

E Brief - April 2019

Introduction

After a brief absence in March of this year when no e-brief was circulated due to a combination of extended annual leave and some short term challenges, it's great to once again highlight the news and learner success stories from staff and learners across WEA Scotland.

This month, there is material from virtually every area of Scotland covering a number of different aspects of adult learning ranging from cultural visits, student residential trips, conferences and several examples of learner successes and achievements. Despite the breadth of provision the recurring theme that underpins all this activity is that individual learners across the lifespan are engaging in learning activities that make a positive difference to their lives and in turn, this has a positive impact on communities across Scotland.

As work will shortly begin on a new Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland, Scottish Government and regional policymakers need to take these positive impacts on learners and communities into account when deciding on their future funding priorities. As you read through the learner stories and achievements below, imagine what their lives and our country might look like, were it not for the work the WEA does. How much worse off would we all be.....

WEA Scotland Education Updates

WEA Highland: Digital Skills

Judie Holliday, the Area Education Manger for Highland was featured in an article in the Inverness Courier on providing Digital Skills Advice to delegates at a University of the Third Age Event:-



Inverness Courier
(Friday), 05 Apr 2019

Women in the Highlands Update

As ever, Women in the Highlands have a number of events over the next few months, culminating in their Annual Conference on Saturday May 18th 2019. This year the keynote speaker will be Kate Forbes MSP. Also speaking at the event are a number of high profile figures including Lynne Smith, the WEA's National President.

Apart from the conference, there have been a number of successful events taking place and more are in the pipeline. For International Women's Day, there was a WEA Women in the Highlands Walk Inverness event organised. This was a guided

walking tour around the statues and monuments of women who have had a strong influence on the Highlands. Lara MacDonald attended the Scottish Women's Convention event at the Scottish Parliament to promote the Women in the Highlands Project network with other organisations and share best practice.

Coming up, there are more opportunities for those interested in creative writing and the arts. "Make Your Mark" (an art and writing workshop on identity) has already been successfully delivered in Nairn and will be offered in Aviemore during May. A creative writing workshop called "Next Steps" is also due to be delivered shortly and builds on the earlier work from the Creative Writing for Beginners workshops. Finally, the Women in the Highlands Choir will shortly reconvene after a short break

WEA Highland Agewise Project Film

The Agewise project has been featured in previous e-briefs and focuses on providing individuals with tools for transition across life. The project has gone down very well with both service users and the Gulbenkian Foundation who financed the project. A short film showcasing the work of the project can be found in the link below:-



SOCIAL ISSUES

Transitions in Later Life

This short film looks at the *AGEWISE tools for transition* project from Worker's Education Association Scotland, which incorporates mindfulness and creative approaches.

[WATCH THE FILM](#)

WEA Highland Local Association Visit to Victoria and Albert (V & A) Museum, Dundee

WEA Local Association members from Inverness, Alness, Nairn, Aberdeen, Fife and Dundee spent several months co-ordinating a joint visit to Dundee to visit the V & A Museum and the McManus Art Gallery and Museum. Beyond the visits themselves, this was an excellent opportunity for networking, sharing and socialising. The

McManus Art Gallery and Museum (where local WEA member Jim Gordon acted as a first class guide) appears to have been very popular, if in need of funds. In contrast, the V & A appears to have money aplenty, but feedback on the visitor attraction itself was (to be polite) a little more equivocal!!



Jim Gordon (Dundee), and Norman Miller (Aberdeen) contemplating the memorial to the 16 men from Dundee who were killed in the Spanish Civil War, serving in the International Brigade.



Oor Wullie and Friends

[WEA Reach Out Residential to Loch Ness](#)

This year, the Reach Out residential took place on the banks of Loch Ness at Lower Foyers. Many of the Reach Out learners have quite difficult personal and life circumstances and these residential visits present them with challenges and opportunities in equal measure.

Beyond the more formal learning aspects of the residential such as the daily walks, local history, engaging with nature and understanding the environment, a lot of learning is achieved via “stealth” or is embedded into the programme. The learners have to buy the provisions for the duration of their stay, which is a challenge to those not used to working on a budget. They need to work as a team, preparing and cooking food or building and dismantling the tents on the campsite. They also develop their core and essential skills through map reading, working out time and distances, and by learning to plan for activities they also learn how to work with others.

