

E Brief Text October 2019

1 Introduction

This has been yet another busy but rewarding month in WEA Scotland. With the bid to the Families and Communities Third Sector Fund out of the way at the end of September, October has been more of a business as usual month. That said we had to complete our six monthly update for our current ALEC Fund money to Scottish Government, there was an IIP audit, and Kathleen and her Team completed a large bid for funding to Glasgow City Council.

The ALEC Fund updates and letters of testimonies received from partners to support the Glasgow Bid were both excellent examples of the WEA showcasing what it does, demonstrating the value that it adds and the impacts it makes for individuals and communities across Scotland. A selection of this work is featured in this ebrief. I hope: like me, you enjoy reading about the differences we are making to individuals and communities across Scotland

2 ALEC Fund Update

As many of you may be aware WEA Scotland is required to provide a quarterly update to the Scottish Government on the progress it is making against the targets agreed in relation to the core funding provided. A copy of the report submitted is attached below and provides numerous examples of great work being done by the WEA across Scotland. I am pleased to advise that the report received very positive feedback from Scottish Government who commented particularly on our progress against agreed outcomes and in the financial turnaround which has laid the foundations of the organisations sustainability



6 Month report-Ref
NoRep-2987-101020:

3 Investors in People Audit

As part of the WEA working towards enhanced IIP accreditation and [hopefully] progressing from our current bronze standard to silver or gold, the IIP auditors chose WEA Scotland as the base for their annual audit visit. The auditor met with all members of the WEA Scotland Edinburgh staff and he also spoke with the four Area Education Managers. The official report will not be produced for a few weeks but [based on this visit to Scotland] the auditor indicated that the WEA had made substantial progress in the past twelve months. I am really grateful to all the staff that participated in this visit and portrayed the WEA in such a positive way.

4 Bid to Glasgow City Council Communities Fund: Letters of Support

Kathleen Richardson and colleagues in Glasgow have spent a large amount of time in October making a bid for core funding from the Glasgow Communities Fund. As part of making this bid WEA Scotland sought letters of support from a number of partners and received several very positive testimonies. The contribution of Craig Brown his team of ESOL tutors and workers is highlighted in two of the testimonials below and indicate perfectly why our work is so important:-

“The specialism skill and warmth demonstrated by WEA ESOL Tutors when teaching English to our traumatised and young client group is really impressive. Young people often comment on how much it benefits them to attend classes, especially as most of them are not ready to attend college or cannot yet access a place. This is often the first opportunity young people have to form a peer group in Glasgow and provides them with more than just English language skills but improved confidence, a sense of hope about their future and an opportunity to attend something they choose to attend”

British Red Cross

“Amina, the Muslim Women’s Resource Centre has worked continuously with WEA for over ten years.....At Amina, we work with BAME women, many of whom are non-native speakers who are only able to work confidently in a safe female only environment. We would be unable to provide this unique service were it not for the provision and culturally sensitive support provided to us by the WEA. Their tutor has developed a very positive reputation within the local BAME community this encouraging repeat and new service users to our project”

Amina Muslim Women’s’ Resource Centre

5 WEA Education Updates

5.1 South West Scotland: New Staff Member

WEA Scotland is delighted to welcome Sharon Campbell to the team in South West Scotland. Sharon brings a wealth of experience to the WEA notably in employability programmes and European funding and will be based in North Ayrshire supporting Syrian refugees and their families.

5.2 South West Scotland: Financial Literacies on CANVAS

This financial literacy course for ESOL learners, aims to help improve the learners ability to think about and manage their money. This programme has previously only been available via face to face delivery but over the next few weeks is going to be added to CANVAS which will enable it to also be delivered as a fully on line course or as part of a blended learning delivery model. This will hopefully increase both learner and partner uptake

5.3 South West Scotland PA Project

The PA Project continues to thrive and the range of its activity continues to grow. This month the PA Project partnered with SDS and Enable Fife to host a “Get Together Get Involved” day which brought together personal assistants, employers support organisations and carers for a day of workshops presentations and discussions. Beyond the learning that takes place on the day and the knowledge that is shared and exchanged, these events are integral to the development of local support networks for personal assistants growing their confidence and capabilities

Similar events to the one above were also held in Glasgow and North Lanarkshire. Sharon Ledger and Les Watson [the project leads] also participated in the Care Inspectorates Thematic review of Self Directed Support in Dunbartonshire, South Lanarkshire and East Lothian raising the WEA’s and the projects profile in these areas and building the basis of more activity growth in these areas in the future

5.4 Glasgow: New Course for NHS Staff

WEA Scotland will shortly launch a new journaling course for NHS staff but clearly this course will have a much wider potential application than just for NHS staff. This course will help learners to develop the skills that will enable them to write a journal for their own personal wellbeing. It will also provide those who work in the NHS with the skills and knowledge to work with their patients and through this journaling, improve the patients wellbeing.

