more likely to appeal a grade than a state school pupil.

Why does this matter?

We want more pupils from poorer backgrounds to be able to go on to university. For many people an appeal can be the difference between getting on to university and not.

These charges are a financial barrier to going on to university. That's why Iain Gray, Labour's Education spokesperson, has written to John Swinney calling on him to end these charges,

Here's his letter:

Dear John

Exam appeal charges

All across Scotland, pupils will be weighing up whether to appeal a grade from their exams, with their results having come through last week.

The most recent available data shows that private schools are three times more likely to appeal their grade than state school pupils.

These charges for exam appeals are unfair and should be scrapped, all they have done since your government introduced them is tilt the education system towards those who can afford to pay and those who cannot.

The cost of these charges now fall on school budgets. State schools have already seen huge cuts during this government's time in office, with £1.5 billion slashed from local authority budgets since 2011.

Labour and the SNP agree that there should not be any financial barriers to going on to study after school, so we should work together to remove these charges.

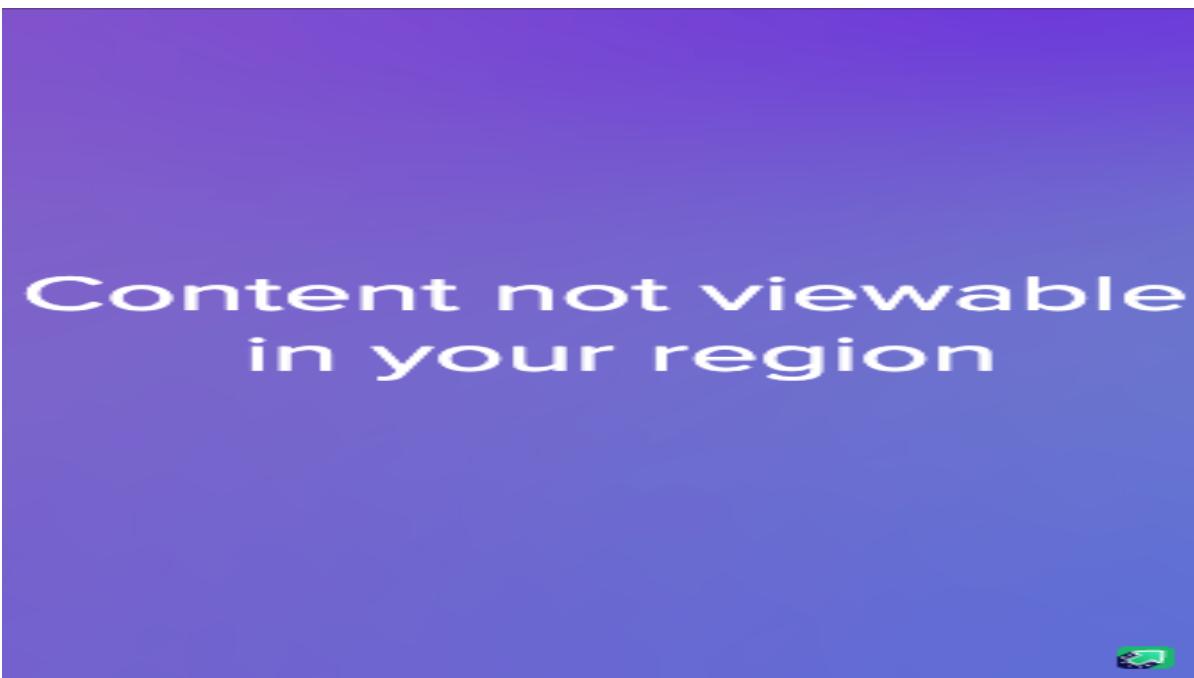
We should be taking every step possible to widen access to university and college. These charges, which the data shows have a deterring effect on state school pupils applying for appeals, stand in the way of that aspiration.

Sincerely,

Iain Gray
Labour Education spokesperson

As Scotland's pupils go back to school, Scottish Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, is this week focused on education.

To read more about the campaign, click on the image below:



Every young person deserves the opportunity to succeed

16 August 2017



Today we are calling for the Scottish Government to set up an independent expert review into the senior phase of school.

