

PACT

Anti-poverty Professional Learning
for the Teaching Profession

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The Educational
Institute of Scotland


The Scottish
Government
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

Joining the Dots on Poverty: Putting Professional Learning into Action



REPORT OF THE EIS PACT PROJECT: **SUMMARY**
Phase One: November 2018 – March 2021

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**‘It is not Poverty which is shameful.
It is the existence of Poverty which
is shameful’** Joseph Wresinski

PACT Phase One: Summary Report

This Summary is designed to give an overview of the work of the Scottish Government funded EIS PACT Professional Learning Programme – for fuller details on anything mentioned here, please do see the main Report, at www.eis.org.uk/PACT/PACTReport

We have a series of Recommendations at the end. We invite you to consider their positive implications and potential for real and meaningful impact.

Background

The ground-breaking EIS PACT Project grew out of preliminary discussions between the EIS General Secretary Larry Flanagan and the Cabinet Secretary for Education and Deputy First Minister, John Swinney, at the 2017 International Summit on the Teaching Profession. The EIS and the Scottish Government then made a joint commitment to develop an evidence-based anti-Poverty professional learning offer for teachers.

The Project was built on the Scottish Government's programme of commitments to tackling poverty and the EIS's long track record of anti-poverty partnership working and campaigning, and ably supported by an expert Project Advisory Board.

What's in a Name?

The name of the Project brings with it the significance of the Project's intention. PACT represents a **promise to act**. It represents a pact between teachers, learners, school leaders, families and communities - and, of course, between the Scottish Government and the EIS in the project partnership itself. Since its inception, the Project has demonstrated an active commitment from both the Scottish Government and education professionals to **act** – to collaborate in ensuring that we are doing all that we can to mitigate the effects of poverty for our young people in our schools.

'...Really inspired and proud to be part of a profession and union with this perspective.'

Teacher and PACT participant

PACT Professional Learning: starting points

In stating our PACT 'starting points' here, we do so to model our commitment to highlighting the often hidden assumptions and underlying ideas on which our shared narratives rest. In that spirit, we have deliberately and continually, made these explicit throughout the Professional Learning Programme.

We have three underlying premises:

1. Teachers' desire to know and do more about poverty

Teachers have told The EIS that they want to develop and deepen a shared understanding of the range of poverty-related issues and impacts which learners, their families, and communities, struggle with day after day. See, e.g. www.eis.org.uk/campaigns/child-poverty

We want to respond to teachers' desire for more action on poverty within our schools. This professional learning programme aims to meet that need and in doing so, unequivocally names poverty in all its forms as 'The Problem' - and not those who endure it.

2. The relevance and utility of a Human Rights-Based Approach (HRBA)¹

PACT unequivocally takes a Human Rights based approach to poverty, in line with the U.K and Scotland's international treaty-based commitments, and this is reflected here in both theory and practice. This not only acts to support Scotland's National Performance Framework and the Curriculum for Excellence, but also a wide range of other current and forthcoming school and societal Scottish Government frameworks.

It also supports meeting Government requirements to Respect, Protect and Fulfil the Human Rights detailed in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1976)², as well as explicitly furthering the aims of the U.N. World Programme for Human Rights Education,³ and the U.N. Declaration of Human Rights Education and Training⁴ - amongst many more.

We believe it's time to change the narrative on poverty, in the same way as we have successfully changed the narrative on children's rights.

¹ <https://www.scottishhumanrights.com/projects-and-programmes/human-rights-based-approach/>

² The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/ProfessionalInterest/Pages/CESCR.aspx>

³ <https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/WPHRE/Fourthphase/Pages/FourthPhaseIndex.aspx>

⁴ [https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/UnitedNationsDeclarationonHumanRightsEducationandTraining\(2011\).aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/UnitedNationsDeclarationonHumanRightsEducationandTraining(2011).aspx)

3. The need for shared understandings and concepts, and a common language for effective collegiate working

While acknowledging and valuing that participants bring a wide range of experience and understandings of poverty gleaned from different settings, both educational and wider, the PACT PL Programme does not assume particular types of prior knowledge. We do so, not only in order that no-one feels embarrassed or worried about their level of awareness, but also because we want to emphasise shared experiences and explicit common understandings from our work together.

