

Introduction

This is the fourth edition of the monthly briefs by WEA Scotland featuring the work of staff and students engaged in adult learning across Scotland. This edition once again highlights the breadth and depth of learner activity and the potential life changing differences learning can make to individuals and their communities.

If you are reading this feature for the first time and want to know more about learning with the WEA, then links to the first three months ebriefs can be found at the end of this article. I am also always interested to hear from learners and from partners so please don't hesitate to get in touch if you read anything in these ebriefs that interests you and would like to find out more about what the WEA can potentially do for you.

WEA Annual Report and Feedback from Education Scotland

Every year the WEA makes an annual report to Scottish Government and Education Scotland. Full details of this report will feature on this website in a few weeks. For now, I am delighted to say that we have received very positive feedback from Education Scotland. They specifically commented on our success in delivering outcomes for learners and meeting targets against the funding provided by the Scottish Government. This is important as it shows we are not only being effective, but delivering value for money. They also provided positive feedback in relation to the scale of our partnership working and the comprehensive evidence we supplied about the impact and differences made to our learners.

The feedback on this report is welcomed by everyone at the WEA. It is testimony to an outstanding team effort from all the staff. Everyone should justifiably take pride in the comments made by Education Scotland but above all else in the knowledge that their efforts are making a positive contribution to individual learners and to Scotland.

National Adult Learning Conference

The National Adult Learning Conference Scotland took place on Tuesday 24th April 2018. In the keynote address, Shirley Anne Somerville, Minister for Further Education, Higher Education and Science, made specific reference to the WEA / Glasgow Kelvin College education programme: Science for a Successful Scotland. This is a suite of materials that aims to teach science or STEM (Science Engineering Technology and Maths) subjects in a more engaging learner centred way. The Minister described the materials as making an outstanding contribution to the STEM Strategy for Scotland.

Also at the National Adult Learning Conference, Ross Murray and Kevin McPherson from the North East led a workshop for delegates on the work they have been doing on the Reach Out Project. This was justifiable recognition for both Ross and Kevin who have been making a huge impact in the North East for a number of years transforming the lives of their learners, many of whom have faced the most challenging of life circumstances

Developments across Scotland

ESOL Provision in North Ayrshire

The successful partnership in North Ayrshire between North Ayrshire Council, Ayrshire College and the WEA, held a celebration of learning event at Ayrshire College this month. This was to

recognise the efforts and progress of a number of Syrian New Scots who, having completed their learning with the WEA, were now progressing to further training with the college.

Previous e-briefs have reported on the success of this partnership and the awards it has won for its contribution to Syrian New Scots. Beyond the awards, it is delivering an invaluable service to those people who need our help and support the most and enabling those who have come to Scotland to establish a new life in a new country that is both welcoming and committed to providing opportunities for all.

The latest innovation from the partners is an ESOL for driving course. This course aims to provide learners with the levels of English required to sit the driving theory test and undertake driving lessons. Clearly, this further enhancement of their skills is bound to improve both life circumstances and employment opportunities for our learners in the future.

Two members of the WEA Team, Audrey Young and Stewart Fraser are also raising awareness of the partnership across the region by delivering training on “Effective Communication with Speakers of Other Languages”. These courses are being delivered to a range of stakeholders with the aim of assisting front line staff to improve their communication skills and understand the challenges faced by service users when a cultural or language barrier exists.

WEA and Scottish Refugee Council ESOL Provision

The WEA in Glasgow also continues to deliver effective ESOL provision across the city in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council. In the last three months around 30 learners have completed programmes in “Survival English”. This course focuses on functional language that will enable the learners to integrate into society through essential topics such as shopping, health, public transport and making applications for a job or a place at a college.

In addition to enabling the learners to become effective citizens in a new country, the course also aims to ensure that the learners progress to a higher level of learning or to an employability programme at the end of their studies.

WEA Women in the Highlands Project

For the past few months, Andrea Johnson and Lara McDonald have been incredibly busy organising and preparing a comprehensive programme of events for Women in the Highlands. Thirty five delegates attended the first event of 2018. This was a partnership event with Highland Lit in which a panel of women writers from across the Highlands discussed equality for women and the extent to which things have changed since some women were given the right to vote in 1918.

This focus on writing continues in mid-May with a residential creative writing and blogging course that is already fully booked. The high levels of interest in these early events is evidence of very effective local engagement and the provision of learning opportunities driven by the needs of learners and local communities.

