

E Brief - September 2018

Introduction

This latest edition of the monthly ebriefs by WEA Scotland provides an update on the Director's recent meeting with Education Scotland and the Scottish Government and provides a summary of their feedback on the continued progress the organisation is making. It also announces some excellent news in relation to new additional income sources that have been secured in the past month and as ever, features the excellent work of WEA staff and learners across the country.

After the summer break, learner activity will once again pick up in the next few months. Please continue to send me your success stories, tell me about your learners or share with me any effective partnership working that colleagues members and volunteers across the country would be interested in hearing about.

I am grateful to all colleagues across the WEA for their support with these e-briefs in the past few months and for sending me such innovative and inspiring material to share with others. A number of people have been kind enough to write and say how they like reading about the work of the WEA across Scotland.

To all those who have contributed material, many thanks for your support and keep the news coming!! If you haven't yet sent in material for the e-briefs, please make 2018/2019 the year that you do!! Meantime, I hope everyone enjoys this latest edition

WEA Scotland Meeting with Education Scotland and Scottish Government

I met with Education Scotland and Scottish Government in late July for our six monthly monitoring meeting and am pleased to report that their feedback was very positive. They welcomed the significant improvement in the organisation's finances notably the recent growth in income. They advised that a new fund (to replace the current ALEC Fund) will be launched in 2019/2020 for implementation in 2020/2021. While the objectives would not necessarily be like for like, the current over achievement of targets by the WEA would provide a persuasive case for the continuity of funding.

The education delivery by the WEA continues to be held in very high regard. The ALEC Report prepared by Shirley Howitt in conjunction with the Area Education Managers and Education Coordinators, continues to set the standard across the sector in relation to the quantity and quality of information submitted. Education Scotland were particularly pleased that we had unilaterally and proactively instigated a quality audit of our provision and had produced an action plan aimed at greater standardisation of our quality processes and ongoing improvement of all our provision.

The recent work in relation to improving our policies and procedures for Safeguarding was also welcomed and our efforts to comply with the newly introduced GDPR Regulations were described as sector leading. This is an area of significant challenge for the sector. Education Scotland have advised us that our work in this field is a model of best practice that they would like to share more widely across the sector and within Scottish Government.

WEA Scotland: Income Growth for 2018/2019

As many people across the WEA will be aware there have been significant challenges to our financial sustainability for a number of years. The situation has significantly improved in the past couple of years to a point where the organisation is at or close to a breakeven budget. While this has been a huge step forward it still did not provide the basis of medium to long term financial sustainability. In the past few weeks however there has been a step change that can potentially create the beginnings of the organisation moving to a sustainable financial footing.

Clare Harper and the Team in Aberdeen (Ross Weatherby, Kevin McPherson and Morag MacDonell) have just secured a significant amount of money for the next three years while in Glasgow, Kathleen Richardson and Craig Brown have also won a significant contract with one of our major partners. At the time of writing, I am unable to provide more details as the official communications in relation to both projects has yet to be finalised and agreed. More details will however be circulated in due course and also appear in the next edition of the e-brief

Alongside these large new income streams, there have also been new contracts awarded to the WEA from the Department of Work and Pensions through bids made by Kathleen Richardson, Craig Brown and Ross Murray. Our STUC provision also continues to flourish thanks to the work of Kirstine Simpson, Archie Campbell and Craig Finnie.

This new and significant additional income should be celebrated by all across the WEA. Its achievement has been a real team effort with lots of work done by all involved. In addition to the Area Education Managers and Education Coordinators, the Finance Team (Judith MacDonald and Janice Wimpenny) have been a huge assist in the preparation of the bids, frequently doing this work against very pressing deadlines. Now all we have to worry about is delivering all this work!!

WEA Learner and Partnership Success Stories

Women in the Highlands: Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival



The Women in the Highlands Project aims to encourage and empower Highland women to develop their potential in the workplace the community and at home. The Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival is a music and arts festival founded in 2004. It has quickly evolved into one of the biggest events in the Highland and has been a sell out every year since 2008.

The aim of taking the project to the Belladrum Tartan Heart Festival was to maximise impact raise awareness and reach as many people as possible in a very short time. The creative work at the heart of this project has a proven empowering effect. If women can find ways to express themselves creatively, the confidence they gain profoundly affects the rest of their lives and can be a stepping stone towards higher levels of confidence and engagement.

The main activity that the WEA showcased at the event was an art installation. This installation was to be composed of mini canvases on which visitors to the marquee could create a self-portrait. The aim was to create 100 portraits (one for each year from 1918 when some women were given the vote). In the end, 116 portraits were completed some of which can be seen in the photos above. In addition to the self-portraits the WEA also hosted an Open Mic session on each of the three evenings the festival took place. This provided a forum for female performers to share their skills in creative writing, drawing, poetry readings and music. Over 40 people attended these sessions and the feedback received very positive.

Andrea Johnson and Larissa MacDonald are currently working on sharing the portraits from the festival across the region. The project clearly achieved its aim of reaching and engaging with a large number of people quickly and based on the feedback received is sure to be repeated next year.

Learner Success Gareth Nzwela

Craig Finnie, one of our Education Coordinators in Glasgow sent me the following learner success story regarding one of his recent learners, Gareth Nzwela.

“Gareth Nzwela was successful in his application for an Adult Apprenticeship in Joinery with City Building. This comes directly after completing our recent Pre Apprenticeship course which we delivered at RSBI Community Trade Union, finishing two weeks ago. Gareth is well known to me. He has been on several of my programmes over the years and worked hard last year on two of our programmes for this chance of an apprenticeship. Everyone who knows him is delighted. Gareth has a hearing impairment which makes his achievement all the more impressive”.

Congratulations to Gareth on such an excellent achievement. Testimonies like this are so important not just for the learner but for their families and friends. It is life changing education and but for the WEA, the chances of this success being realised by other means would be very slight

WEA Success Google Alert

As the attached link shows the WEA has also been featured on Google Alert for its work in partnership with the McDermott Group. Craig Finnie has been leading on this partnership. The learners' successes have featured in previous e-briefs, but the link below provides more detailed information:-

<https://projectscot.com/2018/08/contractor-earns-recognition-for-work-with-young-trainees/>

WEA Scotland and ABF from Sweden



In August, we enjoyed a visit from our sister organisation in Sweden, ABF, which stands for Arbetarnas Bildningsförbund (the Workers' Educational Association). ABF is Sweden's largest adult liberal education association. They have 52 local/regional branches and a national Secretariat, working comprehensively in the fields of culture, integration, health, trade unions, politics, international studies and disabled issues.

The visit saw staff of the WEA and ABF exchange information on their operations and educational programmes. It was hosted by Glasgow City Council who provided a room in the Mitchell Library. Frances Bradley attended and gave a very interesting

presentation on the work of Glasgow Life, and Mandy Watts also presented on her work supporting and promoting ESOL for Education Scotland.

Following their day with the WEA, the group from Sweden enjoyed a trip to Loch Lomond Shores, stopping for a tour at Dumgoyne Distillery and lunch in the village of Killearn and a day in Edinburgh to enjoy a bus tour and some of the free street theatre of the Edinburgh Festival Fringe.