We wanted to facilitate a common language and framework that can act to maximise collegiate working on this issue within each school and across the sector, while still drawing on that important diversity of background.

Research and Consultation

The learning in the Programme Modules is strongly research-based and built on wide-ranging mixed-methods research, encompassing both desk and field research, and diverse in-person consultations involving teachers and schools, and importantly - looking beyond the school - with community groups, families and third sector organisations, through conversation, workshops and events.

Professional Learning Models

The PACT Project represents a new approach to professional learning on poverty: a union-led offer, co-designed by teachers, delivered by teachers, for teachers. The SCEL Professional Learning Scoping Study (2018)⁵ has been instrumental in shaping our model of Professional Learning.

In doing so, we also highlight the self-evident position that this can only happen with the provision of the necessary time and resources to create that space for developing shared narratives.

⁵ Professional Learning Scoping Study, Scottish College for Educational Leadership April 2018 <https://professionallearning.education.gov.scot/explore/the-national-model-of-professional-learning/>

Programme Themes

Building on our starting points and the findings from our consultation and research, we developed five PACT Programme learning themes, with associated Learning Aims. These are the underlying 'strands' woven throughout the professional learning. Our five principal themes are:

- 1. Understanding Poverty Better**
- 2. A Human Rights Approach to Poverty**
- 3. Pedagogical Approaches to Mitigating the Impact of Poverty**
- 4. Creating a Whole School Anti-Poverty Culture**
- 5. Further Professional Learning**

Original PACT Programme and Transition Online

The original intent and delivery design was for a face-face, whole school professional learning programme, underpinned by a Train the Trainer model with EIS Reps, that would be delivered through an initial pilot phase in three local authorities. Inevitably, the pandemic necessitated changes to project plans, timelines, and modes of delivery, against a background where anti-poverty professional learning was more important than ever.

This resulted in an adapted PACT Core Professional Learning Programme being delivered online (as three incremental modules), supplemented by two earlier Covid-responsive learning sessions, and a later 'Reflections' session.

Feedback and Evaluation

As would be expected, evaluation and opportunities for feedback have been designed into the Core Programme from the beginning.

Due to resource constraints, the majority of evaluation exercises were designed and analysed internally for this phase. Drawing on previous academic research knowledge and experience, responses were anonymised, and stored confidentially by Project Co-Leaders. We used a mix of qualitative (formal and informal) and (a little) quantitative methods: pre and post programme questionnaires, individual module online surveys, case studies, module reviews, discussions and informal feedback.

Feedback from participants through the questionnaires and online survey was generally very positive, which was also the case with the other forms of feedback on the modules. However, response numbers for each were not high (deemed unsurprising given the extreme demands on teachers at this time), but as a set of indicators all point in an extremely favourable direction, nonetheless. This is discussed in detail in the full Report.

Here are some examples of feedback, all from teachers and PACT participants:

'During the lockdown I completed a variety of courses but none of them inspired me or raised awareness to the extent that this did. It was a pleasure to be part of this and more people should take the opportunity to take part if the chance arises.'

'I am very much looking forward to the future sessions and I have been telling everyone who will listen how wonderful the PACT professional learning is!'

'Can I just take the time to mention how useful and insightful I found last night's session.'

And on impact:

'My school is in a very deprived area. I feel that having been on these courses that I have a better understanding of the adverse childhood experiences of many of the pupils.'

'I have found the importance of stressing Human Rights and Human Rights Education to be one of biggest things I have taken away from the PACT course.'

