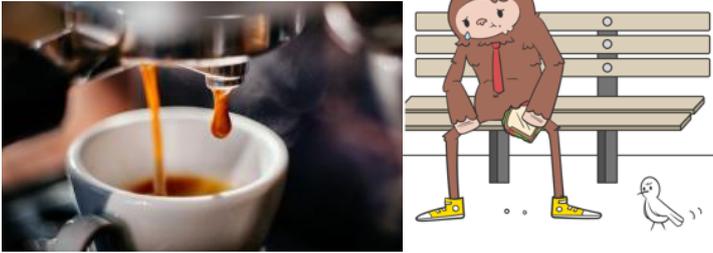


February 2026

Learning Reps News

eis Scotland's largest
and most effective
education trade union.

Edinburgh Local Association



Your well-being: “You can’t pour from an empty cup!”

Across Edinburgh’s schools, teachers at every stage of their career are carrying a heavy load. Whether you’re a probationer searching for secure employment, navigating the growing pressures of ASN in the classroom, managing behaviours of concern, or simply trying to keep on top of an ever-expanding workload, the strain is being felt widely. It doesn’t matter if you’ve been teaching for twenty weeks or twenty years — maintaining our own physical and mental wellbeing has become increasingly difficult. As Learning Reps, we can’t fix the systemic challenges facing the profession, but we are committed to doing what we can to support EIS members here in Edinburgh. In this newsletter, we’ll share what we’ve been working on, and we’d genuinely like to hear from you about what else would make a difference.

Recently, I had the opportunity — alongside a former EIS National President Allan Crosbie — to speak with this year’s probationers at the city’s Probationer Conference at Maybury Primary School. Our session focused on establishing healthy professional boundaries, but it also gave us the chance to listen closely to the challenges probationers are already facing. As a Local Association, we take that responsibility seriously. The EIS is, at its core, a member-led union, and the concerns raised at this conference have shaped the work we are now taking forward. Whether it’s through ongoing discussions with the City of Edinburgh Council or by reflecting on what more we can offer as a local branch, we are committed to responding meaningfully. One comment resonated deeply with us: many probationers felt they were “*pouring from an empty cup*” — a stark reflection of how the job is impacting their wellbeing. No one in this profession should feel that depleted, and we are pushing hard, locally and nationally, for the systemic change that teachers urgently need.

It’s also worth remembering that our own professional standards place wellbeing at the centre of our practice. The GTCS Standard for Full Registration makes this explicit in Standard 1.1: as teachers, we are expected to promote the wellbeing of our pupils *and* ourselves. The Standard for Headship goes further, encouraging school leaders to actively support the health and wellbeing of their colleagues. These expectations aren’t abstract ideals — they are written into the very framework of our profession. That raises an important question: if we are not prioritising our own health and wellbeing, how can we realistically sustain the energy and care required to support the young people in our classrooms. Your best will look different from day to day, and that is entirely normal; what matters is protecting yourself from burnout by recognising your limits and giving yourself permission to rest. We know this isn’t a problem that can be solved overnight, but we do believe there are practical steps you can take to begin reclaiming space for your own wellbeing.

PRD and Professional Update

As teachers in Scotland if we look at our own Standards for Career Long Professional Learning, it explicitly states that our own wellbeing should be at the heart of our professional learning. It is often easy to neglect your own wellbeing, that simply needs to stop. Within Edinburgh the EIS is seeking to put staff wellbeing at the heart of professional learning, working time agreements and school improvement plans.

“Promoting health and wellbeing of self, colleagues and the children and young people in my care.”

GTC Scotland: Standard for Full Registration.

1:1 Professional Values

The GTCS highlights several persistent myths that can create unnecessary pressure around the Standards and the PRD process. Among the most common are beliefs such as:

- “I need to evidence all the professional actions for the area of the Standard I am focusing on.”
- “Every year I need to focus on and develop a different aspect of the Standards in my practice.”
- “I need to cover professional learning on every aspect of the Standards.”
- “I will be told at my Professional Review and Development meeting which aspect of the Standard I need to focus on for the year.”
- “An awareness of our Professional Values and the notion of Professional Commitment is enough.”
- “I need to stick with the Standard for Full Registration for the first five years of my career.”
- “I need to ‘traffic light’ myself against all aspects of the Standards.”

These myths can leave teachers feeling overwhelmed or unsure of what is genuinely expected of them. In reality, the Standards are intended to support thoughtful reflection, meaningful professional learning, and—crucially—your wellbeing, not to create a checklist of tasks or evidence.

We believe that your own wellbeing can — and should — sit at the heart of your PRD. This is a point we have been raising consistently with city leaders, and we are pushing for clear recognition of this across Edinburgh. To support this work, my fellow Learning Rep, Dominic, will be running a workshop on **Friday 1st May** at EIS HQ in Moray Place, and we would strongly encourage as many members as possible to attend. We firmly believe that taking ownership of the PRD process is a meaningful step towards improving staff wellbeing across the profession. Never forget that PRD is *for you* and *led by you*; it is a space to reflect on what you need, what sustains you, and what helps you thrive — not another task to be completed for someone else.

Staff Health and Wellbeing

Within Edinburgh, we have also been working closely with Education Support — the only UK charity dedicated entirely to the mental health and wellbeing of teachers and all school staff. If you ever find yourself feeling overwhelmed, it’s important to know that you are not alone and that support is available. Education Support offers a wide range of excellent resources on their website, alongside a 24/7 helpline for anyone experiencing a crisis or simply needing someone to talk to. You’ll find the links and phone number listed below so you can access help whenever you need it.

Helpline:

08000 562 561

<https://www.educationsupport.org.uk/>

Learning for Sustainability

Dominic is currently collaborating with Allan Crosbie on various learning for sustainability projects locally. Like a lot of the projects we are involved with, progress can at times feel slow.

“Why political literacy is central to learning for sustainability?” On Tuesday the 5th of May the EIS in conjunction with The City of Edinburgh Council will be holding an event to try to help answer that question. Please look out for more information regarding this exciting event.

Financial Services

What will my pension look like when I retire? Where is the best place to keep my savings? When should I start planning for retirement?

The EIS offers free financial services and advice for members. Further information can be found [here](#).

What else can we do for you?

The key role of a Learning Rep is to support and advise members in all aspects of their professional learning, including offering guidance around PRD and Professional Update. However, as you'll have seen from our recent updates, our work often extends far beyond this. We try to engage with the wider issues affecting teachers' professional lives and wellbeing, because we know that meaningful learning and development can only happen when colleagues feel supported, valued, and heard.

Thank you for taking the time to read this update — we know how stretched, tired, and overwhelmed many colleagues across Edinburgh are feeling right now. As Learning Reps, we want you to know that we see that reality, and we are here to support you in whatever way we can. If there is something you feel we could be doing to help, please reach out; your voice genuinely shapes our work. Above all, we encourage you to prioritise your own wellbeing, look out for one another, and take the time you need to stay safe and steady in the weeks ahead. We are proud to stand alongside you.

Best wishes
Martyn

dshaikh@eis-learnerp.org.uk

mcheung@eis-learnrep.org.uk

[Learning for Sustainability - The General Teaching Council for Scotland \(gtcs.org.uk\)](https://www.gtcs.org.uk)

[Professional Review and Development - The General Teaching Council for Scotland \(gtcs.org.uk\)](https://www.gtcs.org.uk)

[Exploring Learning for Sustainability in the GTCS Standards – Scottish Educational Journal \(sej.org.uk\)](https://www.sej.org.uk)