

Feel safe & trust

INSPIRE  
More sympathy

# A guide to support young people facing financial hardships

tell me "you can do it"

Nobody knows what everyone is going through

SCHOOL VISITORS

Daily affirmations.

offer a helping hand 

TOGETHERNESS

No gossip

Have an open mind  + open heart 

Everyone equal

SUPPORT

Encourage

LISTEN!!!

make the world  
on it would  
classroom filled with  
are ready to listen  
ask if your not ready  
a classroom filled with  
support. A classroom where  
talk about these topics  
with love and no judgement.  
everyone is on the same playing field



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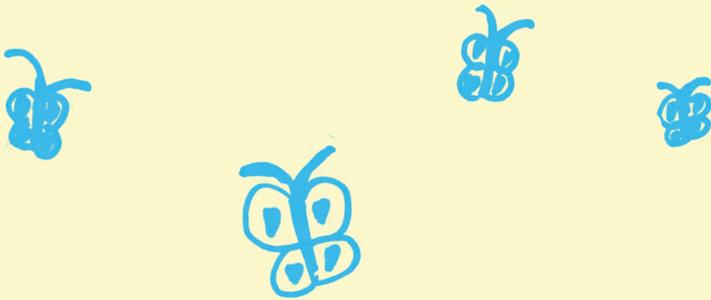
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**The Trussell Trust** is an anti-poverty charity that supports a UK-wide network of food banks. A **food bank** is a place in local communities that people can go to access emergency food when they are struggling to buy food for themselves and their families, while meeting all of their other bills and daily needs, like rent and mortgage, gas and electricity, travel and clothes. People can also get advice and guidance on issues relating to money and support at the food bank too.

Even though we provide emergency food and advice to families and individuals experiencing poverty and financial hardship, and though we are deeply proud to stand in solidarity with everyone facing poverty in the UK, we don't want food banks to have to exist.

Our vision is for a UK **without the need for food banks**; a UK where everyone has enough money not just to survive, but to live a healthy, happy, and safe life, where children and young people have everything they need to thrive.



## Who we are:

**Stand for Change** is a group of young people within the Trussell Trust who have lived experience of financial hardship, and who want to use their experience, stories, and voices to call for real and meaningful change in the UK.

We want to **connect with** and **amplify** the voices of other children and young people, and support each other to **become change makers** in our own communities and nationally.

We believe that a UK without the need for food banks is possible, and that young people have the power, determination, and hope needed to achieve this together!

# The problem

To start this resource, we want to pinpoint what is the problem here. **What's going wrong?**

Young people feel **unsupported** and **stigmatised** during the school day.

The **beliefs, biases and behaviours** of educators impact young people experiencing poverty.

These negative experiences can affect children and young people long-term. We need a resource for educators to **better support children and young people** facing financial hardship.

STIGMATIZED!!!

NO ONE  
Should feel  
alone or isolated.

Anyone and everyone  
who is in contact with  
a young person experiencing  
poverty of any type of financial  
hardship should have access to this toolkit!

No help"

Schools should  
have more support  
systems in place so  
that no one feels  
left out

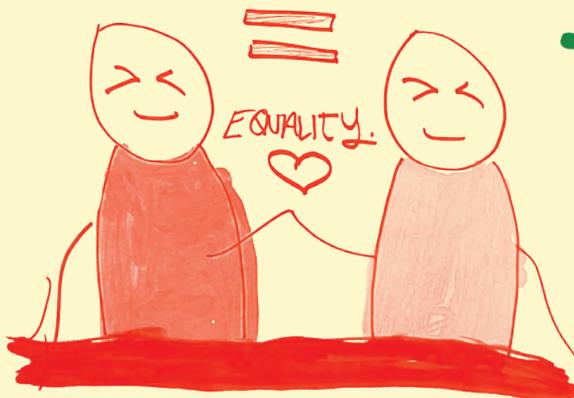
NO SUPPORT

Everyone is perfect +  
sometimes environments  
have to change before  
you are able to bloom!

Encourage

Supportive

Inspire



We know that **everyone is an individual** and that our experiences are unique. We do not try to speak for all young people.

But we do know certain things can happen during the school day that can make young people experiencing poverty feel **unsupported, singled out, and stigmatised**. We've used some of our own experiences to help us create this resource.

We want this resource to help educators and others to think about how some of their beliefs, biases, and behaviours can impact on young people they work with – even when they might mean well.

We want this resource to help educators to **think about their own work** and to **talk to each other** about how they can make their schools and spaces kinder and more supportive to young people experiencing poverty.

# Who is it for?

Who is this resource for? Simply put, **anyone and everyone** who is in contact with a young person experiencing poverty, or any type of financial hardship, should have access to this resource!

Some examples of people who may want to use this resource are...

People who are experiencing financial hardships or poverty

SCHOOL VISITORS!