Most useful? '... The extra knowledge that I have obtained and perhaps a more gentle and considered approach to my teaching. I can use it to greatly enhance my presentations and my teaching.'

Focus Group Study

“If you’re not aware of human rights, then you can’t demand them.”

Teacher and Focus Group participant

Interim report on attitudes to poverty and human rights before and after the PACT programme (Professor Tom Bartlett & Dr. Piotr Wegorowski)

In reflection of our commitment to best practice whenever possible, Project Co-Leaders also sought out opportunities for external evaluation. This resulted in an independent evaluation study of aspects of the Programme’s potential impact, conducted by Professor Tom Bartlett and Dr. Piotr Wegorowski of the School of Critical Studies at the University of Glasgow.

The study found welcome evidence of positive Programme impact on the different ways participants discussed issues pre- and post-programme, a finding in line with our own. A study summary is available as an appendix to the main Report.

Policy and Culture Development Case Study

Our pre-pandemic work included working with a Glasgow Secondary School (Bellahouston Academy), to support anti-poverty policy and culture development.

Feedback was sought from the Depute Headteacher (Murdo Macdonald), who was responsible for leading the work. Here is an extract of his contribution to a very positive evaluation:

‘... As an EIS member I had heard of PACT and over the last few years I have developed my understanding of how poverty affects our young people and families. But it is not enough just to talk, talk, talk about it. Working with Kait and Sandra on drafting a school anti-poverty policy enabled me to learn and think about ways in which we could tackle the issues many families face. It’s no use though simply saying kind words, virtue signalling and tokenism.

Working with PACT gave me the confidence to carry out substantial anti-poverty work and not simply see it as an add on, something nice for the school to do, but as something that must be integral to our work.’

PACT Co-Leaders' Summary Reflections

Our ongoing reflections have continued to be far reaching and aspirational. We have summarised some of them for you here, in the hope that they will be of interest as we consolidate our learning from Phase One, and in the hope that they will be useful for our colleagues in the ongoing development process for PACT Phase Two.

We are grateful for the opportunity to contribute in this way before we move to pastures new. While the thoughts in the section are purely our own, they are based on our PACT experiences and our own professional learning over the last two years. They represent selective reflections – and in some cases further development – of our PACT Programme themes and ideas.

The Elephant in the Classroom

We have long been aware, both from research and lived experience, of the stigma and shame surrounding poverty. We have heard teachers say that they want – and need - to be supported to recognise, confront, and overcome these barriers, individually and collectively. Understandably, there are fears around addressing this sensitive subject. However, too many of our young people have no choice but to deal with poverty, and so we must not shy away from discussing it. In our discussions, young people themselves have told us that they want to explore poverty in the classroom – ‘... and not just in a big talk in assembly’⁶.

We believe that learners (and teachers) who are already poverty ‘experts by experience’⁷ deserve to have their reality validated, and their lived experience named - not as an individual fault or failing, as much of the media constructs the story - but rather as resulting from an ideology that must be confronted.

We know that the majority of children who live in poverty do not live-in areas of multiple deprivation, so no school is free of having to deal with this ‘elephant in their classrooms’, if they are to truly meet the needs of all their young people and have a role in changing the narrative on poverty.

⁶ Pupil Council Members (2020), Glasgow Secondary School

⁷ A term increasingly used (along with ‘lived experience’), including by Scotland’s Poverty and Inequality Commission: see: <https://povertyinequality.scot/publication/guidance-for-the-poverty-and-inequality-commission-involving-experts-by-experience/>

Joining the Dots

Having had the privilege of building on the foundations of existing anti-poverty work and learning from many examples of good progress across Scotland, we have become so very aware of the need to 'Join the Dots' on poverty, in so many ways – so much so, that we chose it for the title of this report.

We recognise that 'dots need to be joined' across the school, with all staff experiencing anti-poverty professional learning together. A small number of staff gaining expertise is a good first step but there is no substitute for involving the whole school, including non-teaching staff.

