THE COST OF
THE SCHOOL DAY
WORKING GROUP GUIDE

CHILD POVERTY ACTION GROUP

THE COST OF
THE SCHOOL DAY

Children North East
Poverty Proofing

WHAT IS THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY?

Parents spend an average of £800 per child each year on school costs.
(The Children's Society, 2014)

Cost of the School Day helps all children and young people to take part and be happy at school. We work with everyone to make sure money is never an issue.

We help school communities and local authorities to take action to support families on low incomes, so all children and young people can fully participate in their education.

WHAT DOES THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY DO?

Direct work in schools

Advice, support and training

Resources for schools

Practice gathering and sharing best practice with other schools

Collaborative approach

Direct support from the Cost of the School Day team

Our team is always happy to provide ongoing support to schools who are implementing a Cost of the School Day approach. Drop us a line if you have any questions or if you'd like to let us know how you're getting on.

Coventry practitioner:

Richard Barrie
rbarrie@cpag.org.uk

HOW CAN A WORKING GROUP HELP?

There are lots of benefits to having an active working group.

Consultation: a working group will support your school to see the whole picture of the costs of the school day for pupils and their families.

Collaboration: an effective working group will help to share the load of the Cost of the School Day approach in your school.

Momentum: by getting together regularly to discuss the school's CoSD programme, a working group will help to keep things moving.

# KEY ELEMENTS OF THE WORKING GROUP PROCESS

- Establishing goals
- Deciding membership of group
- Choosing a facilitator
- Analysing the report
- Making an impact
- Setting milestones
- Open communication
- Evaluating the progress
- Reflective practice
- Celebrating your achievements

WHO SHOULD BE INVOLVED IN THE WORKING GROUP?

It is up to the school to decide who should be involved in the working group.

Ideally, working groups should be made up of a cross-section of the school community e.g. staff, pupils, parents, governors and key staff involved in tackling poverty and disadvantage on a daily basis.
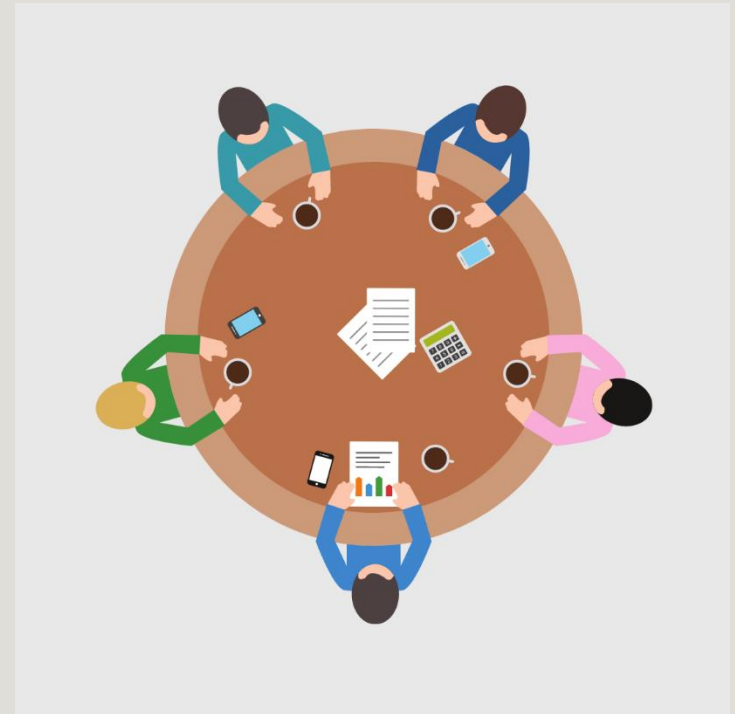
WHAT COULD A WORKING GROUP LOOK LIKE?
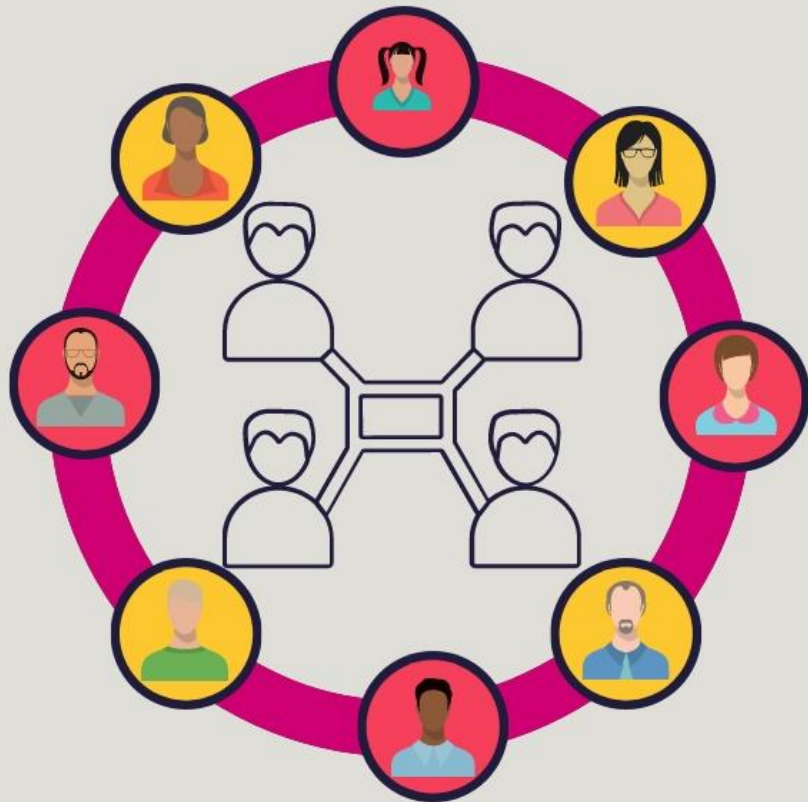
Pupil representative