OFSTED

your friends.  
Counselors  
Teachers

CHILDREN!

Classroom assistants

MOTHERS,  
FATHERS,  
CAREERS

your family!

youth workers

peers and mentors

even students  
so they can better  
they're knowledge

# EVERYONE!

If everyone who is in contact with young people experiencing financial hardships uses this resource as a guide, we can start to work towards a place where young people feel **more supported** and are in **better positions to thrive**.

# Aims of this resource

Schools and other educational settings do not feel like safe spaces for many children and young people.

We know that change can take time but it is possible, and we want this resource to be part of that change. We hope that this is the first step Stand for Change will take in building resources and encouraging conversations about the impacts of poverty on young people and ways we can:

- **Destigmatise** and stop stereotypes
- **Support** young people, offer help and create belonging
- **Inspire** people to share, act and talk to each other about the role we can all play in fighting poverty and its harms



# Signs



Having different shoes shouldn't be a problem.

Stereotyping can mean that we sometimes think that everyone experiencing poverty shows the same signs, but that's just not true.

There can be **physical signs**, like young people not having the right uniform or equipment, not being able to pay for trips or school meals, and sometimes they might be absent from school altogether.

But sometimes young people will have everything they need for school but they or their families might still be **struggling financially**.

Sometimes the impacts of financial struggles are less obvious, and young people might be **distant or distracted** in class, might be drifting away from friends, or be **behaving differently** than they usually do.

In our experience, instead of teachers and educators taking the time to talk to us about why we don't have the right uniform or why we might be behaving differently, we are disciplined and get into trouble. **This can add even more stress to young people who are already finding things really hard.**



you don't need to have the 'best' clothes



Free things  
buying  
Free things

People bullied for not being their heroes

They're mind  
pressure to fit in.

Drifting away from friends

Friends

ISOLATION

Can never afford

MENTAL HEALTH

SCHOOL TRIPS

# Examples

There are lots of ways that **young people can feel singled out** during the school day, such as:

- Being put on the spot in class when talking about sensitive topics
- Being taken out of class for projects and initiatives that are obviously designed for young people from low income backgrounds

**“We used to have a programme called “intervention” and we would get our names called over the speaker and we had to get extra tuition because we were from a low-income family. It felt like people thought because we were poor we couldn’t be doing well in school without extra help. And intervention – like someone needs to intervene in our lives? Like our parents aren’t doing enough or something. It’s so wrong and felt so stigmatising. Yes you can help, but you need to think about how to do that in the best way for each young person, not just lump us together.”**

- Getting bullied for being different
- Lunchtime payment processes, especially for people receiving free school meals, can be messy and confusing and can cause embarrassment

**“We have these card things that get topped up to pay for lunch. I remember a boy in front of me didn’t have enough money on his card, and the dinner lady just said really loudly “you don’t have enough money” and everyone was just watching him and he had to put some stuff back. It was horrible.”**



**“Ew sort yourself out!”**

- Realising you don't have the money for a trip or activity or having the wrong equipment or uniform, and being asked about it publicly



**"I wore the wrong shoes to school one day and when I said I didn't have others the teacher just said "I'm sure your mum can afford a cheap pair of proper shoes from Primark". But no, she can't afford it, and I don't want to ask her when I know she hasn't got the money. And what's "cheap" anyway?"**

- Having people gossip about you, including staff
- Not being able to afford the bus home and having to walk miles

**"That's happened to me before, and you have to pretend you want to walk, but everyone knows it's because you don't have enough money."**



- Wearing old clothes that look worn
- Not being able to apply for bursaries or extra support because no one tells you about it unless you ask, and stigma or shame can stop you asking

**"It's really hard and feels unfair because a kid living with a family, they might get a bursary and of course they need it too. But they don't have to pay for everything with it, just travel maybe or books. But when a kid is a care leaver, they're living alone and have to pay bills, transport, food, clothes, books and pens, phone and wifi, everything with hardly any money. It's just not thought about in the right way and it's like, everyone should get the same support equally, but it's not equal if our personal needs aren't considered too."**

**"I didn't know all year that I could apply for a bursary to help with college. No one told me and I wouldn't have known where to ask about something I didn't know existed."**

# Emotions

How would someone feel when stigmatised?

Misunderstood

Ashamed

"I don't want to go to school"

Insecure

Isolated

Stupid

Neglected

A FRAID

Treat Me Normal!

"ew! those shoes"

"Heheh! no money!"



"you can't play this" "look - ban" "maker"

Im FINE.

DO BETTER!