On the process of development for change: just as poverty is a systemic problem rather than an individual problem, educational mitigations need to be systemic – and systematic - too. Schools need an emphasis on the joining-up of policies, processes, and structures in order to create and maximise any desire for change.

A coherent anti-poverty policy co-constructed with teachers, young people and families is more likely to lead to sustainable action through ownership of that shared narrative, and to avoid the unexpected consequences⁸ so often inherent in top-down policy development.

A Human Rights-Based Approach to Poverty (HRBA)

An HRBA became a pivotal theme in the PACT Professional Learning offer. It provides a foundational counter-narrative to the poverty-creating and justifying hegemonic narrative that the EIS has firmly stood against in its campaigns on this issue.

A Human Rights-based approach can transform a school's approach to poverty. As detailed elsewhere in this report, research demonstrates, and participant feedback underlines, that anti-poverty school-based work is more inclusive, empowering, and sustainable when based on Rights – not charity. Our learners are entitled to know their Human Rights around poverty-related violations, and teachers are in a crucial position to help them discover this knowledge through Human Rights Education (HRE).

Most importantly, an HRE and Human Rights-based approach defends the Human Rights of our children, young people, families and communities - by empowering them with the information, understanding, and skills needed to claim them.

⁸ Beware of 'unexpected consequences' when developing policies – they need to be actively thought about

The Importance of Community and Place: 'Embedded Schools'

Schools don't exist in a vacuum. Every school exists within a wider community, and we know there is so much good work going on already from committed teachers and school leaders in reaching out beyond the school.

We have come to believe that our ongoing efforts to make closer links between schools, families, and communities may benefit from thinking about an additional term - 'embeddedness' - to complement, but also to go further than our normalised term of 'engagement'. In doing so, we better highlight that it is communities themselves who are the 'gatekeepers', who may hold the keys to meaningful engagement with low-income families, and who decide on whether or not a school is embedded within that community.

In this conceptual model, it becomes the responsibility of the school to develop grass-roots channels of listening to community realities and to support their articulation of what they need from the school, to act on that within their boundaries and possibilities, and to signal clearly to the community that they are doing so.

Supporting Pride in Place

One of our Project Advisory Board members made the point in one of our early engagements that it was important that schools encouraged a sense of connection and pride in young people around their local area - the place where they lived their lives.

We agreed and this thought became a 'seed' which went on to support the eventual development of a strand of evidence-based PL learning that emphasised the role of pride in their own community in the positive identity formation and psychological well-being of our young people.

Schools have the power to resist traditional narratives of education as a 'way out' of the place a child has grown up and instead foster a sense of being part of a worthwhile and skilled community - and one where, in these Covid times, people have often rallied round to offer practical help and solidarity'. We have emphasised how schools can help to develop communities and nurture a sense of place and community identity - but only if they are seen as understanding the realities of life in that community.

Don't Skip Class

As well as poverty, we think that it is important to name the other elephant in the classroom: social class. As we have already touched upon, education as we know it often prioritises middle class interests and goals. Our inter-disciplinary research has led us to explore these issues using perspectives from the social sciences such as 'cultural capital' and 'habitus'.

In the current context of the pandemic, class has become even more noticeable. The disproportionate impact on working class communities is more evident than ever - from the everyday lack of access to services to the truly appalling additional death rate.

And yet, in those very communities worst affected by Covid and class-based discrimination, people are working together to support their neighbours in those acts of love and solidarity. It will come as no surprise that we believe that schools must be supported and challenged to confront class-based unconscious bias - to challenge attitudes and assumptions - if they are to truly value working class voices and experiences.

We believe that it is important to remember, as we discussed in our PACT learning, that '... the purpose of education is not to make everyone middle class'.⁹

The PACT Community and Peer Support

We knew from initial consultations with teachers that we wanted to promote a model of professional learning where participants could continue to reflect on and apply their learning in their own settings.