Member of the PTA

Governor with Pupil Premium responsibilities

PE lead

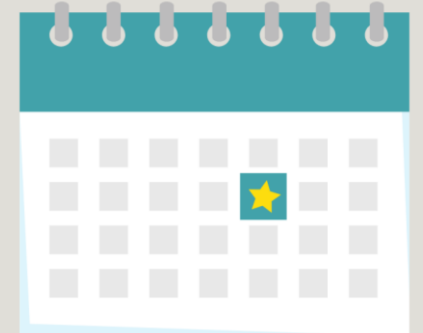Member of pastoral staff

Deputy head teacher

Pupil Premium lead

Head teacher

WHEN SHOULD A WORKING GROUP MEET?

It is important to consider when and how often a working group meets.

We suggest that the working group meets once a term to discuss how the CoSD approach is working in their school. You may find that it is most convenient to hold meetings immediately after school as pupils and staff are on hand, and parents often find it easier to attend.

Some schools have found inventive ways of organising their working group, for instance, including the working group into enrichment activities.

Smaller sub-groups

The working group may choose to divide the actions that need to be taken. Smaller sub-groups can be formed so the relevant staff members can focus on specific recommendations and actions.

INTRODUCING YOUR WORKING GROUP

1. **Everybody introduces themselves**, shares their role in the school or community, and gives their reason for wanting to be part of the working group.

2. **Set an agenda and establish a goal** for future meetings. Working groups are created to solve a specific issue, so spend some time defining the goal.

3. **Designate a facilitator**

4. **Pace yourself** – change is a slow process.

THE ROLE OF THE FACILITATOR

The facilitator coordinates meetings and keeps the group moving forward. Without a facilitator, meetings may not be as productive as they could be and there may be a lack of accountability. Facilitation is about making sure that the group is achieving collaborative change.

Facilitators are responsible for things like:

- Setting up meetings
- Making sure the meetings are productive, timely and inclusive
- Setting the agenda for each meeting in advance

The working group is collaboratively accountable for progress.

