

## **E Brief - September 2019**

### **Introduction**

After a couple of months where no e-brief was published due to the annual summer break in learner activity, it's good to once again highlight a number of excellent learning programmes delivering real benefits for learners.

While there may have been a break in learner activity over the past couple of months, the wider world of adult learning has not been standing still. The new Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland continues to be developed with a planned publication date of summer next year. WEA Scotland has just completed its bid to Scottish Government for our next three years of core funding. We will hear the outcome of that bid in December. Finally, I am really pleased to report that following a skills audit of the WEA Scotland Board and a subsequent recruitment and selection process WEA Scotland has successfully recruited three new Board members.

I hope you enjoy reading about these developments and of course, the success stories of our learner's details. As ever I am always interested to hear from any WEA staff member, learner or external stakeholder if they have comments on these ebriefts or would like more information on any aspect of the WEA's work.

### **Adult Learning Strategy and the WEA Scotland AGM**

The new Adult Learning Strategy for Scotland will pose a number of challenges and opportunities for all providers in the sector. The Scottish Government has made it very clear that this Strategy needs to demonstrate what impacts and differences adult learning can make for communities and for Scotland. While we all know and can see the benefits to individual learners, the Government needs the sector to better connect the impacts it makes to other policy areas. For example, how can adult learning impact on mental health, how can it help close the attainment gap, etc.

These challenges will require the sector as a whole and all the providers in the sector, to consider how they will respond to these challenges. To that end this year's WEA Scotland AGM will run a series of workshops on how best the WEA can meet the challenges posed by this new emerging Strategy and what education provision we need to offer to maximise our contribution in the future. Our keynote speaker will be Nicola McAndrew the Policy Lead for Scottish Government on the Adult Learning Strategy.

This AGM is a chance for all local association members and volunteers to have their say in shaping the WEA's education offer. It will also be a chance to discuss and question the lead for Scottish Government on the development of the Adult Learning Strategy. Members will shortly receive notice of the AGM. I hope that with the planned focus on our education provision and the chance to discuss the new Adult Learning Strategy, there will be a huge interest among members that will be reflected in the number of delegates who attend.

## Families and Communities Third Sector Fund

Previous e-briefs have highlighted this new Scottish Government Fund. This fund replaces the current Adult Learning Empowering Communities Fund (ALEC). This is the fund from Scottish Government that underwrites a large percentage of WEA Scotland's core cost and is an essential element in the organisations financial sustainability.

For the past few weeks WEA Scotland has been completing its bid to this new fund in an effort to secure these core funds for the next three years from 2020-23. All 28 pages and 10,000+ words of the bid were completed and submitted on Tuesday. I must acknowledge and thank all the WEA Scotland Management Team and a number of staff who provided comments and feedback throughout the past few weeks and really enhanced the quality of the bid that was eventually submitted. Special thanks to Judith who version controlled the document, managed all the edits and corrected my numerous mistakes!!

For those not too familiar with this new fund a link providing more details is outlined below

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

## New WEA Scotland Board Appointments

Following a recruitment and selection process across the summer months, WEA Scotland has appointed two new Board members: Simon Hewitt and Paul Ballantyne.

Simon Hewitt is Vice Principal for Curriculum and Attainment and a member of the Executive team at Dundee and Angus College. He is also an Associate Assessor with Education Scotland, a member of the Scottish Digital Skills Partnership and a Board member of the Dundee Science Centre

Paul Ballantyne has an extensive background in adult education and community development. He has worked primarily in local government most recently in the Employment and Skills Division of Scottish Government where he was responsible for education training and learning programmes for vulnerable and disadvantaged people. He has held a number of previous Board appointments including being Chair of the Scottish Urban Regeneration Forum, and Xchange Scotland. He is currently Scottish Trustee for the People's Health Trust which is the good cause's partner of the Health Lottery.

## **WEA Education Updates**

### Falkirk Council Employment and Training Unit

WEA Scotland has established a new partnership with Falkirk Council's Employment and Training Unit. The Unit focuses on supporting unemployed people with skills for employability. Many of the learners have multiple barriers to learning, challenging life or personal circumstances and have been unemployed for some time. The WEA complements the work of the Unit by providing one to one support for learners with their core skills and confidence by creatively building on learner's strengths and interests. For example in numeracy training one learner interested in baking is taught numeracy via recipes while another who is interested in football learns numeracy via the football results. Through this innovative delivery learners are beginning to achieve and taking small incremental steps towards a positive destination.

### Falkirk Job Clubs Poverty and Deprivation Enquiry

Learners from the Falkirk Job Clubs have been assisting Falkirk Council Community & Learning Development (CLD) colleagues through a peer investigation on the impact of poverty and inequality in the Falkirk area. The learners are trained on interview techniques that enable them to gather information from community members. The learners are then involved in the processing of feedback and editing and will then co-produce the final report in conjunction with CLD staff. Feedback from the learners is really positive many of whom have made massive steps forward both personally and professionally and have made a positive impact on their communities

### AMIF Project and Scottish Refugee Council

This Asylum Migration and Integration Fund] (AMIF) Project in partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and WEA Scotland delivers ESOL education to new refugees who have recently been granted leave to remain. Beyond the core language provision the WEA supports these vulnerable learners in a number of different ways. Learning is delivered in a relaxed and supportive small group environment. The education is delivered in a contextualised way that enable learners to integrate into their new environments including trips to local resource centres, learning bus timetables and networking opportunities. This wider activity enables learners to not only improve their language capabilities, but make new connections increase their support networks and improve their chances of progressing to further study.

