

## Social Justice Ambassadors - breaking barriers and promoting equity for every pupil.

### How-to Guide

This guide offers more detailed information and advice for those who may be interested in adopting or adapting the initiative in their local area.

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## Social Justice Ambassadors - breaking barriers and promoting equity for every pupil.

<b>Title</b>	Social Justice Ambassadors.
<b>Lead Organisation</b>	St Modan's High School.
<b>All Organisations</b>	St Modan's High School.
<b>Category</b>	Promising.
<b>Poverty Impact</b>	Mitigation. Raising Awareness.
<b>Introduction to the Project</b>	
<p>The Social Justice Ambassadors at St. Modan's High School in Stirling are a group of pupils who lead initiatives focused on promoting equity, supporting low-income students, and advocating for minority groups within the school. Meeting weekly, their work centres on reducing the cost of the school day and closing the attainment gap. Previous activities include the launch of a Breakfast Club—now a regular part of school life—offering free breakfast to anyone who needs it. They also introduced a 'Take What You Need' trolley, providing free essentials such as pencils, pens, rubbers, sanitary items and hygiene products to ensure all students can participate with dignity.</p>	

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### Initial Idea

<b>Who had the initial idea?</b>	Ashleigh Carlin (previous Project Lead at St. Modan's High School).	
<b>How did the idea for the project come about?</b>		
The previous Equity Lead at St. Modan's High School, Ashleigh Carlin, was inspired by the activities of other Equity Services in schools, including the provision of associated services delivered by Braes High School in Falkirk		
<b>Were plans informed by any published reports / papers / research evidence or practice from elsewhere?</b>	Yes	
Scottish Index of Multiple Deprivation (SIMD). School Attendance Statistics. Internal Statistics (How many children were receiving free school meals).		
<b>Was anyone else involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes	
Aisling Shandley, Previous Deputy Head Teacher at St. Modan's.		
<b>Were those with lived experience of poverty involved in developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	No	
<b>Was funding required to support the development of the initial idea of the project?</b>	No	
<b>Were specific resources – other than funding - needed when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes	
<b>Staff/Volunteer Time</b>	Not specified.	
<b>Facilities / Workspace</b>	Not specified.	
<b>Equipment</b>	Not specified.	
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	Not specified.	
<b>Food and Drink</b>	Not specified.	
<b>Did any barriers have to be overcome when developing the initial idea of the project?</b>	Not specified.	

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<b>Did anything in particular enable development of the initial idea of the project?</b>	Yes
The project thrived thanks to the school leadership team's immense support. Their ongoing commitment and appreciation for the initiative ensured its continuous development.	
<b>How long did it take between having the initial idea and starting the project?</b>	Not specified.
<b>Who made the decision to introduce the project?</b>	Not specified.

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**Early Development**

<b>Was there a pilot project or feasibility study or test of change?</b>	No
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### Accessing the Service and Engaging with Service Users

<b>Are potential users referred to your initiative?</b>	Yes
<p>There is a referral process in place, which includes both formal and informal methods. School staff—particularly support staff—are often in regular contact with families facing financial hardship and will refer them for additional support. In some cases, referrals happen more informally; for example, when donations are received from local parishes for families struggling to pay bills or cover school trip costs, teaching and support staff alert the equity lead to the families in need.</p> <p>There is also a self-referral option. For instance, in the case of the school pantry, the Project Lead for Equity, Rachel, sends out a Google Form to all families every two weeks. This form allows families to indicate if they would like to access the pantry. There are no qualifying questions—any family can self-identify a need for support and access is then provided accordingly.</p>	
<b>Are there ways, other than referral, that are used to make potential users aware of your initiative?</b>	Yes
<p>Awareness of the project and available support is raised through multiple channels. Information is regularly shared via the school bulletin and at information evenings held throughout the year.</p> <p>The Parents' Association also plays a key role in spreading the word among families. In addition, the school has used its Twitter account to promote support offers and activities, although it is currently in the process of moving away from that platform.</p>	
<b>What is the most common way through which users typically access your initiative?</b>	
<p>The most common way for pupils to access wider activities is through the Breakfast Club, which runs every morning. Pupils from low-income backgrounds who make use of the service often become aware of other forms of support available to them at the breakfast Club.</p> <p>For families, access is more commonly achieved through the Google Forms service provided to parents by the school, This allows parents to request support such as access to the pantry, without facing stigma.</p>	

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<b>Do you take steps to keep in touch / reach out to users?</b>	Yes
The school based service keeps in touch with service users through the school’s official communication channels, such as the school bulletin, the Parents’ Association, school assemblies, and targeted teaching materials related to health and wellbeing.	

