

E-Brief - July 2018

Introduction

This sixth edition of the monthly e-briefs by WEA Scotland is considerably shorter than previous editions. This may be a function of the unseasonably hot weather where people's minds are rightly focussed on their summer holidays! This summer period also quite naturally coincides with the end of the current year of learning and many classes are now ending for the summer break. As a result, this e-brief reflects on the past year as well as celebrating and acknowledging the work of our staff and learners.

WEA Scotland in 2017/2018: Making Progress and Moving Forward

While the focus of these e-briefs to date has rightly been on staff and student successes, the net effect of all these achievements impacts on WEA Scotland as a whole and how the organisation is viewed by all its partners and stakeholders.

I am pleased to report that stakeholder feedback is positive. This is reflected in WEA Scotland attracting more funding, increasing its learner numbers, gaining more awards, generating more column inches in the press, being asked to contribute more to partners' strategies and influencing the direction of Adult Learning in Scotland.

In the past twelve months, WEA Scotland has received in excess of £70,000 of over target income, attracting new sources of funding as well as being given additional funding from our existing partners. This has enabled us to deliver more learning, reach more learners and make a positive impact to communities across Scotland. As a result, we have increased our learner numbers and many of their success stories have featured in previous editions of this ebrief.

Our work has also attracted the interest of Education Scotland and other Adult Learning Stakeholders. Our education programmes have been showcased on the National Improvement Website, the WEA has been invited to present its work at the National Adult Learning Conference, the Director has been invited to input to the Community Learning & Development (CLD) and Adult Learning Strategies of two of our major partners and, in conjunction with two other organisations in the sector, to scope out the development of an Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland to replace the current Statement of Ambition.

All of these successes have been possible largely due to the professionalism commitment and dedication of the staff who work at WEA Scotland. They have embraced and managed significant organisational change in the past years and done so without any adverse impact on learners or external stakeholders. I would like to thank all of them for their hard work commitment and excellent service they provide to our learners. No doubt 2018/2019 will bring its share of challenges too but I am equally confident that we have the right team in place to meet those and we will be reading more about their successes in future editions of this e-brief.

WEA Learner Success Stories

North Ayrshire ESOL and Employability Learners

The ESOL Employability learners in North Ayrshire have enjoyed some wonderful success stories in recent weeks. A number of learners have progressed from their studies with the WEA to higher levels of learning at the local college (Ayrshire College). Two learners have been offered places on level 3 programmes, while one learner has gone a step further and secured a place at level 4. A further four learners have begun work placement experience with North Ayrshire Council.

Both these success stories illustrate the differences the WEA makes to individuals and communities. For those people arriving in Scotland from Syria and Afghanistan this learning with the WEA is that vital first step in being integrated to a new way of life in a new country.

The importance of this provision was recognised when the classes were recently visited by the local Lord Provost, Ian Clarkson. He met with both staff and learners and discussed how this language learning from the WEA was assisting the learners' integration to Scotland.

ESOL Learners Glasgow

Proof, if proof were needed, that the WEA delivers life changing learning is evidenced by a story I was sent by one of our ESOL tutors in Glasgow. A few years ago the WEA delivered some ESOL learning to two learners: a mother and daughter, from Pakistan through the Red Cross Third Country Nationals ESOL Programme. One of the learners continues to study ESOL and has made significant progress progressing through the language levels. The other, has just completed her HND in Accounting at City of Glasgow College and is attending university in September to complete her degree in accounting.

Accreditation of Learning in 2018-19

The Education Coordinators and Management Team recently attended a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) session on the accreditation of learning. Two sessions were delivered, the first on the Adult Achievement Awards and the second on the Scottish Qualification Authority (SQA). The Adult Achievement Awards provide a different non-traditional means of accrediting learning through learners writing up a reflective account of their learning experience. There are several levels of award and all are aligned to the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF). The session on the SQA involved a discussion on how we can look to offer more credit bearing activity than we do currently and what resources we may need to do this.

In both cases the focus is on trying to provide more and better opportunities to accredit our provision so that learners get formal credit for the learning they undertake with the WEA, and can use this to provide evidence of progression as they continue on their learning journey or go into employment.