AWKWARD

made me feel bad about myself

you made me feel like there was something wrong with me.

you made me feel embarrassed

ANXIETY

PEER PRESSURE

PARANOIA

Dread

Unwanted

ALONE

uncomfortable

i don't want to go to school help me.

ask me how i am?



you made me feel like i wasn't really you

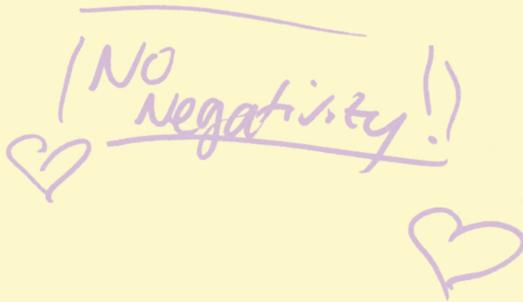
you made me feel alone

you made me feel so alone

check up on me. my mental health isn't great. due to my financial struggles i should be able

# Beliefs & behaviours

SUPPORT  
YOUNG  
PEOPLE



Beliefs and behaviours of educators can really **impact** on young people long-term. If you feel like a teacher is judging you or that school just isn't a **safe place** for you, you might stop trying or just stop going altogether.

If you feel **embarrassed** about not having enough money for food but you're not on free school meals, or you are but the system for paying feels **shameful** or **uncomfortable**, you might not eat properly and avoid lunch entirely. This impacts on your nutrition, health and your concentration so if it carries on long-term, it can really affect how well you do at school and how teachers view you and your abilities.

If your parents, carers, or you as a young person are stressed about money, it can feel **overwhelming** and hang over you all of the time. Stress can affect both your mental and physical health.

School shouldn't be another place of stress. **It should be a place where young people are supported to learn, grow and thrive.**

# Solutions



Like we said, **change is a process** and it won't happen overnight.

But what can you start to do in your everyday work with young people to try and better support those experiencing poverty?

## BE AWARE AND LOOK FOR SIGNS

- **Notice** changes in behaviour and bullying. If this is happening, even if it's not about poverty, a young person clearly needs support, so offer it.
- **Raise awareness**, access information informed by people with lived experience of poverty. Have teachers with lived experience so they can understand what it feels like for young people.
- **Stop** thinking you know what's going on for a young person or making assumptions about their lives or situation. **Ask questions** and get to know them. If a young person doesn't trust you, they won't ask for help, and the only way you can develop **trust** is by showing that you care about who they really are.
- **Don't** single people out and think about how you address certain questions in public.
- **Stand up**, challenge and educate your colleagues if you see them singling young people out or using derogatory or disrespectful language or tones.
- **Be patient**. You might not be able to help or understand straight away but you should never give up on a young person in your care.

no labels.  
a classroom with equality.

# TREAT YOUNG PEOPLE WITH RESPECT

A respectful relationship involves **valuing and understanding each other**. Not only is it essential to build a trusting relationship with the young person by treating them with the respect they deserve, but also creating a relationship with their family or guardians to ensure their support needs are being met.

- Be aware of your environment, and discuss sensitive issues **privately**
- Treat young people with **respect**
- Tell me **'you can do it'** – positive affirmations are important!
- Building trust will create a safe space where young people feel able to **share**
- Talk and be nice to young people on a personal level, no need for hierarchies
- Have an open mind and open heart
- Make time for everyone
- 1-2-1 meetings between educators and students should be normalised
- No gossiping, no negative moods
- Checking in and asking questions as simple as **"Hey there, how are you today?"**

LISTEN!!!

Nobody  
knows  
what everyone  
is going  
through.

**"You can tell when a teacher is in a bad mood and they take it out on you. Sometimes they make jokes at your expense and can be really sarcastic. Yeah sure, everyone is human and has bad days, but they're a professional and should act like it. We're just kids."**

# MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

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It's key to be aware of mental health changes in young people. By being aware and supporting young people through difficulties, you can create a school that prioritises kindness and care.

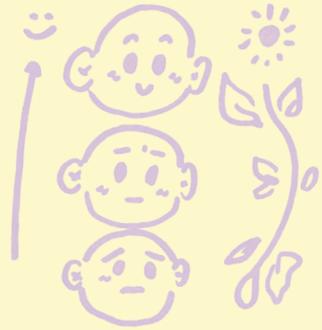
A healthy approach to mental well-being creates a healthy space for everyone.



- Make sure everyone has **the right training** for their job, whatever their job is. The training should focus on being flexible with young people to help staff find the right response to that young person's need, instead of fitting the young person to one response or way of supporting.
- Make sure that young people know that **it's ok not to be ok**, and that they can talk about their feelings and their struggles.
- **Create real spaces for kindness, care, and support** – rooms where young people can go and get space and quiet time if they are feeling stressed during the school day, anonymous boxes for sharing worries or concerns, more creative activities that encourage expression, forums for young people with lived experience of an issue to influence school practice and policy. **Ask young people** what they need and want in their school and help them to create it with you!
- **Stop yelling. Talk to us.** We're all more likely to listen and be open when we speak to each other with kindness and respect.
- **Notice** when a young person is struggling and don't give up after one attempt to reach them. **Trust takes time** and this stuff is personal. Respect that a young person will share when they are ready, but don't use that as an excuse to stop letting them know that you're there whenever the time comes.

