

PERENNIAL PROVIDES HELP WITH COST OF SCHOOL UNIFORM FOR HARD-HIT FAMILIES WORKING IN HORTICULTURE WITH THEIR 'BACK TO SCHOOL' SUPPORT

In Brief: With 30% of British children¹ living in poverty and the impact of COVID-19 hitting families hard, Perennial is ready to support children of those working in horticulture with their return to school this September. Families can receive help towards the cost of school uniform and PE kit by visiting perennial.org.uk/backtoschool.

With 30% of all children in the UK living in relative poverty¹, the need to support our most vulnerable families has never been greater. COVID-19 has exasperated an already critical situation. According to a report by The Children's Society², the income of low earners is being affected the most by the pandemic, which, along with school closures, is having a devastating effect on children living in poverty.

A recent survey³ revealed that 87% of teachers believe that poverty is having a significant impact on student success at school. They shared widespread concern about school uniforms with children wearing ill-fitting clothing, no coats or socks, and shoes with holes in them. This not only causes a deep emotional impact on children but also their success at school, with children from poorer backgrounds falling behind their more affluent peers throughout all stages of education⁴.

Perennial, the only UK charity for people in horticulture, is ready to support families to meet the rising costs of getting children back to school by providing help towards the cost of school uniform and PE kit. This is essential help at a time when many families are struggling to meet the cost of food and other essentials.

The professional and friendly team at Perennial can help families access the government support that can make a long-term difference to their lives, along with providing a safety net of financial help, where at least one parent or carer works or has recently worked in horticulture.

Many hard-working families working in horticulture are finding themselves in poverty. Almost three-quarters of children in poverty come from families where at least one adult is working. Of those with self-employed parents, 15% of children are living below the headline⁵.

Perennial's support scheme was launched in 2019 and was very well received with one parent saying: *"I am relieved and humbled that you have helped us with the children's uniform and shoes. Thank you so much for your support and advice too. It feels financially overwhelming at the moment and we are grateful for this help."*

According to a report by The Children's Society⁶, the average cost of secondary school uniform, per year per child, is £337. Parents of primary school age children spend an average of £315 per year,

¹ According to statistics from the UK Department for Work and Pensions https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/875261/households-below-average-income-1994-1995-2018-2019.pdf

² [Children's Society, The Impact of COVID on Children and Young People, 2020](#)

³ [National Education Union \(NEU\), The State of Education: Child Poverty Survey, 2019](#)

⁴ [CPAG / NEU Child poverty and education: A survey of the experiences of NEU members - 2018](#)

⁵ Analysis by Child Poverty Action Group - <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/child-poverty-working-families-rise>

⁶ <https://www.childrensociety.org.uk/what-we-do/resources-and-publications/the-wrong-blazer-time-for-action-on-school-uniform-costs>

per child. Many people simply can't afford new uniform and for those forced to purchase uniform from specific suppliers, the costs can result in debt or the family going without other essentials.

To find out more about the Back to School support and apply for help visit perennial.org.uk/backtoschool and complete the online form.

ENDS

For more information please contact Alex Bailey on abailey@perennial.org.uk or call 0800 093 8510

Commentary

Julia Hayne, Director of Services at Perennial says:

“The cost of raising a family is rising but we’re not seeing wages increase and the situation has been made worse by the coronavirus crisis. We know many families are frustrated that, despite being in work and budgeting carefully, they are still struggling to meet the growing demands on their finances. We’re here to alleviate some of the pressure, taking the stress out of going back to school and helping families find financial solutions that will help them in the longer term.”

“We help families every day, often facing difficult challenges, providing a safety net for people working in, or retired from any branch of horticulture, who are not able to find support elsewhere. As your charity, we’re here to give you the help and support you need.”

