

## E-Brief - October 2018

### **Introduction**

Thanks to everyone for their continued support and positive comments on the monthly E-Briefs. I am really grateful to all the staff across Scotland who send me news about their learners and the differences the WEA continues to make in communities across Scotland. This edition contains more of the same. It also features some excellent news on continued and growing funding for several of our key project areas. This demonstrates once again the faith our partners have in the WEA, the positive impact we have on learners and that we continue to offer and deliver good value for money.

### **WEA Scotland Funding News**

Last month, I announced that the WEA had secured some additional funds for some of our projects but as the news was embargoed, could not provide more details at that time. Since then, the embargo has been lifted and I am delighted to share this news with everyone across the WEA.

### Reach Out

The Reach Out Project in Aberdeen got quite a birthday present to celebrate the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the projects inception, just under £400,000 from the Big Lottery to sustain the project for a further three years. It also secured further funds from the Fairer Aberdeen Fund and the Health and Social Care Partnership.

Not surprisingly, this news has attracted significant interest in the North East and across Scotland. The story was featured in all the local and regional press and also attracted some coverage in the Glasgow Herald. I was asked to speak about the project on That's TV and this is due to be broadcast early in October. MSP's and Councillors have also written to offer their congratulations and support, and the Lord Provost has offered to host a civic reception in the city in the near future.

This extra funding will enable the project to grow and offer more opportunities to more learners. It will also enable the team to better equip and resource the project and in so doing, provide an even better learning experience to those on the programme. Reach Out works with particularly marginalised and vulnerable people from across the north east and provides a truly unique and supportive learning environment. Attached below are videos from two learners who describe their Reach Out experience. They spoke to the assessors from the Big Lottery and undoubtedly played a huge part in the WEA securing this funding:-

<https://vimeo.com/280957608>

Graham Robb

<https://vimeo.com/280956899>

David Brown

The competition for Big Lottery money is huge and Clare, Ross, Kevin and Morag have done a wonderful job in securing this funding against so many other competing bids.

### ESOL Provision Scottish Refugee Council

No sooner had we received the news about Reach Out, a few days later it was confirmed that the WEA in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council had won a significant six figure sum to deliver ESOL provision via the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund (AMIF). This new funding is to enable the WEA to work with the Scottish Refugee Council for the next two years to deliver “Survival English” to people who have recently arrived in the UK and are to be integrated into communities across Scotland.

Many of the learners who will benefit from this provision have arrived in Scotland from very challenging and difficult life circumstances in their homeland. This project is aimed at helping these people establish a new life in Scotland and this initial language training is the first step towards achieving that.

The funding has almost certainly been secured because of the very effective longstanding partnership work between the Scottish Refugee Council and the WEA, led by Craig Brown and Kathleen Richardson. This project will further consolidate and enhance that relationship.

### PA Project

There was an equally welcome funding announcement this month for the Personal Assistants (PA) project based in the Kilmarnock Office. This project provides personal assistants who provide care in their client’s homes with a network of training events and CPD opportunities. Many of these personal assistants work on their own, are self-employed and do not have ready access to a network of support unlike their colleagues who work in residential care facilities. This project provides a vital support service to these personal assistants and ensures that they in turn can deliver higher quality provision to their service users.

Under the terms of the grant, the projects funding was due to expire at the end of this month. However, following the commissioning of an evaluative report by the Scottish Government, project funding has been extended to April 2019 with strong indications that there will be further funding secured for future years once budgets are finalised.

The additional funding for this project is wholly merited as it was based entirely on the key deliverables, impacts and differences the project was making both for the personal assistants and their service users. Sharon Ledger and Les Watson should be rightly proud of their work in this area

### Employability Funds, DWP Contracts and STUC Learning

The positive trend outlined in last month's E-Brief has continued. In Kilmarnock, the first Employability Fund programme for the year has been concluded with high levels of student satisfaction and learner progression into work. The WEA has also secured further contract offers from the DWP and STUC thanks in no small part to the quality of bids being submitted and the delivery of provision to learners across Scotland. Much of this work is relatively new but already is turning into a lucrative source of repeat business largely due to the quality of service by staff and delivery to learners.

### **WEA Learner and Partnership Success Stories**

#### Glasgow ESOL Register

A few months ago, the WEA was asked to manage the Glasgow ESOL Register on behalf of the Glasgow ESOL Partnership. This register captures the details of all those learners who require ESOL provision in Glasgow and who have registered their interest with one of the providers across the city. Ultimately, the aim of the register is to better balance the demand and supply of provision and ensure that those who require some language support can access it as quickly and effectively as possible.

In the short few months that the WEA has been managing the register, Sharon Ledger and Stephen Wilcox have been consistently praised by partners for the quality and speed of their responses to enquiries. They have also developed and enhanced the database that drives the register, and have improved a number of the associated processes. These updates have been presented to and welcomed by the ESOL partners and there is also growing interest in the register (and the extent to which it can be replicated) from other regions across Scotland.

#### North East Motivational Tales Project

Around a year ago the North East Local Association made a bid to the WEA's Innovation Fund to support an educational project in the region. The aim of the project was to enable the Local Association to engage with learners to capture the learner voice and find out what impact the WEA's learning had on them. On Wednesday 3<sup>rd</sup> October 2018, an exhibition of these learners' stories will take place at the Aberdeen Arts Centre.

The narrative below is from Pam Simpson the Convenor of the North East Local Association:-

“The Motivational Tales Project developed from discussions of the North East Local Association. Voluntary members wanted to increase their knowledge of the classes and find out about their impact on learners' lives. Our approach was one of

Narrative Inquiry, where out of storytelling would emerge the learner's experiences and reflections. This method allows the learners to decide what is relevant to them. As volunteers we found the outcomes revelatory. By highlighting the learners' voice, which was often heard but rarely captured and shared, we would increase our knowledge of the work and make a contribution to ongoing evaluation. Learners articulated their experiences, hopes and concerns with true fluency, which was faithfully recorded.

A crucial point, reaffirmed during our inquiries, is not only the difference education makes to people's lives, but how the WEA's approach to learning helps establish a foundation of self-esteem and social skills on which education and critical thinking can flourish."

### Highland Local Association Programme

The Convenor of the Highland Local Association, Pauline Mackay, highlights once again the breadth and depth of lunchtime talks in Inverness and Highland. Beyond the breadth of topics ranging from whisky and gin, the history of sweets, Lyme Disease and creative writing classes (to name but a few), Pauline also positively reports raising the awareness and profile of the WEA at assorted festivals and new locations across the region.

### Women in the Highlands

The range and volume of activity described above is also evident in Highland via the Women in the Highlands Project. Planned events include a creative writing residential weekend hosted by the Glasgow Women's Library, a women's writing workshop hosted in Dingwall and a Women in the Highlands Choir Concert in Strathpeffer.

In the past few weeks, Women in the Highlands have also hosted and facilitated a Women into Leadership Programme in partnership with the Social Enterprise Academy. The aim of the programme was to provide some leadership knowledge and skills training that would enable and empower women in the Highlands to develop their potential and assume leadership roles in the workplace, the community and at home.

### ESOL in North Ayrshire

This time last year, this project won two awards at the WEA Awards ceremony in London, one for Student of the Year and the other for Partner of the Year. Twelve months on this partnership continues to flourish. In a relatively short time since arriving in the UK and speaking little or no English, a number of the learners have progressed to higher levels of learning at Ayrshire College, while others have secured sustainable employment. Stewart Fraser and Aileen Pollacchi have clearly built very successful partnership relations with North Ayrshire Council and it is clear that this partnership will continue to grow and develop into the future.