Therefore, in a direct reflection of our research journey and our developed sense of the importance of 'community', we have sought to introduce opportunities to develop a sense of peer-based community amongst PACT PL participants.

'I would like to be part of a PACT community, especially if it might be something that the Scottish Government wants to be rolled out across all schools.'

We hope that being part of the fledgling PACT community will empower teachers to develop and share ideas for action in their schools, and to begin to meet aspects of the identified need for such a professional support network around these issues.

The importance we attach to this is reflected in our Recommendations.

⁹ Gilbert, Ian. *The Working Class*, Crown House Publishing, Carmarthen 2018

Recommendations

These recommendations emerge from insights and imperatives based on the EIS PACT Phase One work. They are not intended to be prescriptive but rather to inform and support both ongoing anti-poverty work in schools and across the profession, and the development of PACT Phase Two. We also hope that they may contribute to the wider body of thought on this issue.

Recommendation for local authorities, school leaders and teacher trade unions: Consider whole-school approaches to anti-poverty work

While individual anti-poverty work in schools is undoubtedly valuable, whole school approaches such as policy development and pedagogical interventions have the power to strengthen and sustain the school's support for learners growing up in poverty.

As well as reacting to poverty issues as they arise, schools should consider consistent and proactive approaches e.g., financial inclusion work and elimination of curricular costs. Poverty must be a significant consideration in school improvement planning and Covid recovery planning.

Recommendation for the Strategic Board for Teacher Education: Actively support and resource Human Rights Education on poverty

While the whole PACT Project is innovative, the inclusion of a strong Human Rights dimension is an innovative strand within that, with an educational approach that we believe is unique in Scotland. The success and impact of this from Phase One is summarised here, and detailed in the Full Report. This provides further evidence, if any is needed, that this approach gives a much-needed foundation for anti-poverty work, with shared language and concepts consistent with developing a cohesive and meaningful common narrative around our educational and social justice frameworks.

PACT has responded to calls from the profession - supported by further inter-disciplinary Scottish-based research - to bring wider professional learning on Human Rights Education to teachers. That research also emphasises the importance of incorporating this into Initial Teacher Education, as per our international commitments on HRE.

This would clearly be logically consistent with the EIS PACT PL Programme going forward and could provide a coherent scaffolding for developing this body of knowledge and skills in a sustainable and meaningful way: therefore we recommend that interested parties engage in further dialogue on how to

progress Human Rights Education within the teaching profession in Scotland.

We also recommend that while that wider dialogue is ongoing, HRE on poverty is recognised as being urgently needed, and that further specific PL training on this is considered in preparation for the PACT Phase Two.

Recommendation for local authorities and school leaders: Highlight the importance of Community and Place

We have come to understand that we must put not only young people and their families, but the wider communities in which they live, at the centre of our developing understanding on poverty - how it feels and what it does. In doing so, we believe that it is communities themselves who are the 'gatekeepers', who may hold the keys to meaningful engagement with low-income families, and who decide on whether or not a school is embedded within that community. These opportunities for action are now supported across the profession by the Empowerment agenda.

For guidelines and advice on involving experts by experience, we recommend consulting Scotland's Poverty and Inequality Commission's Guide as mentioned earlier in the Report – referenced here once more for convenience.³¹

We have given examples, and made some suggestions here as to why and how, we may use the insights generated by our Phase One work to support that, therefore our recommendations in this section are simple:

- For links between schools and geographical communities of place, or in the case of more affluent areas, communities of interest (e.g. campaigning organisations and support groups, etc.), to be included as a priority in school improvement and recovery planning, to support any existing work already being done.
- That due recognition is given to the importance of local Community Learning and Development Workers in developing the 'bridges' to support this work going forward.
- That the above is sited within a process of meaningful engagement with learners and families in the process of anti-poverty policy development and school culture shift.

Community partners should also be involved in developing the questions to be asked, as well as being part of developing the answers. 'Consultation' is not enough.