NOTES FOR EDITORS

Back to School Support

Perennial helps people working in any area of the horticulture industry. You can request Back to School support if you are working in or your last job was in horticulture and if any one of the following apply to you (evidence of the below may be requested):

- Your child or children are currently eligible for free school meals
- You have an annual household income below £30,000 (gross) **and/or** are in receipt of means tested benefits
- You are experiencing a crisis situation
- If one of the above points applies, you must then be:
- Living in the UK and be eligible to work and apply for public funds
- Perennial can provide your family with support towards school uniform and PE kit – up to a maximum of £150 per child.

About Perennial

Perennial is the UK's only charity looking after people in horticulture and their families at any stage of life. If you work with flowers, plants, trees or grass our friendly and experienced team are here to deliver completely free, confidential and personal support. We understand the devastating impact unexpected personal challenges and financial pressures have on lives.

Perennial's team is available to help people access statutory services and assistance as well as offering advice and information. Everyone needs something different, the helpline is open Monday

and Wednesday, 9.30am – 5pm and Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 9am – 5pm, email services@perennial.org.uk to find out more.

The charity is responding to an unprecedented increase in requests for help due to the widespread effects of Coronavirus Covid-19 on the UK horticulture industry. Yet many of the events and activities the charity would usually be using to raise funds for its free advice and support services have been cancelled or postponed. An emergency fundraising appeal, HortAid-20, has been launched to bridge the funding gap and offer some fun and easy ways for people to raise money for people in horticulture this year. Call Perennial's helpline on 0800 093 8543 or visit perennial.org.uk for more details.

#perennial #backtoschool #schoolcosts #perennialhelps #hortaid20

Fact Check

- According to the [Department for Work and Pensions](#) the total number of children living in relative poverty – classed as on or below 60% of the UK average household income after housing costs have been paid – was 4.2 million in 2018-19, up from 4.1 million the previous year, equating to roughly 30% of all children.
- The [Children's Society, The Impact of COVID on Children and Young People, 2020](#) reveals that the income of low earners is being affected the most by the pandemic
- Analysis by Child Poverty Action Group of the government 'Household Below Average Income' data (1994/95 to 2017/18) published in 2019 found that almost three-quarters of children in poverty come from families where at least one adult is working and of those with self-employed parents, 15% of children are living below the headline: <https://cpag.org.uk/news-blogs/news-listings/child-poverty-working-families-rise>
- The Children's Society report, [The Wrong Blazer 2020: Time for action on school uniform costs, reveals](#) families are spending an average of £337 per year for each child at secondary school whilst parents of primary school children spent on average £315. The Children's Society has found that at school some children in poverty go hungry and face punishment for missing uniform or equipment their family simply can't afford. The [cost of school](#) is having a deep emotional impact on children, nearly a quarter (23%) of parents said that the cost of school uniform had meant their child had worn ill-fitting, unclean or incorrect uniform. Based on the number of children in state-maintained schools in England (8.1 million), this refers to an estimated 1.8 million children.
- The Wrong Blazer 2020 report also finds that parents of secondary age children pay the most for different items of clothing with coats and bags the most expensive items, both costing £52 annually for each child. They are followed by school shoes averaging at £47 each per year and PE kit (shoes / boots) at £45. Blazers and PE kits (PE t-shirts, shorts, jogging bottoms, skirts) are also expensive with an average price tag of £41 and £40 respectively for secondary school pupils.
- A snapshot survey by the National Education Union (NEU) in 2019 reveals the extent to which poverty is damaging the educational opportunities for children from poor families. A staggering 87% of respondents say that poverty is having a significant impact on the learning of their pupils and students and 60% believe that the situation has worsened since 2015. "Heart breaking" was the description most commonly used to describe the critical situation of many

poor children and families. Teachers described children wearing worn-out shoes and unable to do homework because they have no stationery.

- [CPAG / NEU Child poverty and education: A survey of the experiences of NEU members - 2018](#) has found that children from poorer backgrounds lag at all stages of education. By the age of three, poorer children are estimated to be, on average, nine months behind children from more wealthy backgrounds.