

Labour group amendment

Amendment to be Moved by: Cllr Rustidge

Amendment to be Seconded by: Cllr Nasheen

~~Delete~~

Add

Motion 3: Fair and Affordable School Uniforms for Oldham Families

To be Moved by Councillor Zaheer Ali

To be Seconded by Councillor Shabir Hussain

This Council notes that:

- Families across Oldham continue to face significant financial pressures due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, with many parents and carers struggling to meet the rising costs of everyday essentials.
- The cost of school uniforms places an additional and unnecessary burden on households—particularly where schools require numerous branded items available only from a single supplier or a limited number of retailers.
- The Department for Education’s statutory guidance requires schools to keep uniform costs to a minimum, prioritise value for money, and avoid limiting competition between suppliers.
- ~~The Government intends to make further requirements statutory from September 2026, including limiting the number of compulsory branded items schools can require.~~ The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which received Royal Assent on 29th April 2026, has now placed these requirements on a statutory footing.
- The Act amends the Education Act 1996 to cap the number of compulsory branded items of uniform and PE kit that schools may require to three, or four for secondary schools where a tie is included, with the limit taking effect from 1st September 2026.
- The Act defines a branded item broadly, covering any item that, because of its colour, design, fabric or other distinctive characteristic, is only available from particular suppliers.
- This closes a loophole whereby schools could restrict parental choice of retailer without formally branding an item.
- Exclusive supply arrangements can create local monopolies, restrict competition, reduce choice for parents, and drive-up prices—often with no clear evidence of better quality or durability.
- Seventy per cent of schools in Oldham are academies, including all secondary schools.
- While the Council does not have direct control over all uniform policies, it has a vital leadership and campaigning role on behalf of residents.

- Pre-loved and recycled uniform schemes can significantly reduce costs, support family budgets, and contribute to environmental sustainability.

This Council believes that:

- No child should be disadvantaged or stigmatised because their family cannot afford an expensive school uniform.
- Parents and carers should have the widest possible choice of retailers, including high-street and online options.
- Where branded items ~~are essential~~ remain compulsory, schools should ensure these are available through multiple retailers wherever possible, avoiding exclusive contracts that inflate costs.
- Affordable, accessible, and durable school uniform provision is a key part of tackling child poverty and supporting family resilience in Oldham.

This Council therefore resolves to:

1. Write to all schools, governing bodies, and multi-academy trusts operating in Oldham, urging them to:
 - ~~Minimise the number of compulsory branded items;~~ Comply fully with the statutory cap on compulsory branded items ahead of its commencement in September 2026, and go further than the statutory minimum wherever possible;
 - Avoid exclusive single-supplier arrangements;
 - Permit multiple retailers to stock ~~branded uniform items;~~ any branded items that remain compulsory;
 - Ensure uniforms are affordable, durable, and widely accessible; including generic items not covered by the statutory cap;
 - Expand and actively promote pre-loved and recycled uniform schemes.
2. Request that all schools and academy trusts provide a written response to the Council within six months of the Act's commencement in September 2026, detailing:
 - ~~The number of compulsory branded items they require;~~ Confirmation of their compliance with the statutory cap on compulsory branded items under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026;
 - Whether they have an exclusive supplier arrangement for any remaining branded or generic items, and the reasons for it;
 - The steps taken to ensure value for money and quality for parents on items outside the statutory cap;
 - The measures in place to support low-income families and promote uniform reuse.

3. Instruct appropriate Council officers to engage with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Greater Manchester People Inclusion Standards to develop a region-wide approach to affordable uniforms and greater supplier competition.
4. Establish an Oldham School Uniform Charter, inviting schools and trusts to voluntarily commit to: going beyond the statutory minimum set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 by:
 - ~~Keeping costs and the number of branded items to a minimum;~~
 - Promoting fair competition between suppliers;
 - Maximising choice and quality for parents and carers;
 - Supporting uniform recycling, reuse, and swap shop initiatives.
5. Request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake a formal review of school uniform affordability in Oldham within 12 months, gathering evidence on exclusive supplier arrangements and their impact on families and reporting back with recommendations.
6. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Education, ~~calling for stronger national action to prevent monopolistic uniform supply arrangements and to ensure all families can access affordable uniforms from a range of retailers.~~ welcoming the statutory cap on branded uniform items introduced by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, while calling for further national guidance to prevent monopolistic supply arrangements for uniform items that fall outside the cap.