What does that mean? We want to see if Third to Sixth year is working properly for everyone.

The review should focus on 5 things:

1. The impact of 4,000 fewer teachers on pupil choice.
2. Access for pupils to subjects, particularly in Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths (STEM) subjects.
3. Access of each secondary school to regional colleges and local employers.
4. An update on access to vocational courses as the curriculum has narrowed.
5. The possibility of introducing a Scottish Graduation Certificate as a formal qualification.

Why do we need a review?

With fewer teachers in our schools, the curriculum is narrowing.

That means students studying fewer subjects.

Government guidance published two years ago encourages schools to link with local colleges and employers to allow pupils to pursue vocational courses and Highers.

But there has been no update on these partnerships, if every school has one, and whether they have helped pupils

In those two years Scotland has seen a decrease in the number of pupils sitting Modern Languages and STEM subjects.

We are concerned that pupils aren't able to access key subjects, particularly at the same time, to get the qualifications they want to go college or university.

The review should consider introducing a Scottish Graduation Certificate

Labour's plan for a Scottish Graduation Certificate would be a qualification gained at the senior phase of secondary school and would involve vocational courses, work experience, voluntary achievement and traditional exams.

It would build on the successful Scottish awards network and mean formal recognition for young people with fewer traditional qualifications. The

Scottish Graduation Certificate would also be a step towards an education system that recognises all talents.

We think every young person deserves the opportunity to succeed.

This week, Labour's summer campaign 'For The Many' turns to education. Catch up with the summer campaign in full here:



Education must be the top priority

15 August 2017

This week marks two years since I became Scottish Labour leader. Three elections, a referendum on the EU and the near constant campaign around the constitution in Scotland has been packed into that time – now it's time to take a breath and focus on what really matters.

I made education my top priority when I became Labour leader because I believe the transformative power it can have on people's lives. Giving people the skills they need to compete for the jobs of the future will cut the levels of poverty that scar our communities and grow our economy.

One of the first headline policies I announced as leader was a Fair Start Fund – extra funding for each of the poorest pupils in our primary schools, paid directly to head teachers.

Sound familiar? The SNP adopted the policy and rebranded it the 'pupil equity fund'.

I'm all for the SNP government taking Labour's advice when it comes to closing the gap between the richest and the rest. The problem is SNP ministers copied our policy – but not how to pay for it.

Labour would introduce a 50p top rate of tax on the richest to fund this extra investment in our young people – instead the SNP took it from central funding.

That is central funding for schools that has already been hammered by £1.5 billion of cuts since 2011. It is the definition of giving with one hand and taking away with the other.

The Scottish Parliament has the powers to do things differently now. Thanks to the new powers over tax delivered by the Vow there is no excuse for the Scottish Government to fail to give our schools the investment they need.

This week Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, adopts a 'Back to school' theme, as we highlight our plans to reform and increase investment in education. We'll highlight the SNP's failures too.

It's more than two years since Nicola Sturgeon took to the pages of the Daily Record to declare she had a 'sacred responsibility to ensure every young person has the same chance to succeed'.

Big words, but the numbers don't add up. The percentage of spending going to education and skills since the SNP has come to office has fallen, as it has pushed down the list of priorities for public spending.

In fact the SNP currently plan to spend more money cutting tax for frequent flyers than they plan to spend closing the attainment gap in our classrooms.

In 2016 the SNP lost its majority in the Scottish Parliament, and in 2017 it lost its direction.

Ministers can't bulldoze their plans through parliament anymore. They have to work with other parties.

That's why, I'll be making the case in parliament to push Labour ideas through on education.

Nicola Sturgeon promised Scots she was going to make education her top priority. I'm going to make her keep that promise.

Kez Dugdale is the Scottish Labour leader. This article first appeared in the Daily Record on 15 August 2017.

Scotland can lead world with Labour's plan to end period poverty

14 August 2017

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Access to sanitary products should be a basic right, but too many people in Scotland can't afford or obtain what they need.

That's why Labour MSP Monica Lennon is proposing world leading legislation to end period poverty.