The next event is planned for the end of this month and will bring together women from across the Highlands to discuss how best the Women in the Highlands project can deliver the best possible outcomes and greatest possible impact for women in the region. The outcomes of this discussion will complement and add to the series of workshops that are already planned, being delivered and attracting a healthy number of attendees.

The culmination of these workshops and events will be the Women in the Highlands Annual Conference in Inverness on 26th May. Over 100 delegates are expected to attend the event involving a number of inspirational workshops and speakers. The keynote address will be delivered by Maree Todd MSP.

WEA Highland Local Association and World Book Night

World Book Night is a national celebration of reading and books. On 23rd April 2018, the WEA Highland Local Association hosted a free writing workshop to writers and aspiring writers. This workshop aimed to encourage all those interested in writing to share and explore ideas with local writer, Mairi Sutherland and to discuss how to find the time and space to write in such a frantic world.

WEA Highland Lunchtime Talks

WEA Highland has also just completed its spring programme of lunchtime talks in Inverness and Dingwall. Around 79 people attended a diverse range

of talks including railway history, the story of the A9 road, mind mapping, the Inverness Victorian Market, a talk on Beaulieu Priory from Historic Environment Scotland and finally, a session with the newly appointed Polish Consul to Inverness and the Highlands. This does not cover the full range of topics but gives a flavour of the breadth and depth of provision that can be accessed by WEA learners in the Highlands. Norman Newton would be delighted to provide more information on any of the above for those who may be interested.

WEA Highland Local Association
at Dingwall Community Centre

Heritage Along the Kyle Line with Susan Kruse MBE
When: Wednesday 23.05.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Great North Road: the A9 through the ages with Jim Miller
When: Wednesday 04.04.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Mind-Mapping for Beginners: the uncharted reaches of your mind with Jonathan McColl
When: Wednesday 11.04.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Of Cabbages and Monks: the story of Beaulieu Priory with Adrian Cox
When: Wednesday 18.04.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

WEA
Adult Learning
World Book Night

Lunchtime Talks

WEA Highland Local Association
at Inverness Library

Home Fire Safety with Colin Henderson, Community Safety Advocate
When: Thursday 02.04.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Caring, Listening, Helping: a night in the life of an Inverness Street pastor with Rev. Dr Donald Boyd
When: Thursday 11.04.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

The Inverness Market Dogs: Fact and Fiction with Norman Newton, Local Historian
When: Thursday 12.04.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

Representing Poland in the Highlands with Hon. Consul Izabella Zofia Therese Fraser
When: Thursday 26.04.18
Time: 12.30pm - 1.30pm

WEA
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Lunchtime Talks

North East Local Association and WEA Innovation Fund

The North East Local Association conducted a workshop several months ago to review its activities and decide how the Local Association could make a different and more effective contribution in the future. They identified that the Local Association's most unique contribution that would make the biggest difference was to focus on the education being delivered locally by the WEA, and to get more involved in the classes that were taking place.

Supported by funding from the WEA Innovation Fund, the Local Association set up a sub group to manage the project with the aim of enabling Local Association volunteers to become more effectively engaged with both learners and tutors. The volunteers were trained by Professor Karen McArdle in the techniques of narrative enquiry. This equipped the volunteers with the skills and knowledge to effectively discuss with learners and tutors the education being provided. The volunteers also received training on how best to disseminate, publish and present their findings.

A full evaluation will be completed on the project when it ends in June, but the early signs are really encouraging. The Local Association is actively engaged and making a positive contribution to the learning being delivered by the WEA in the North East. The local managers and the tutors are also interested in and welcoming the feedback being given on the lessons from the volunteers who visited their classes.

Conscientious Objection in Scotland: Legacies of Resistance

This WEA project, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, aims to bring to life the meaning of Conscientious Objection across Scotland and show the legacy of those who were branded as cowards or traitors for refusing to kill as part of the resistance to the First World War.

In honour of International Conscientious Objectors Day 2018, WEA Scotland, the Edinburgh Peace and Justice Centre and Great War Dundee have joined together in an awareness raising week between 15th and 23rd May to showcase the lives and legacies of those who said “no” to war. On 15th May 2018, there is a vigil in Edinburgh in honour of conscientious objectors. On the 18th and 19th May 2018, there is a weekend of events including a public lecture and several talks and discussion groups on the issues and challenges conscientious objectors in the First World War faced. Finally on 23rd May 2-18, WEA Scotland is hosting an event on conscientious objectors lives sponsored by Christine McKelvie MSP