This project is now one year old and in the past twelve months has delivered some outstanding results. 204 refugees have completed initial language assessments to enable them to access community or college ESOL classes and 115 learners have been enrolled in 13 ESOL classes. The learner feedback is really positive with the

recurring theme being improving confidence with the language, no need for translators, learners living independently and great feedback on WEA Tutors.

### ESOL Funding Glasgow

Outside of the AMIF Project the WEA is also a key partner in the delivery of ESOL provision across the city. For the second year the WEA has been awarded significant funds to manage the ESOL Register across the city. This register is where learners note an interest in attending classes and are then matched to places available from the learning providers. Lauren, Sharon, Stephen and Kathleen can all take huge credit in their management and development of the register for the past twelve months. It is their diligence and achievements that has been recognised by the continuation of this funding.

### Employability Programmes South West and Glasgow

The first employability programme in Health and Social Care for 2019-20 was completed earlier in September with ten learners enhancing both their employability and vocational skills and gaining certified qualifications in health and safety and food hygiene. The learners are now at the stage of submitting applications to prospective employers and we should be able to report on the outcome of these by next month.

### Lloyds Banking Group Volunteers and Employability

One of the distinguishing features of WEA employability programmes is the contribution of our Lloyds Banking Group volunteers. In both Glasgow and the South West of Scotland Lloyds Banking Group volunteers contribute their knowledge and expertise to assist learners with their CV's and interview skills. The learners report this makes a valuable contribution to their confidence levels and interview readiness.

### Personal Assistants Network

This project continues to support personal assistants throughout Scotland with on line/telephone support and regional peer support groups. A number of peer support events have been running across Scotland in the past few months and a large numbers are planned going forward as the project continues to grow month on month. The social media profile of the project also continues to grow raising awareness of the project across Scotland and is undoubtedly contributing to its sustainability and success.

Just in the past few weeks, the project has gained Associated Membership Status of Self Directed Support Scotland which will further increase its exposure and access to more member's partners and funders.

### DWP Course and Workshop at Lauriston Job Centre

The Lauriston Job Centre has a number of clients whose first language is not English. Over the summer months, they have commissioned the WEA to deliver a work related English course to improve the learner's language and digital skills.

As a very innovative extra step, the Job Centre also commissioned the WEA to deliver a course on effectively communicating with speakers of other languages to enable Job Centre staff to better understand the difficulties faced by their ESOL customers and to provide the staff with strategies to improve their communication skills to ESOL learners. The feedback from both staff and learners has been really positive both on the learning provision and on the impact and differences it has had on communication between the staff and their clients.

### Literacy and Numeracy Provision Glasgow

The Glasgow Office of WEA Scotland made a successful bid for funding to support an event during Maths Week. The event is called Charity Counts and will aim to help ESOL and non ESOL volunteers make money for their charity shop and provide them with the basic skills of running a business.

Two courses on literacy and numeracy have recently started with the Royal Strathclyde Blindcraft Industries. This organisation employs over 250 people where at least 50% have some disability. These courses will provide underpinning skills and knowledge to learners who are working towards their Adult Apprenticeship Skills Course.

### Syrian Resettlement Programme Inverness

The Sharing Lives Sharing Languages Project is helping a number of ESOL learners in the region make a step change with their skills and knowledge through a process of peer education. The project engaged with the learner groups that meet every week to practice their language skills. Through consultation they found out what additional skills the learners wanted to learn and that were most important to them.

Beyond the weekly sessions on improving their language capability, the learner group now focus on ICT literacy skills and driving theory practice which will enhance the learners' employability skills and also help them better and more quickly integrate into their local communities.

### Employability Programme Inverness

At the Invergordon Job Centre, the WEA are working with a number of long term unemployed clients on a one to one basis. Many of these clients have long term health issues, low or no qualifications, lack confidence and motivation and have had poor levels of engagement with Job Centre staff.

Over the past few weeks the WEA tutor has provided over 90 hours of 1 to 1 support and mentoring and has already achieved some notable successes. One learner has completed an SCQF Level 4 qualification, 2 learners have secured employment, 1 learner has started college and one is about to take their Construction Skills Certificate. If you assess these outcome in terms of contextualised achievement these are outstanding results.

### WEA Media Slot North East Scotland

Ross Weatherby has advised that he is about to become a media personality in North East Scotland. Ross has done an excellent job of securing a slot on the local radio station in Aberdeen. This slot will take place four times a year to coincide with the planned recruitment timeline for the start of the Reach Out Programme courses and will hopefully result in a growth of numbers and a much greater awareness of the programme across the region. Ross also advises me that he is in more detailed negotiations about a regular late night radio show slot which he hopes he could use to promote the Reach Out Programme on an ongoing basis and will keep us all advised on how that progresses.

### What We Can Weave Together Fife

WEA Fife Local Association held a week long exhibition in August in partnership with the Kirkcaldy Civic Society and the Wemyss School of Needlework on the history and heritage of linen in Fife. Over 300 people attended and participated across the week to see the maps and photos of old mills, stories of prominent industrialists, historical documentation and research hear recorded oral histories and to see a number of designs and artefacts associated with the industry. The event was a great success and the project will continue for at least one more year with a publication and blog already in the pipeline.

### **WEA Inspiring Stories**

Another WEA Learner story at <https://www.wea.org.uk/inspiring-stories/confidence-building-through-music>