ANALYSING THE COST OF THE SCHOOL DAY REPORT

The Cost of the School Day report is a comprehensive review of what works well for pupils in your school and what areas there are to explore, to reduce the financial barriers for pupils and their families. When analysing the findings and recommendations in the report, the group needs to reflect on the **good practice** and **areas to explore sections**.

1. What do we think about this?
2. What is making us think that?

The report contains thematic sections ranked by order of importance: sections which should be given the highest priority are labelled (1), medium priority (2), lowest priority (3).

It is important to consider the highest priority areas, as they need to be addressed without delay. **Looking at which recommendations could be quick-wins is key**: these can be addressed first, as it will help motivate the group and build momentum in the school. It may also be worth implementing some medium priority (2) recommendations if you think that they would be quick-wins.

Quick wins are:

Easy to implement

High impact

Low cost

MAKING AN IMPACT

The working group is a platform for action and can really make an impact in your school.

When your working group is first set up, it can be really effective to agree simple actions (quick wins) and implement them straight away: they can be a boost to help the project continue to move forward.

Eventually, you may find that your school wants to build **more ambitious strategies**. The working group can really help with this.

A **collaborative, whole-school approach** with shared division of responsibility will make the Cost of the School Day a success in your school, as it is **inclusive** and allows for **multiple voices to be heard**.

Effective tools for making an impact:

1 Excellent communication

2 Recording and collecting evidence

3 Listening to the whole school community

4 Reflecting on the process

5 Continuously reviewing and improving practices

SETTING MILESTONES

For working groups to make progress with the Cost of the School Day project, it is useful to set milestones. Without milestones, it is difficult to evaluate the pace of the project. This is especially the case in busy schools, as this work is often carried out on top of staff's regular workload.

Realistic milestones enable the project to run at a healthy pace; milestones should be reviewed by the working group and adapted based on the progress of the project.

OPEN COMMUNICATION

Since the recommendations you're exploring can span your whole school, different stakeholders will have different interests in what action can be taken to create positive change.

To ensure the group isn't working in a bubble or duplicating work, find ways to share updates, get feedback, and communicate transparently.

Ways to communicate:

1 Sending weekly update emails

2 Creating open meetings

You can open up some or all of your working group meetings to the school community.