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### Working with People with Lived Experience of Poverty

<b>Are those with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>delivering</u> the project?</b>	Yes
Individuals with lived experience of poverty are central to co-creating and shaping the Social Justice Ambassadors' initiatives. Notably, a group of pupils who have previously accessed food banks conceptualised the school pantry project. Furthermore, students with lived experience of poverty help deliver the project by running the Breakfast Club and organising the 'take what you need' trolleys."	
<b>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved in <u>managing</u> the project or in project <u>governance</u>?</b>	Not specified.
<b>Are people with lived experience of poverty involved <u>in any other aspect</u> of the project?</b>	Yes
Students with lived poverty experience are involved in the delivery of the project, including the school pantry project and the schools breakfast club.	

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### Leadership, Governance and Partnership Working

<b>Who is responsible for managing the project?</b>	
Rachel Slaven (Project Lead Equity and Teacher). Joanne Docherty (Senior Manager, Pupil Support).	
<b>Is this the only responsibility of the person managing the project?</b>	No
Rachel is a teacher (full timetable) and also part of the School's Equity team. Joanne is responsible for all pupil support, additional student support needs, and first year students.	
<b>What proportion of the manager's overall workload is given over to this project?</b>	
Just a small proportion of it.	
<b>Is there a Project Steering or Advisory Group?</b>	No
<b>Are any other governance arrangements in place to review strategy and performance?</b>	Yes
Governance and strategic reviews are maintained through a council-wide equity group facilitated by Education Scotland which Rachel is a member of. Meeting several times a year via a dedicated professional platform, the group serves to monitor performance, share best practice, and provide robust feedback on the School project's progress and direction.	

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### Links to Wider Policies, Strategies and Statutory Requirements

<p><b>To the best of your knowledge, is the project aligned with national and/or local anti-poverty strategies and priorities (e.g., local authority or health board priorities)?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>The project aligns with both local and national anti-poverty strategies by addressing key priority areas, specifically fuel poverty and support for young carers. At a local level, the initiative directly support Stirling Council’s commitment to 'The Promise', which focuses on improving outcomes and providing targeted support for care-experienced children and young people. By targeting these intersecting areas of disadvantage, the project supports the delivery of statutory local authority and national equity frameworks.</p> <p>More information on “The Promise” can be found by accessing, <a href="https://www.stirling.gov.uk/social-work-social-care-and-health/children-and-families/the-promise-support-for-care-experienced-children-and-young-people/">https://www.stirling.gov.uk/social-work-social-care-and-health/children-and-families/the-promise-support-for-care-experienced-children-and-young-people/</a></p>	
<p><b>In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?</b></p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Aligning with these strategies has provided the project with the essential institutional backing required to establish and sustain its anti-poverty initiatives. Integrating these frameworks into the schools antipoverty initiatives has significantly enhanced the Equity team's work, providing them with a broader perspective and a deeper knowledge base related to the school pupils' lived experiences and needs. This strategic alignment ensures that the project's interventions are both targeted and effective.</p>	
<p><b>Is the project part of any other strategy?</b></p>	<p>Don't Know</p>
<p></p>	
<p><b>In your opinion, has the project benefitted from being part of this anti-poverty strategy?</b></p>	<p>Don't Know</p>
<p></p>	
<p><b>Is the project delivering a service that is a statutory commitment?</b></p>	<p>No</p>

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**Funding**

<b>Is funding used to support the work?</b>	Yes
<b>Has external funding been secured to support the work?</b>	Yes
<b>Which organisation provided funding?</b>	As a Catholic School they receive ongoing support from local parishes and church groups. They also received a grant from Tesco.
<b>What was the specific funding stream/source/scheme?</b>	Grants and donations.
<b>How much funding was secured?</b>	Grants and donations.
<b>For how long has funding been secured?</b>	Not specified.
<b>Is future funding from the same external source a possibility?</b>	Yes
<b>Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?</b>	Yes
<b>What are these conditions?</b>	Future funding from local parishes and church groups is conditional. The support provided is conditional in that it can only be used to support pupils and their families living with poverty.
<b>Has a specific sum been secured from your organisation to support this work?</b>	Yes.
<b>How much funding was secured?</b>	Not specified.
<b>For how long has funding been secured?</b>	Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) has been secured for 5+ years.
<b>Is future funding from your organisation a possibility?</b>	Yes.

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<b>Is future funding dependent on achieving pre-agreed outcomes or outputs?</b>		Yes.
<b>What are these conditions?</b>	Q53c The Pupil Equity Funding (PEF) is conditional in that it must be used to provide equity. Spending must be evidenced to provide proof of how funding was allocated. PEF funding awarded is based on the number of free school lunches the school provides.	
<b>What are the future - longer-term - prospects for this work if existing funding sources were no longer available?</b>		
They rely on donations for their activities. Without available funding a lot of the activities could not run.		