This is an intensive four day programme ably led and facilitated by Ross Weatherby and Kevin McPherson who I know would be delighted to share more information than is possible in this e-brief. As ever, the success of the programme is its impact on the learners and a few of their quotes are outlined below:-

“This course has allowed me to come out of my shell”

“It was great to get away from my problems”

“This helped compliment my experiences on my personal learning journey”

“Mixing and communicating with so many different personalities was challenging but enabled me to keep clam and stay focussed”

WEA Reach Out: Steve Murison

This brief excerpt cannot begin to do justice to Steve Murison’s lifelong learner journey. Some people will already know that Steve is a relatively new recruit to the WEA having joined the Reach Out project team. What will be less well known is that Steve is a former learner on the Reach Out Programme who, like many of his fellow learners, joined the programme several years ago for (what turned out to be) a life changing experience.

Steve is and will be a massive asset to the Reach Out programme. He can relate to the issues the learners are trying to manage. He in turn can be a role model to them as evidence of what is possible through resilience, persistence and patience. We frequently talk about learner success and impacts on learners, but it is rare to have such stark evidence of it where the learner becomes the teacher. This success is a celebration of an individual’s achievement, an acknowledgement of the contribution

of the Reach Out staff, and of a programme that is evidently life changing and which must be sustained to serve the communities of Aberdeen and the North East.

WEA Personal Assistant Network Project

Since receiving confirmation and security of funding, the volume of activity on the Personal Assistant Network Project has increased considerably with a marked increase in both the number of events and the number of delegates attending them.

Get Together events for PA's and PA Employers have been held recently in Glasgow, Aberdeen and for the first time, in Shetland. The event in Shetland was the first of what is hoped will be a regular programme of events to support local PA's in conjunction with the local authority, Shetland Community Connectors, Train Shetland and Shetland College.

These Get Together events enable practitioners and employers to share experiences and knowledge, identify the support they would find most beneficial, plan for future sessions where this support can be provided, and to establish or maintain an effective peer support network. Perhaps not surprisingly, the provision of online support going forward is seen as important in underpinning all the other assistance the project provides.

In addition to these more formal events, the PA Network continues to provide support to PA's on an ongoing basis across Scotland. In the past couple of months, there have been sessions in Moray, Dumfries and Galloway and Ayrshire with events in Dunbartonshire, Forth Valley and Stirlingshire already being planned and due to be delivered in the relatively near future.

WEA Learning in Ayrshire

Following the recent award from Bank of Scotland for a programme of learning on Financial Literacy, the first two programmes for learners in Saltcoats and Irvine have just begun with good feedback from learners. Two more, one in Kilbirnie and one in Dalry will begin shortly. This programme aims to help people (but particularly those who are in need of English language support) to better understand money matters and to prevent them getting into debt.

Also in Ayrshire the 2018-19 Employability Fund programme is well advanced in terms of its delivery schedule. Beyond a number of learners successfully completing the programme, work placements and accredited qualifications, several candidates have now progressed successfully into employment.

WEA Learning in Glasgow

In recent months there has been a number of learner successes across Glasgow in a diverse range of curricular areas.

Two long term workplace literacy learners, Anton Mooney and Wes Young, who work at Royal Strathclyde Blindcraft Industries (RSBI) in Springburn, have achieved their Adult Achievement Awards at Level 3 and will shortly receive their certificates from Newbattle Abbey College.

In the New Scots Integration Programme, 100% of learners who recently completed the WEA's "Survival English" class for low level ESOL learners progressed to college or to further learning in their local communities. In addition, a number of them are developing their employability skills through volunteering work in a community garden. This "Survival English" is not just about language capability but assists in the learner's wellbeing. It aims to help "New Scots" understand their environment, begin their integration journey and take the first steps to being included and involved in their new country.

A new partnership with the New Gorbals Housing Association (NGHA) is also helping individuals and families with their language capability, but at the same time highlights a major WEA strength of delivering learning in communities. NGHA had received feedback that the biggest barrier to their residents learning English was lack of childcare and distance to classes. In this innovative community centred partnership, NGHA funds the facility for the childcare and has asked the WEA to deliver the learning. To date, 34 people have enrolled on this programme with a further 48 planned between Easter and summer.

The WEA recently delivered a STEM Workshop to Glasgow Life Community Service and Family Learning Officers. The aim of this workshop was to introduce these practitioners to "Science for a Successful Scotland" and "Counting on a Greener Scotland" learning materials. These materials aim to encourage families to learn together and to provide a better means of supporting children's learning in science.

WEA Inspiring Stories

Another WEA learner story at <https://www.wea.org.uk/walking-back-happiness>