Recommendation for local authorities, school leaders and teacher trade unions: Connect with and sustain the PACT Community

The PACT Community enables teachers to support each other in their anti-poverty work and to continue professional discussions arising from PACT professional learning or from school experiences. Teachers should be supported to sustain the PACT community online until local face-to-face teacher networks can be established.

As with any other professional network, teachers will need adequate time and resources to fully benefit from, and contribute to, the development of the PACT Community.

Recommendation for EIS PACT and Scottish Government: Sustain the PACT PL Momentum

While we are 'keeping the pot boiling' in disseminating the learning from Phase One, supporting our new PACT Community, and making plans for developing EIS PACT Phase Two, we recommend further specific practical considerations as worthy of attention:

- The inclusion of external specialist PL input on poverty-related HRE to be delivered as part of the Phase Two Train the Trainer programme. As already detailed, this is still an emerging field in Scotland, particularly around poverty, and our future PACT Train the Trainer programme will necessitate a developed understanding in this area.
- We have raised the need for acknowledging that there may be concerns for some teachers around teaching about domestic poverty in the classroom, on dealing with potential parental responses to relevant policy changes, and perhaps on incorporating an HRBA and HRE into classroom and school discussions on poverty.

Future EIS PACT work should include prior research to be conducted on these issues, in order to adequately address any concerns within a future PACT PL offer.

- Inter-disciplinary learning on poverty has been an important and welcome part of the PL offer, and so we recommend that specific efforts should be made to develop input and partnerships to sustain and develop that.
- In response to the keen interest expressed by colleagues, consideration should be given as to how to extend the PACT PL offer in the future to include Early Years, FE and HE.

³¹<https://povertyinequality.scot/publication/guidance-for-the-poverty-and-inequality-commission-involving-experts-by-experience/>

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- In order to ascertain the full impact of future work, an external evaluation process should be built into any PACT PL Programme from the beginning, thus providing a solid base for expansion if sufficient impact is generated.
 - That Education Scotland PL endorsement is sought for the Programme.

Recommendation for local authorities, school leaders and teacher trade unions: Join the Dots

PACT research has highlighted evidence of highly effective practice in anti-poverty work across the educational landscape, often in partnership with valued third sector partners.

We would like to encourage schools to step back and look at the whole picture, making links within and across both school and the wider communities to mitigate the impact of poverty in education.

And finally, of course, we draw attention to our own attempts to aid that process of joining the dots through our Recommendations here.

PACT Phase One has developed and/or delivered:

- Three Core face to face Modules (now to be delivered in phase two)
- Three Online Core Modules (delivered 2020)
- A widely attended online Programme Launch event (2020)
- One pandemic-responsive Special Module and initial webinar (delivered in 2020 also)
- One PACT Community PL and Reflections session (delivered 2021)
- School-based policy-development/good practice work (ongoing)
- Module Resource Packs
- Film resources
- Various workshops, presentations to diverse groups and stall activities at EIS and community events
- A wide range of partners and critical friend relationships, nationally regionally, and in local communities, including a partnership with three local authorities for our face-to-face learning
- A fledgling and enthusiastic PACT Community
- A dedicated PACT zone on the EIS Website (in progress - to be completed around end May 2021).

Thanks

PACT would like to extend heartfelt thanks to all who made this project possible by giving us their time, expertise, and commitment. We stand together with you in solidarity in the fight against poverty.

We want you all to know that we have greatly valued your input and help in maximising the impact of the PACT Project's work in our schools, and sincerely hope that you will continue to be our 'critical friends' going forward.

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**‘Education is the most powerful
weapon that you can use to change
the world.’** Nelson Mandela

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**‘If we don’t fight poverty, we can’t
create a level playing field for our
children.’** Murdo Macdonald, DHT

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**‘Education is not a way to escape
poverty, it is a way of fighting it.’** Julius Nyerere

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