

SUSTAINABILITY & AFFORDABILITY of School Uniforms



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What is the problem?

School uniform offers a sense of belonging and can equalise children from households with differing income. Unlike for England and Wales, there is no current guidance on the expense of school uniforms or the wearing of branded items to schools in Scotland. The affordability and potential for recycling/up-cycling of uniforms are inextricably linked to production processes and fabric quality used to make uniform such as blazers, ties and polo shirts. Without careful consideration, school uniforms could generate unnecessary environmental waste, and in addition, cause social difficulty to families less able to afford them.

What did we do about it?

Research led by Rachel Shanks in the School of Education found that 96% of publicly funded secondary schools in Scotland require a uniform and 20% of those schools specify an exclusive supplier for uniforms—often a barrier to affordability.

Who was involved?

Dr Shanks' research made a series of recommendations to the Scottish Government, including statutory guidance on school uniform policies to be developed, with affordability of key importance. Shanks' research on the cost of uniform and the need to end exclusive supply was recently discussed in Scottish parliament with a commitment to introduce statutory guidance on school uniforms.

What's happening next?

Dr Shanks is current research is exploring sustainability around this issue and how uniform banks can relieve financial and emotional pressures on families living in poverty. Research tools are being developed to examine the impact of school uniform banks in relation to the affordability and sustainability of school uniforms in Scotland, and how these provisions can help alleviate poverty while supporting a greener economy.

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/official-report/what-was-said-in-parliament/meeting-of-parliament-29-09-2021?meeting=13332&iob=120960#5596>

<https://www.parliament.scot/chamber-and-committees/votes-and-motions/votes-and-motions-search/S6M-01065>



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