Monica has launched a consultation on her Member's Bill which proposes:

- Put a duty on Scottish Ministers to introduce a universal system of free provision of sanitary products.
- Put a duty on all schools to provide free sanitary products in school toilets.
- Put a duty on all colleges and universities to provide free sanitary products in campus toilets.
- Introduce measures to allow Scottish Ministers to extend these duties to other bodies in future, following a period of review, if deemed appropriate or necessary.

You can have your say in the consultation by visiting www.periodpoverty.scot

A wide range of experts, organisations and charities, including the Children and Young People's Commissioner, have spoken out in support of the proposal

Children and Young People's Commissioner, Bruce Adamson said:

"Period poverty is a human rights issue. Having proper access to sanitary products is an essential element of human dignity and impacts on the ability to access other rights such as education, leisure and cultural activities.

I welcome this consultation which is particularly important for young people. It is important that as many young people as possible make their views heard through this consultation."

EIS President, Nicola Fisher said:

"At its AGM in June the EIS passed a motion to campaign for free sanitary products to be made available for pupils and students in all schools, colleges and universities. We fully welcome this consultation and look forward to engaging in open and constructive discussion to investigate how

best these products can be made easily accessible in educational establishments. We would also encourage many teachers and pupils to take part in order to help put an end to period poverty. It is shameful that in this day and age, many women and girls struggle to access basic sanitary products, which can have a significant impact on their health and wellbeing. This is a matter of basic human dignity, to which we should all be entitled, regardless of income."

The Trussell Trust Scotland Network Manager, Ewan Gurr said:

"The Trussell Trust network of foodbanks work at the frontline where we see the shame and embarrassment that the inaccessibility and unaffordability of sanitary items creates for many women and girls.

It has been a pleasure to work alongside Monica and others to raise the profile of period poverty and we fully support the launch of the consultation. It is our hope and belief that it will add weight to the call for approaches that place dignity at the heart of provision."

Suki Wan MSYP for Glasgow Shettleston, and Vice Chair of Scottish Youth Parliament said:

"This event, and the consultation being launched today, goes to the very heart of the Scotland we all want to live in. An overwhelming majority (99%) of the Scottish Youth Parliament's members, which democratically represents young people across Scotland, believe that access to menstrual hygiene products is a basic human right. The proposed bill would facilitate access to this right, particularly for young people who struggle financially, those who are homeless, or those who live in extreme poverty. It will help break down the 'taboo' status of menstruation in everyday conversation, and the multiple discrimination women and trans people who menstruate experience as a result of period poverty. On this pressing issue, SYP stands in support of the bill and ending period poverty for good – so Scotland can really become the best place in the world to grow up."

NUS Scotland Women's Officer, Shuwanna Aaron said:

"This consultation will be welcome news to people in Scotland who have periods. No one should have to experience the indignity of having to go without vital sanitary products they simply cannot afford and it's important to remember that as well as impacting women, period poverty can also affect non binary people and members of the trans community.

"We've already seen great examples of students' associations and community organisations providing free products but with limited resources and ever declining budgets this is simply an unsustainable solution. The unfair cost of sanitary products can have significant financial impact on households, individuals and students struggling financially. In turn there can be a hugely negative impact on health and wellbeing, and it's imperative to ensure that everyone in this country has access to the sanitary products they need."

Women's Aid South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire CEO, Heather Russell

said:

"We have been enthused by Monica Lennon's address of this issue which is reflective of wider challenges faced by women.

"Women's Aid South Lanarkshire and East Renfrewshire have always distributed donations including sanitary wears to those we support, however, following meeting and discussions with Monica we moved to a more respectful 'help your self' approach. This allows any person who requires sanitary wears to take what is required without having to ask from readily available stocks of donated goods in our office toilets, and all refuge accommodations.

"In understanding the challenges those we support are faced with we feel it important to lighten the load in any way that is practicable. With this in mind our 'help your self' approach has been extended to all generously received donations including clothes, toiletries and food.

"Whilst we do what we can as an organisation, we have our limits. As such, we fully support Monica's proposed Members Bill which seeks to make access to essential sanitary products a legal right and look forward to further supporting her in this endeavour."

As Scottish schools come back from their summer holidays, Scottish Labour's summer campaign, For The Many, is this week focused on education and schools.

To read more about our campaign, click the image below.

