

E-Brief - June 2019

Introduction

The planned May edition of the WEA Scotland e-brief was a little bereft of material so we decided to combine the May and June editions together. As usual, you can't help but be struck by the learner stories and the impact learning has on individual's families and communities. Without this vital adult learning input, many more people would be disadvantaged and deprived of the opportunities and services that the WEA and other third sector organisations provide.

As we look at the current political economic and social context, it is clear that the need for our services has never been greater. It is therefore quite difficult to comprehend why adult learning seemingly continues to be among the first areas to be cut from local council budgets with the resulting decline in educational opportunities for those who need it most. It is therefore vital that the WEA maximises the opportunities that may be potentially available to it via the new Adult Learning Strategy and the new Families and Communities Third Sector Fund.

The new Adult Learning Strategy is due for publication in the spring of 2020. The WEA Director for Scotland is on a Scottish Government led working group charged with developing and delivering this Strategy following widespread consultation with key stakeholders within and out with the adult learning sector. At the Strategy launch at the Adult Learning Conference on May 22nd, the Minister, Richard Lochhead, made it clear that this Strategy must be about delivery not debate. While we can all point to beneficial differences and impacts for our learners at a local level the challenge for the sector going forward will be to better demonstrate the impact and difference it can make for communities and for Scotland.

Associated with the new Adult Learning Strategy is the launch of a new fund to replace the ALEC fund. The Families and Communities Third Sector Fund was launched on 29th April. The value in the fund is £16 million per year for the next three years and is only available to national organisations. The opportunity to bid into this fund opened on 6th June and will close on 24th September. Adult learning has been specifically cited as a key element for reducing poverty within this fund which clearly presents a significant opportunity for the WEA to demonstrate how it can best contribute to the people of Scotland and also secure its medium to long term sustainability.

More details on this new fund can be found via the link below:-

<https://news.gov.scot/news/families-and-community-learning>

WEA Education Updates

Personal Assistants Network

The Personal Assistants Network continues to grow in terms of its reach, providing vital support knowledge and skills to personal assistants across Scotland. In the past couple of months the project has expanded into a number of new regions including West and East Dunbartonshire, South Lanarkshire, Forth Valley, Fife Shetland Moray and Inverness. Meetings have already taken place to extend this reach even further with events being planned for North Lanarkshire, Dundee and Angus from September onwards.

Across the network, 7 Facebook groups have also been established which provide peer support within regions. These groups have also resulted in the establishment and growth of a number of local networking events run by the PA's themselves, enabling peers in regions to offer support to one another reducing isolation and the groups taking ownership of their own development.

This recent development is a massive step forward and evidence of the projects current and likely future success. The project was created to deliver exactly this kind of outcome, where these independent local networks are established and function with assistance from the WEA but are not dependent on the WEA. If the project continues to develop in the way it has to date, then the impacts across Scotland for personal assistants and for this sector are potentially transformational.

WEA Women in the Highlands Conference

The above conference took place at the Merkinch Community Centre on May 18th under the theme of "Inspiring Women". There were 37 women delegates in attendance and five members of staff who were joined by the WEA President Lynne Smith and three members of the WEA Scotland Board, Susan Cooney, Karen McArdle and Marion Flett.

There were five workshops on offer to the delegates, Wellbeing, Laughter Yoga, Make Your Mark, Digital Citizenship and a Wildlife Walk. In addition to the workshops, there was an inspiring Women's Symposium with three outstanding speakers. Esme Leitch the Highland Youth Convenor, Fiona Dalgetty who was named in the 2018 BBC Radio 4 Woman's Hour Power List, and WEA President Lynne Smith. The keynote speaker was Kate Forbes MSP and if all that wasn't enough, the day was rounded off with a performance by the Women in the Highlands Choir.



Science for a Successful Scotland Workshop

Science for a Successful Scotland and Counting on a Greener Scotland are two sets of learning resources that the WEA have developed in partnership with the Glasgow Clyde Education Foundation from Glasgow Clyde College. They aim to increase interest and uptake of science through innovative materials that will better engage learner's, teachers and family members, and make it more likely that more people will progress their learning in science and/or consider a career in one of the science based subjects.

With these materials now developed and widely recognised as excellent, the challenge now is to share them more widely and get more people in schools, colleges and CLD to use these materials when delivering science to their learners. In May and June, Audrey Young moved this agenda forward through the delivery of two one day workshops to 11 CLD practitioners from Midlothian, East Lothian and City of Edinburgh Councils. One workshop was on Science for a Successful Scotland and the other used the Counting on a Greener Scotland resource to deliver a workshop on STEM initiatives. Going forward the aim is to replicate this model across Scotland.

Audrey has a number of photos from the workshops that I am sure she will be happy to share but the one below gives you a flavour of the different kind of experiments that were taking place:-



Reach Out Impacts

While Reach Out is a project that is still only delivered in Aberdeen and the North East, more and more people are becoming interested in the work of the project and the impact it has for learners. The World Community Development Conference is being held in Dundee at the end of June and one of the WEA learners, David Brown, will be showcased at the event via a film where he describes the WEA learning experience and the difference it had made to his life. This film will be part of a workshop at the event and will also be promoted across the conference and on social media. Please see link to the Conference and to David's film below:-

<https://www.wea.org.uk/walking-back-happiness>



WCDC2019_paper_1
54 (1).pdf

Beyond the impact and profile raising at this Conference, David's film has also been used at public events, as a means of promoting the programme to and engaging with students and has also featured on the WEA websites and across social media.

As David's film highlights, a major part of the Reach Out Programme is the group walking activity across North East Scotland and more widely across Scotland during residential activities. This walking programme has now attracted interest from WEA colleagues in the south east of England who have adapted the programme and circulated it across the WEA and on our social media platforms. Ross Weatherby, the Reach Out Project lead, will also be appearing on local radio in the north east in July to talk about this and other aspects of the Reach Out Programme. Meantime outlined below are several links to the walking programme:-

<https://www.wea.org.uk/about-us/blogs/reach-out-project-walking-guide>

<https://www.wea.org.uk/news-events/blogs/may-national-walking-month>

WEA South West: North Ayrshire

Stewart Fraser and Aileen Pollacchi continue to make a positive impact on individual learners and communities across North Ayrshire. They have just completed two Financial Literacies courses funded by Bank of Scotland. This provision aims to help ESOL learners better understand the value of money and provides them with help and support to make the most of the money they receive via work or benefits.

More generally, a number of learners across the region are making significant progress with their language skills and integration to the North Ayrshire Community. Three learners have successfully obtained a place at the local college, while others have progressed to courses on offer via the DWP or are actively volunteering in their local communities.

These excellent achievements by WEA learners were rightly recognised in a recent Pan Ayrshire ESOL Celebration of Learning Event at Ayrshire College.

WEA Inspiring Stories

Another WEA learner story at <https://www.wea.org.uk/inspiring-stories/were-all-adults-here>