

## **E-Brief - November 2018**

### **Introduction**

The next few months are pivotal for both the WEA and WEA Scotland. As a number of people will be aware, the WEA launched its new Strategy last week: “WEA Strategy 2025, Empowering People through Learning”. Over the next few months there will be the opportunity for all stakeholders in WEA Scotland to engage with how best we deliver this strategy. I hope everyone will take the opportunity to contribute and ensure that WEA Scotland is best placed to meet the challenges and exploit the opportunities that lie ahead. More news will follow in the next couple of weeks about a number of events currently being planned to facilitate this dialogue.

As this issue again highlights, there is a wealth of expertise across WEA Scotland that can ensure we meet the priorities outlined in the WEA 2025 Strategy. Future success will be assured through the effective and efficient delivery of services to learners and by providing value for money to the stakeholders who fund us. We need to build on the kind of core strengths outlined in this e brief but at the same time adapt and innovate where required so that we stay current, relevant and make a contribution that is valued by individual learners, funders and Scotland.

### **WEA Scotland Thanks You!!**

While this e-brief typically focuses on education news and successes rather than on organisation ones, it would be remiss not to acknowledge the efforts of all staff, managers volunteers, members, the WEA Scotland Board and the Scottish Committee in delivering a transformational change to the organisation in the past two years.

These past two years have been very challenging for everyone with a reduction in the resources available. This has made extra demands on us all as we tried to create the basis for medium to long term financial sustainability by reducing costs and growing income.

While challenges still remain I am pleased to report that in 2017/2018, WEA Scotland returned a small surplus and is forecast to do so again in 2018/2019. Set against a four year backdrop up to 2016/2017 of huge financial challenges, this is a significant achievement and everyone should be justifiably proud of the part they have played in delivering this. I am hoping to see as many staff as can attend on 6<sup>th</sup> December to celebrate this success along with members of the WEA Scotland Board.

### **Learner Voice Event: Count Me In**

The WEA, Learning Link and the Scottish Adult Learning Partnership held a joint event on 23<sup>rd</sup> October called “Count Me In”. This event attracted 70 adult learners

from across Scotland including a tutor from our Conscientious Objectors Project and Kirstine Simpson our Strategic Projects Implementation Manager.

The aim of the day was to engage and consult with adult learners on what was most important to them and the impacts and differences to their lives that learning makes. The event was attended by researchers from both the Scottish Labour Party and the Scottish Conservatives both of whom were supportive of the development of an Adult Learning Strategy going forward. The outcomes from the day will inform a paper currently being produced for the National Strategic Forum on Adult learning who are charged with developing an Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland. The WEA are a member of this Forum and will be a significant contributor to the Strategy that is developed.

### **WEA Innovation Fund: Motivational Tales**

Continuing the theme of the importance of the learner voice, last month's e-brief reported on the success of the North East Local Associations project: Motivational Tales. In a similar approach to the event above, this project focussed on meeting with learners to find out how learning was helping WEA learners and what impacts or differences it was making.

The findings from this dialogue were captured and transferred to a number of individual learner "story boards" that were then showcased at an event in Aberdeen attended by the local Convenor for Education: John Wheeler, the local MP Kirsty Blackman and around 50 guests. The Mayor of Aberdeen has also taken an active interest in the project and has attended the exhibition of the learner's stories.

Within this relatively short narrative, I cannot do justice to this project so have attached a link to the full project report.

<https://www.weascotland.org.uk/motivational-tales-wea>

### **Reach Out Project Learner Success**

Last month we also reported about the success of the Reach Out Project securing substantial funds for the Bog Lottery in Scotland. Beyond the excellent work done by Ross, Kevin, Morag and Clare, a huge success factor in securing this funding has been the impact reported by learners in the group when they were interviewed by the Big Lottery ahead of the funding being awarded

One of the learners: David Brown, recently spoke incredibly eloquently at the Samaritans Conference about his experience on Reach Out and the difference it had made to his life. David was also interviewed along with the Director for Scotland about the Reach Out Project for That's TV Scotland. This has been broadcast recently and a link to You Tube which features both interviews is outlined below

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AZIda8bR668>

## **WEA Highland Agewise Transition Project**

The Agewise Transition Project led and delivered by Margot Henderson, provides knowledge skills and techniques for coping with change. While originally configured to prepare adults for retirement and later life and help them manage this transition, it clearly has significant application to a number of settings where people have to cope with and manage change. As a result it has grown from the initial target group that was funded by the Gulbenkian Foundation to being rolled out to wider groups. More tutors to deliver this programme are currently being trained and associated support materials also being developed.

The film link below provides a good exemplar illustration of this excellent work.

<https://youtu.be/QlrXIBNpA6Q>

## **WEA Highland Learning Update**

In addition to the Agewise Project above, Mark Thomson has also reported some very positive success stories and innovative learning taking place in WEA Highland.

Funding has been secured to deliver ESOL provision to the profoundly deaf. This is hugely innovative provision not just in Highland but potentially across the whole of the UK. If scalable and replicable, this could provide life changing education to groups of learners who are facing massive challenges to their ability to integrate into a new society. Similarly, Mark is also facilitating ESOL delivery to support learners who want to sit the theory driving test. If successful this will significantly increase the learner's employment prospects and bring integration and independent living one step closer.

The WEA also had successful progress and impacts to report from the recent Highland Adult Learning Partnership Event at Inverness College. One learner: Asma Kinani, won an outstanding learner award for her support of fellow learners both inside and outside the classroom on an SQA Employability Level 4 Programme. All the learners on this programme are on track to achieve an SQA award by the end of their course.

Mark was on the organising team for the Adult Learning Partnership Event. It attracted over 100 learners from across the region and featured a large number of workshops facilitated by the learners themselves and a number of guest speakers. Photos and a post event film will be available to watch in the next e brief