More clubs  
after school

~~isolate  
people~~



Daily  
affirmations

"I came to  
school to learn,  
not to get  
bullied"

having a  
room where  
people can  
calm down

## SUPPORT ALTERNATIVE LEARNING

- Allow young people to **learn in different ways**, including learning from home. One teaching method may not work for all young people, and there are many creative ways to get young people engaged in activities.
- **Encourage** young people to join youth clubs, after school clubs, organisations or community groups to strengthen social bonds and collaborate on learning.



"A relationship with a worker at a youth club or something is always different. You feel like they want to be there, like they have fun with you but you still learn and get more confidence. School doesn't always feel that way but it should."

# SIGNPOST TO OTHER ORGANISATIONS

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**So, what's next** for you as an educator, and for the children and young people you work with who might be experiencing financial hardship?

We'd love you to think about what you can do in your day-to-day work to **support young people** and contribute to making your school or learning space a place of **care, kindness, and positive change**.

Young people know what's best and right for them, so start by creating a space where they can really be heard and **work with them** to create the environment they want and need.

We think it's really important that you do your own **research** into what support, training and opportunities are available in your area based on the voices, experiences and identities of the young people in your place of work. However, we also know that you may be working with young people and their families who are facing financial hardship now and need immediate support.

At the Trussell Trust '**Get Help**' page on the website, you can help a young person and their family get support to:

- Find a local food bank
- Find local and national welfare and financial advice
- Search for financial grants they may be eligible for

Learn  
together

actually listening  
to the students

offer a helping  
hand 

- **Local food banks** often have relationships with wider services and local schools which may be able to assist you in seeking more targeted support and enriching opportunities for young people in your area: [www.trusselltrust.org/get-help](http://www.trusselltrust.org/get-help)
- **Your school** can also start to think about practical and meaningful changes that can be implemented to start creating a more positive educational environment for young people experiencing poverty.
- **Child Poverty Action Group (CPAG)** have a range of resources to support schools to plan effectively for the academic year and think about ways to reduce financial impact on families so all children and young people can participate fully in their education: [www.cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day](http://www.cpag.org.uk/cost-of-the-school-day)

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Here are some further suggestions on information and opportunities you could provide within your workplace:

- Provide **information on further support** young people could access, especially any costs that will help during the school day. Work with the families and guardians of young people to provide further support on the wider effects of poverty
- Provide **work experience** related to their dream
- Discuss further **opportunities** at open evenings, to carers/guardians by email, during 1-2-1 mentoring sessions, via an online hub
- **Be aware** of different resources and organisations of support (like funding, free school meals, travel pass, free uniform, bursary etc.) and provide this to students when appropriate

*Young people should be able to access opportunities (for example, through an online platform)*

# Thank you!

We would like to thank all those who made this resource possible. The brilliant young members of Stand for Change, the wonderful Mimi and Bella from Get It Done, our funders at BBC Children in Need, and our colleagues at the Trussell Trust.

For more information on the project, contact the Trussell Trust Participation Team at [participation@trusselltrust.org](mailto:participation@trusselltrust.org) or look online at [www.trusselltrust.org/youth-participation](http://www.trusselltrust.org/youth-participation)

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**The Trussell Trust** supports a network of over 1200 food banks across the UK. The charity provides emergency food and support to people locked in poverty, and campaigns for change to end the need for food banks in the UK.

[www.trusselltrust.org](http://www.trusselltrust.org) @trusselltrust

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**Get It Done** is a community arts organisation based in Manchester and London. Get It Done works directly with communities to facilitate creative campaigns delivering measurable social change, and upskills young people with the tools to lead impactful projects themselves and professionalise their creative practices.

[www.getitdoneart.com](http://www.getitdoneart.com) @we.getitdone

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**BBC Children In Need** is a national charity ensuring every child in the UK is safe, happy, secure and has the opportunities they need to reach their potential.

[www.bbcchildreninneed.co.uk](http://www.bbcchildreninneed.co.uk) @bbccin

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youth social action



Department for  
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Young people feel unsupported and stigmatised during the school day.

The beliefs, biases and behaviours of educators impact young people experiencing poverty.

These negative experiences can affect children and young people long-term.

We need a resource for educators to better support children and young people facing financial hardships...

RESPECT  
Change



Understand

The perfect classroom in my   's would be with colourful walls to show a place of  + . I would add paper and colours with an anonymous box to share your thoughts and ideas + feelings knowing how people feel is important!

Treating the world equally and with respect

Empathy



TOgether.

BE YOURSELF  
and love yourself  
your worth it!

NO ONE should feel alone or isolated.