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### Staffing and Resources

<b>Do existing staff from your organisation contribute toward the work of this project?</b>	Yes.
<b>Role:</b> As part of her Project Lead Equity role, Rachel contributes to the Social Justice Ambassadors by organising meetings and setting agenda's. Rachel also acts as a bridge between the students and the support staff e.g. she feeds ideas from the schools Equity team/Pupils Support Team to the Social Justice Ambassadors and vice versa.	
<b>Are existing staff from the host organisation paid extra (for example, taking on extra hours) to contribute toward the work of this project?</b>	Yes.
<b>Extra hours worked:</b> Not specified.	
<b>Have additional paid staff been employed to contribute toward the work of this project?</b>	No.
<b>Are volunteers involved in delivering the project??</b>	Yes
<b>Role:</b> The social justice ambassadors are student volunteers. They also have other people from the school, both students and staff working as volunteers in various school initiatives, including this project.	
<b>Are specific resources – other than staff/volunteer time and money - needed to support the delivery of the project?</b>	Yes

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<b>Facilities / Workspace</b>	School Equity Room (used for targeted support, mainly for pupils who don't attend as much). Kettles Coffee; the school barista area where the Breakfast Club is provided.
<b>Equipment</b>	Other students/staff donate clothes (e.g. for senior ball: bags, dresses, suits, bags) and household items, bowl and mugs for Breakfast Club. They also rely on existing IT systems e.g. to track attainment.
<b>Local Knowledge</b>	They rely heavily on local knowledge within the community and parish to inform and deliver the project.
<b>Food and Drink</b>	Breakfast items for Breakfast Club.
<b>Are any of the resources needed to deliver the project provided in-kind, rather than budgeted from project funds?</b>	Yes.
<b>Who provides:</b> School Infrastructure and Networks (Rooms, Volunteers, Clothing Donations).	
<b>Were new IT systems, additional software, or upgrades existing software (databases, Apps) required to deliver this project?</b>	No.
<b>Was additional training – for staff or volunteers - required to deliver this project?</b>	Not specified.

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### Monitoring and Evaluation

<b>Do you – or other organisations - collect data on the project for monitoring or evaluation purposes?</b>	Yes.
<b>Is there baseline data to describe what things were like before the start of the project?</b>	Yes.
The availability of baseline data varies across different aspects of the project. For example, in the case of additional tuition in English provided to pupils from Quintile 1, baseline and follow-up data are being recorded to track progress and impact. However, for other elements such as the pantry, Breakfast Club, and "take what you need" trolleys, baseline data is more limited. While it is known that many pupils accessing these supports come from low-income backgrounds and are eligible for free school meals, there is currently no formal data capturing the extent of use, or the direct impact of these supports.	
<b>Is the difference that the project is making measured or monitored by the host organisation?</b>	Yes.

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<b>Who within the host organisation is responsible for monitoring the impact of the project</b>	Several people are responsible for monitoring the project's impact, including Rachel as the Project Equity Lead, and Joanne Daugherty, the Senior Manager of the Pupil Support team.
<b>How often is the impact of the project monitored or measured by the host organisation</b>	Due to the nature of the project and the way impact is monitored, it tends to be an ongoing, continuous process. There is a regular, informal element—such as daily check-ins with pupils. In contrast, more structured interventions, like additional tuition, involve formal before-and-after measurements to assess impact more clearly.
<b>What methods, techniques or strategies are used by the host organisation to impact of the project</b>	The impact is mainly evaluated through qualitative methods, including informal conversations between staff and families or young people, observations of how pupils are presenting in class, and feedback from pupils about how they are feeling. The impact measuring approach is, therefore, more holistic, aiming to capture the broader, less tangible outcomes of the support being provided. Formal strategies include pupil focus groups, surveys led by the Pupil Support Team, and regular stage intervention meetings with pupils and families to gather direct feedback.

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<b>What information is collected by the host organisation about the project?</b>	
<b>Number of users</b>	Yes
<b>Profile of users</b>	Yes
<b>Experience of users</b>	Yes
<b>Outcomes for users</b>	Yes
<b>Anything else</b>	Yes
Rachel also has access to academic results and attainment which provides important insights into individual pupil's outcomes.	
<b>Has the data that has been collected by the host organisation been used to adapt the way the project works?</b>	Yes
Not specified.	
<b>Has an external organisation been employed to formally evaluate the project?</b>	No
<b>Is there an intention to employ an external organisation to evaluate the impact of the project in the future?</b>	Not specified
<b>Is there an intention to undertake your own formal evaluation in the future to estimate the impact of the project?</b>	Not specified.