This Council further resolves to stand with Oldham families and campaign unapologetically for a fair, competitive, and affordable school uniform system that puts the interests of children and parents before commercial monopolies.

Amended motion to read as follows

This Council notes that:

- Families across Oldham continue to face significant financial pressures due to the ongoing cost-of-living crisis, with many parents and carers struggling to meet the rising costs of everyday essentials.
- The cost of school uniforms places an additional and unnecessary burden on households-particularly where schools require numerous branded items available only from a single supplier or a limited number of retailers.
- The Department for Education's statutory guidance requires schools to keep uniform costs to a minimum, prioritise value for money, and avoid limiting competition between suppliers.

- The Children’s Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, which received Royal Assent on 29th April 2026, has now placed these requirements on a statutory footing.
- The Act amends the Education Act 1996 to cap the number of compulsory branded items of uniform and PE kit that schools may require to three, or four for secondary schools where a tie is included, with the limit taking effect from 1st September 2026.
- The Act defines a branded item broadly, covering any item that, because of its colour, design, fabric or other distinctive characteristic, is only available from particular suppliers.
- This closes a loophole whereby schools could restrict parental choice of retailer without formally branding an item.
- Exclusive supply arrangements can create local monopolies, restrict competition, reduce choice for parents, and drive-up prices—often with no clear evidence of better quality or durability.
- Seventy per cent of schools in Oldham are academies, including all secondary schools.
- While the Council does not have direct control over all uniform policies, it has a vital leadership and campaigning role on behalf of residents.
- Pre-loved and recycled uniform schemes can significantly reduce costs, support family budgets, and contribute to environmental sustainability.

This Council believes that:

- No child should be disadvantaged or stigmatised because their family cannot afford an expensive school uniform.
- Parents and carers should have the widest possible choice of retailers, including high-street and online options.
- Where branded items remain compulsory, schools should ensure these are available through multiple retailers wherever possible, avoiding exclusive contracts that inflate costs.
- Affordable, accessible, and durable school uniform provision is a key part of tackling child poverty and supporting family resilience in Oldham.

This Council therefore resolves to:

7. Write to all schools, governing bodies, and multi-academy trusts operating in Oldham, urging them to:
 - Comply fully with the statutory cap on compulsory branded items ahead of its commencement in September 2026, and go further than the statutory minimum wherever possible;
 - Avoid exclusive single-supplier arrangements;
 - Permit multiple retailers to stock any branded items that remain compulsory;

- Ensure uniforms are affordable, durable, and widely accessible; including generic items not covered by the statutory cap;
 - Expand and actively promote pre-loved and recycled uniform schemes.
8. Request that all schools and academy trusts provide a written response to the Council within six months, of the Act's commencement in September 2026, detailing:
 - Confirmation of their compliance with the statutory cap on compulsory branded items under the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026;
 - Whether they have an exclusive supplier arrangement for any remaining branded or generic items, and the reasons for it;
 - The steps taken to ensure value for money and quality for parents on items outside the statutory cap;
 - The measures in place to support low-income families and promote uniform reuse.
 9. Instruct appropriate Council officers to engage with the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and the Greater Manchester People Inclusion Standards to develop a region-wide approach to affordable uniforms and greater supplier competition.
 10. Establish an Oldham School Uniform Charter, inviting schools and trusts to voluntarily commit to: going beyond the statutory minimum set out in the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026 by:
 - Promoting fair competition between suppliers;
 - Maximising choice and quality for parents and carers;
 - Supporting uniform recycling, reuse, and swap shop initiatives.
 11. Request that the relevant Overview and Scrutiny Committee undertake a formal review of school uniform affordability in Oldham within 12 months, gathering evidence on exclusive supplier arrangements and their impact on families and reporting back with recommendations.
 12. Instruct the Chief Executive to write to the Secretary of State for Education, welcoming the statutory cap on branded uniform items introduced by the Children's Wellbeing and Schools Act 2026, while calling for further national guidance to prevent monopolistic supply arrangements for uniform items that fall outside the cap.

This Council further resolves to stand with Oldham families and campaign unapologetically for a fair, competitive, and affordable school uniform system that puts the interests of children and parents before commercial monopolies.

