

WEA Update February 2018

Introduction

Welcome to the first Ebrief by WEA Scotland. This is the first edition of monthly briefs that will be published on the WEA Scotland website at the end of each calendar month. For those with a lifelong interest in learning or in the learning of others, this monthly ebrief from WEA Scotland will champion the cause of adult education and lifelong learning and the potential contribution it can make to societies challenges



Every day across Scotland the WEA delivers life changing education to individuals and communities making a positive impact on their employment prospects, raising their skills levels, improving their health and well-being, and developing social cohesion. Every month, this ebrief aims to capture some of the individual or collective learning successes, highlight successful partnership working, showcase the work of staff across the WEA that is transforming people's lives and demonstrate how lifelong adult education and community learning can work for everyone.

WEA Awards

Nowhere is the impact of adult learning more evident than through the success stories of WEA Scotland's Award winners.

At the recent National WEA awards ceremony in London, Margaret Callaghan and Debbie Corrigan were selected from nominations across the UK as joint winners of the WEA Student Award. Both had very negative school experiences and left school with no qualifications. However through the WEA: and their tutor Ross Murray, they found learning a positive and supportive learning environment culminating in them writing their own book of short stories and poems that has now been published on the Scottish Book Trust website

At the same ceremony WEA Scotland's successes in achieving with partners was also recognised with two further awards. Our partnership work with North Ayrshire Council to deliver an ESOL and Employability Service as part of Scotland's contribution to the resettlement of Syrian and Afghan Families, won the national award as best WEA Regional Partner. On a more local level, the Sharing Lives Sharing Languages Project: in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council, won a regional award for its Social Impact. In this project, local women worked alongside Syrian Refugees to inspire and support one another as educational peers to build confidence levels and integrate the families into the local community.

Personal Assistants [PA] Project

Successful partnership working between WEA Scotland, the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living and the Scottish Social Services Council working has also resulted in the joint publication of a book: the Passport to Independent Living. This book was published on 31st October and highlights the work of Personal Assistants and an inspiring collection of success stories that demonstrates what they achieve for their clients via self-directed support.

More recently on 19th January, the PA Network held its first event in Shetland further increasing its coverage across Scotland and on 23rd January the WEA was involved in a Personal Assistants Network Event attended by the Minister for Public Health and Sport.

Sharon Ledger and Les Watson provide a great support network for these personal assistants. They will be happy to provide you with a link to the book and give you more details on the Personal Assistant Project.

Screenwriting for Postal Workers

The Workplace Literacies Glasgow Project aims to improve literacy skills in the workplace. A partnership between WEA Scotland, the Communications Workers Union and Scottish Union Learning has devised an innovative response to the challenge of improving the literacy skills of postal workers in Glasgow.

Instead of more traditional literacy learning interventions, postal workers engaged in screen writing and film making to develop their literacy capabilities. Through this innovative approach, the learners not only improved their literacy skills but also their digital skills through the use of presentation and editing software in the making of a film to showcase their work. By the end of the programme students had amassed over 60 hours of learning and 9 of the students were accredited with their Adult Achievement Awards at Level 6. Craig Finnie can provide more information on this excellent project and on the Adult Achievement Awards.

WEA Job Club Falkirk

Whether in work or out of work, literacy skills can make a transformational difference to an individual's confidence levels, health and wellbeing and life chances. At the Falkirk Job Club Ross Murray facilitates a number of programmes designed to assist the long term unemployed back to work. One of the learners "Tam" has attended the Job Club for the past year with the specific aim of improving his reading and writing skills. As a result of his efforts "Tam" has just secured his first paid job in 17 years and has also achieved an SQA qualification at level 3 for his writing skills.

Asylum Seekers and Refugees at WEA in Glasgow

The WEA is proud of its association with a number of partners to assist in the resettlement of asylum seekers and refugees. For the individual learners their life circumstances prior to settling in Scotland has been traumatic and their transition to a new life in Scotland difficult. "John" [not his real name] highlights where the WEA makes a difference.

John was uncommunicative in the early stages of his Survival English Course in late 2017 and typically spoke through his carer. The patience and persistence of the WEA staff gradually developed John's confidence and resulted in a diagnosis of a form of Asperger's Syndrome which was limiting his development. With this effective diagnosis and an appropriate programme of education and support John made huge strides with his learning and personal development. As a result, John has already progressed to higher levels of ESOL learning at a college in Glasgow.

Reach Our Project Aberdeen

The diversity of contribution to improving life chances and changing life circumstances is evidenced by three recent successes from the Reach Out Project in Aberdeen. The classes on this project integrate learners from a wide variety of backgrounds who bring different life experiences to the class. This life experience of the learners adds great depth and breadth to the programme beyond the formal aspects of the programme. Ross Weatherby would be happy to provide you with more details. The recent achievements of the three learners below highlight the success of this unique intervention.

Learner 1 is a former offender who prior to Reach Out had spent 40 of his 60 years in prison. He has now turned his life around. He is attending North East Scotland College, is a volunteer with the Samaritans and acts as a mentor to other students on the Reach Out programme. Learner 2 came to Reach Out two years ago with some mental health issues. Two years on, she has just completed all the stages of the John Muir Award and is training to be an instructor on the programme. Learner 3 joined Reach Out after being made redundant. Through some employability skills training and personal development work she has recently returned to work.

Closing the Attainment Gap: Home Schools Links Project

The WEA is also involved in closing the attainment gap and helping adults support their children's learning. Through a Home Schools Project in partnership with Learning Link, Lead Scotland and Scotland's Learning Partnership, the WEA will deliver a programme of family learning that aims to bring parents and children together. It will target those adults that are the hardest to reach and encourage and support them to assist in the education of their children

I hope you have enjoyed reading about the WEA's recent successes. If you have any questions or would like more information please don't hesitate to contact me.