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### Impact

<b>To what extent have the aims of the project been achieved?</b>	Making progress towards meeting Aims.
<b>What difference has the project made?</b>	
<p>The project has made a significant difference to pupils and families facing financial challenges. Pupils who cannot access breakfast at home are now able to receive a free meal at the Breakfast Club, which has been a substantial support for families struggling to afford groceries. Additionally, pupils who cannot afford uniforms or clothing for events such as school balls are able to access these items through the project. Furthermore, pupils identified as needing additional academic support are timetabled to receive targeted assistance through the project, helping to address existing poverty related attainment gaps.</p>	
<b>Have conditions or demand changed since the project was introduced?</b>	Yes
<p>There has been a noticeable change in pupils' needs before and after COVID-19. While financial challenges remain significant, academic demands have also increased. Universities now have higher entry requirements, which has placed additional pressure on pupils. Moreover, the ongoing cost of living crisis has further impacted senior pupils, many of whom are balancing part-time work alongside their studies to attain their Highers. This combination of increased academic expectations and financial strain has heightened the overall demands on pupils since the project began.</p>	
<b>Has the project had the capacity to meet these changing conditions and demand?</b>	Yes
Not specified.	
<b>Has the project changed through time?</b>	No
<b>Has the project had any unexpected or unintended outcomes?</b>	Yes
<p>An unexpected finding was identified relating to the post-school destinations of female pupils from lower-income backgrounds (SIMD Quintile 1). While national trends indicate that female pupils generally achieve higher academic results than male peers from similar backgrounds, project data and pupil testimonies revealed that these young women actually experience less positive post-school outcomes than their male peers. This insight, which had not previously been examined within the school, has prompted plans to investigate the upcoming S3 cohort and develop targeted interventions to improve long-term outcomes for this group.</p>	

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In your opinion, is the project having an impact on tackling poverty?	Yes.
<p>The various activities of the Social Justice Ambassadors have ensured that no pupil at the school needs to go hungry and that every pupil has access to a free school uniform if required. Furthermore, all pupils can attend extracurricular clubs without charge, including any necessary materials required for club participation. The school also provides financial support for school trips, covering costs for families who cannot afford to pay.</p>	

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### Learning from Experience

#### What is working well?

- The school pantry is working well. There is a consistent uptake from the families that indicates that it is working.
- The free Breakfast Club is also operating successfully and is open to all pupils.
- The equity-targeted academic support provided is currently under review, so its full impact will become clearer over time.

#### What, if anything, is working less well?

- While many staff members are generous, some hold conservative views about who should have access to support, which can complicate efforts to provide equitable assistance.
- Balancing the need to support pupils without singling them out remains difficult. To avoid stigma, the team often opts to offer support universally, but this can mean some pupils or families who are reluctant to ask for help may still go without.
- The question of which barriers to overcome, and who should have access to support continues to be an ongoing topic of discussion.

#### What are the key learning points that you'd like to share with other practitioners?

- One important learning point is an identified need to navigate staff attitudes carefully. Even well-meaning staff may hold conservative views about who should receive support, so being prepared to present alternative perspectives and advocate for inclusive access, is vital.
- Providing support to pupils who need it versus not singling pupils out, is an ongoing challenge. While offering support universally avoids stigma, this approach may mean some pupils or families reluctant to ask for help still go without.
- Finding a balance is crucial but also challenging.

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<b>Are there plans to develop or expand the project in the future?</b>	Yes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The team is aiming to recruit more Social Justice Ambassadors from younger year groups, as the group currently consists mainly of senior pupils.</li><li>• There are plans to introduce targeted interventions to support females from lower quintiles, addressing an identified gap in post-school outcomes.</li><li>• Additionally, there is interest in exploring gender-based violence more deeply, moving beyond the initial, somewhat superficial approach taken previously.</li></ul> <p>Furthermore, there is a strong desire to expand focus on the arts, including acting, filmmaking, creative writing, music, and other creative subjects. With excellent arts and culture facilities available, the project hopes to provide pupils with greater access to these opportunities, which can enhance social mobility.</p> <p>Finally, there is recognition of the need to avoid assumptions about pupils' interests and potential, ensuring support is tailored and inclusive rather than pushing pupils into predetermined areas.</p>	
<b>How easily do you think this project could be replicated in another setting?</b>	
<p>The project could be replicated fairly easily in other settings. While they receive donations from local parishes because they are a Catholic school, similar support could be sought from other community sources in different contexts.</p> <p>The nature of the school and its community might influence how the project looks in practice. Nevertheless, core elements such as the Breakfast Club and pantry could be successfully implemented elsewhere.</p>	

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