For those interested in potentially replicating this provision in other areas, Kathleen Richardson can provide more details

5.5 Highlands Syrian Resettlement Programme

WEA Scotland is providing invaluable support to Syrian learners who have been resettled to Inverness and Highland having been granted leave to remain.

They are providing support classes to college students to help them with their homework. They are also supporting the development of family learning for parents with children through classes on shopping for children; phoning the school and helping them prepare for and manage parent’s nights.

The WEA is also helping other groups of learners with their employability skills by helping them better understand the job application process, write CVs and applications and prepare for interviews. They are also supporting those who aspire towards self-employment or to set up their own business

As more families continue to be resettled to Inverness and the demand for our services there continue to grow, the WEA has recruited seven new tutors to cope with this anticipated growth

5.6 Union Learning in Highland

The WEA in Highland continues to work closely with STUC in the region and provision continues to grow. This month the WEA delivered a Reflect Relax and recharge session to 25 members of the RMT union at the Women's Well Being Conference in the Highlands. Also this month the WEA delivered a Working with Menopause course to delegates from SDS, High Life Highland and Highland Council. Activity such as this continues to demonstrate to partners the breadth and depth of the WEA's education provision and increases the scope and potential for future growth in both current and new activity areas.

5.7 Women in the Highlands Choir

The Women in the Highlands Choir's membership visibility and successes continues to flourish. In September they sang at the National Recovery Walk in Inverness promoted by the Highland Alcohol and Drugs Partnership. This month they participated in the Word on the Street Festival in Dingwall.

Audiences for the choir continue to increase and the praise for their work from those who have heard them perform is incredibly positive. Feedback from the choir members themselves has also been very positive and illustrated the wider benefits of participating in the choir. Several members talk of increases and improvements to their self-belief and self-confidence. Other members have reported that they are now developing their own small businesses or joining formal education programmes, none of which they say would have been possible but for the changes in mind-set that the choir has helped create.

5.8 Third Sector Research Forum Conference

Pam Simpson and Karen McArdle recently attended the Third Sector Research Forum Conference and presented a work on "Storied Lives". This presentation built on the work done in the North East of Scotland on Motivational Tales where members of the Local Association met with learners and drew up storyboards of the learner's lives and their WEA learning experience. The focus of this work is to improve the capture of the learner voice and to raise awareness of these learners' stories with current and prospective partners and funders

Pam and Karen presented this narrative enquiry approach to 16 third sector practitioners and academics that delivered very positive feedback on the session and asked if further sessions might be available in the future.

5.9 Reach Out and John Muir Award

Education Coordinator Steve Murison and Reach Out Volunteer Graham Robb attended John Muir Leader Training. This two day course brought together professionals to share practice and knowledge on the delivery of training programmes outdoors to client groups and service users. Both Steve and Graham now have their John Muir Leaders Awards and in total Reach Out now has five John Muir trainers. This mode of learning is often the means by which people previously

disengaged from education and learning become re-engaged and is a huge value add and differentiator in the provision the WEA is able to offer to its Reach Out service users

5.10 North East Reminiscence Groups

The breadth of provision and reach of WEA to provide locally based community education is no better illustrated than through the work of the Reminiscence classes in Aberdeenshire. Currently there are five classes across the region in Rynie, Banchory, Ballater Torphins and Insch with learner age ranges from 60 to 95 plus.

The range of topics available on these programmes is staggering and there are simply far too many to repeat all of them here. However to provide a flavour, there are talks on bees and butterflies, Highland Games, school dinners past and present, war years memories, 70 years of the NHS, apprenticeships v degrees, street pastors, summer holiday memories, shopping lists past and present, the weather and global warming,

Just as illuminating as the range of topics is the feedback from learners about the benefits and value add of this provision and what it means for them. Again the range of feedback and positive impacts are huge but there are a number of common themes: its enjoyable, the range of topics and speakers are excellent, hearing others views and opinions contributes to a much greater life experience, it enables me to socialise and prevents loneliness, it keeps me mentally active.

This ebrief has once again illustrated that delivering community based learning that learner's want at times they want it and in settings where they feel comfortable or can access easily is not just an essential service but a life/game changer for many. If: like me, you are motivated or inspired by these stories please share them with others and if you would like to discuss any aspect of the WEA's work, please contact me

Ray McCowan, Director WEA Scotland