

CPAG works for the abolition of child poverty in Scotland. We co-ordinate, with the Poverty Alliance and One Parent Families, the Free School Meals Campaign.

### **Key facts**

- Less than half of children living in poverty currently receive a free school meal. A quarter of Scotland's children are officially recognised as living in poverty yet only 17% of children are entitled to a free school meal and only 11% actually get one<sup>i</sup>.
- Cost is a key factor in choosing not to eat a school meal for 21% of primary and 31% of secondary school pupils<sup>ii</sup>.
- 500 consultation respondents (96% of those received) supported a previously proposed Bill to provide free school meals for all primary children. Supporters included teaching unions, health experts, children's charities and the churches.
- The **cost** of extending entitlement to all primary school children is £73m<sup>iii</sup>.

### **Universal free school meals**

CPAG **welcomes the Scottish Government school meals pilot**. Primary 1 to 3 pupils in Borders, East Ayrshire, Fife, Glasgow and West Dunbartonshire will have access to free nutritious meals during a £5m trial for six months from October 2007. We are keen to see the pilots work effectively and act as a springboard for a further roll out of free school meals. For this reason we believe that the nature of the proposed evaluation, and expectations of the pilot, will need to take into account:

- the initially short time period for the pilots,
- the fact that they will be targeted at schools in more deprived areas,
- the impact of factors such as quality of meals and dining environment.

Much can also be learned from the evaluation of Hull City Council's piloting of free school meals to all primary school pupils. Evaluation of a universal free school meals pilot in Hull primary schools shows take-up of meals up from 36% to 64% and a **"significant impact in all areas of children's schooling...behaviour, social relationships, health and learning"**<sup>iv</sup>.

### **Extending free school meals entitlement**

Current entitlement rules exclude many children in families suffering in-work poverty and act as an additional barrier for parents trying to move into work. CPAG welcomed Scottish Labour manifesto commitments to **extend entitlement to an additional 100 000 children whose families receive working tax credit** and the SNP Government manifesto pledge to **extend entitlement to an additional 40 000 children living in poverty**. Clearly there is cross party consensus on the need to extend school meal entitlement. It is vital that the Scottish Parliament acts to take forward these commitments.

**For more info. contact:** John Dickie, CPAG, 0141 552 3303 or 07785340618.

<sup>i</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2007/06/04134749/0>

<sup>ii</sup> <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2006/01/13110440/3>

<sup>iii</sup> <http://www.scottish.parliament.uk/business/bills/74-schoolmeals/b74s2-introd-en.pdf>

<sup>iv</sup> Prof. Derek Colquhoun, Hull Uni, [http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk\\_news/story/0,,1995361.00.html](http://observer.guardian.co.uk/uk_news/story/0,,1995361.00.html)