3 Sending surveys

4 Making it an agenda item for each school council meeting.

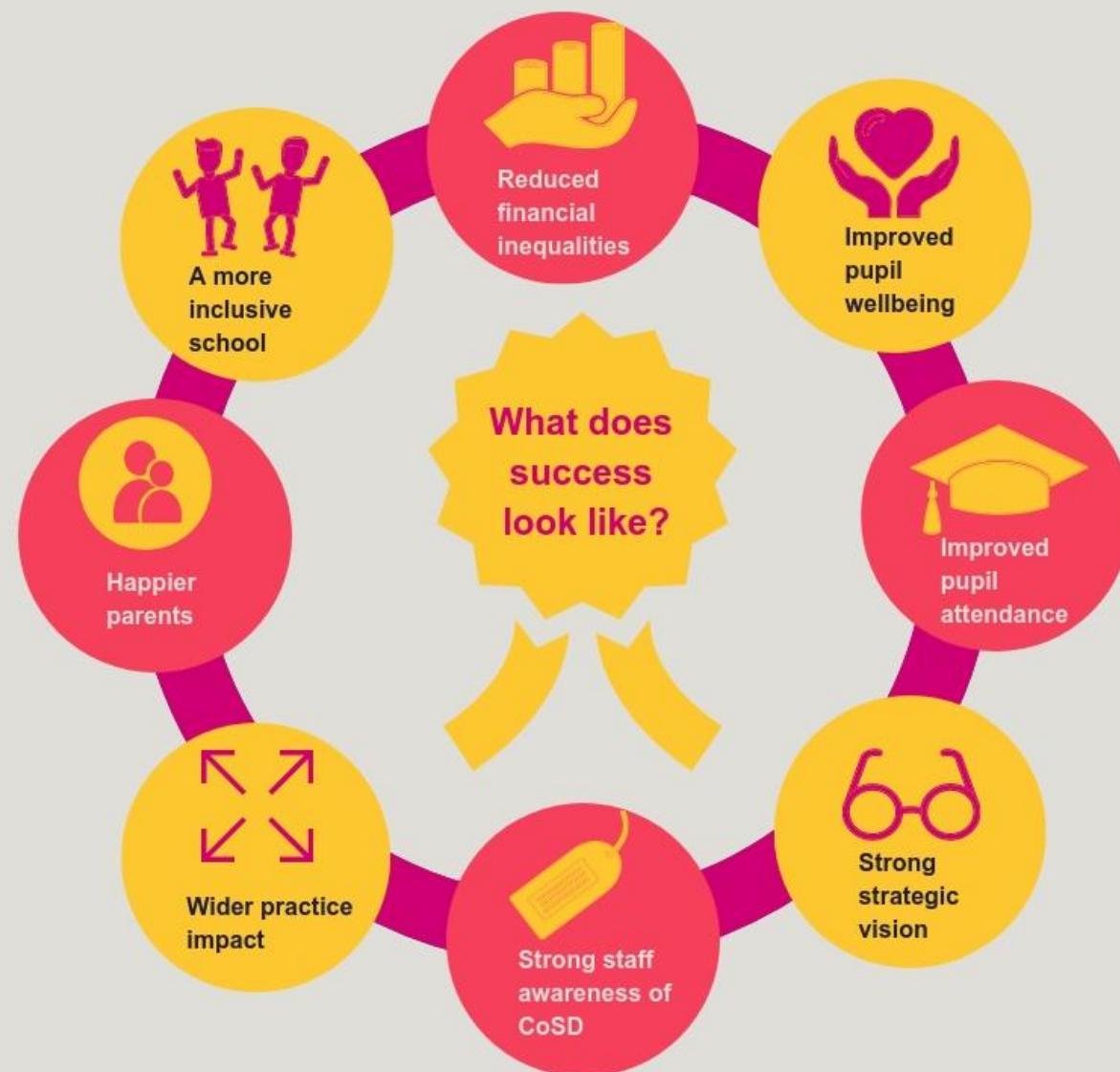This will update school councillors on progress. They can then communicate this information to their peers.

EVALUATE

What does success look like?

It's important to evaluate and reflect on the dynamics of the working group. Your time is important; every improvement that you can make will have a significant impact on the effectiveness of the group.

Monitoring the action plan and checking targets is a good way to evaluate the project. It will demonstrate the extent to which the working group is being successful at addressing poverty in your school.

Consulting with your school community is a good way to evaluate the project: what is the feedback from staff, pupils, governors and parents?

REFLECTIVE PRACTICE

As a practitioner, the working group is in addition to your day-to-day work. Sometimes, this type of extra work can add to your already busy workload. It is important to **reflect on the working group** and its successes and areas to continue to develop in the school.

You should feel comfortable having honest discussions about the group's future. Use your goals as a way to evaluate whether the group is still needed.

A working group could meet at the end of each half-term to reflect and discuss the progress of the project. The working group should celebrate the successes of the term and reflect on any points of further action needed.

Consider the following:
- Are you continuously addressing poverty in your school?
- Have you been able to address this issue taking a different approach?
- How has the school changed? Has its needs changed?
- Is the group still the most effective way to solve this problem?

Your group's regular evaluations and retrospectives are the perfect opportunities to bring up these questions.

CELEBRATE YOUR ACHIEVEMENTS!

REFERENCES

Harllee, J (2017) Crafting an Effective Working Group: working together to solve complex, cross-functional problems https://medium.com/etsy-design/crafting-an-effective-working-group-da77bded3aaf

McGill, B. (2015) The Secret Recipe for Successful Working Group Meetings: https://dynamicecology.wordpress.com/2015/02/26/the-secret-recipe-for-successful-working-group-meetings/

Modeshift Stars (2020) Modeshift Stars Guidance for Schools: Building a working group