

E Brief Text March 2020

1 Introduction

This ebrief is being written as the Corona Virus begins to take its toll on Scotland and the rest of the UK. For the foreseeable future our home and work lives will change immeasurably. The impacts of this virus are likely to disproportionately affect many of the groups of people WEA exists to support. Over the next few weeks we will be looking at what we can do to maintain a level of service continuity to our learners. Already I am aware of WEA Education Coordinators and Tutors taking the lead in their communities to deliver virtual learning, establish new learner groups and create podcasts. I look forward to highlighting in future ebriefs what we have been able to achieve for our learners and their communities in these very challenging times.

For now, this month's ebrief reports on the activities that have been taking place for the past few weeks and as ever highlights the breadth depth and quality of WEA staff and tutors. It also focuses on the contributions and successes of our learners who: in addition to learning themselves, are assisting and helping other learners make significant and sustainable differences to their lives. It is this spirit of selflessness and service to others that will enable everyone at the WEA to survive and potentially thrive in the management of this crisis.

My best wishes to everyone and to their extended families and friends in the weeks that lie ahead. Meantime, I hope you enjoy this latest ebrief and take some comfort that even in these difficult times, there is some good news around that we should celebrate and be justifiably proud of.

2 WEA Education Updates

2.1 WEA Learner of the Year: Christies Story

Christie Paterson: the WEA Learner of the Year has recently had a film of his journey made by the SCQF [Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework]. The SCQF highlights the journey of exceptional learners and how their learning has progressed learners across the SCQF Levels. The film below is now being shared across Scotland on the SCQF website which in addition to the portrayal of Christie's success is also incredibly beneficial in showcasing the work of the WEA.

<https://www.wea.org.uk/christies-story>

2.2 Showcasing of WEA Scotland Student Group of the Year

A few months ago the WEA National Award for Outstanding Student Group was awarded to the Glasgow ESOL Group who were recognised for their outstanding achievement of completing the SCQF Level 4 course: An Introduction to Science in Everyday Life. The SCQF have also expressed an interest in showcasing the success of this group on its website. More details on this will follow in future ebriefs.

2.3 Personal Assistants Network

Prior to the outbreak of the Virus, the Personal Assistants Network had organised a number of supportive events across Scotland for their personal assistants. In the time of crisis that we are all facing this network of support has proved crucial in finding replacement personal assistants when people have become ill or had to self-isolate. It has also been beneficial to highlight the valuable role of personal assistants to the delivery of health and social care in the community and to be able to provide a resource that service users can potentially access given the current strains on NHS and social care capacity

The Personal Assistants network is also working in partnership with the Scottish Personal Assistants Employer Network [SPAEN] and the Poverty Alliance to campaign for all Personal Assistants in Scotland to be paid the living wage. Paying the Living Wage will rightly acknowledge and reward the incredible contribution Personal Assistants make to the delivery of health and social care in Scotland and the higher level of earnings will encourage more people to consider becoming a personal assistant as a long term career choice. Beyond the benefit to the Personal Assistants themselves the likely influx of new people becoming personal assistants will also lead to a bigger and better talent pool of personal assistants across Scotland and a much better care experience for service users

The ongoing valued contribution of the Personal Assistants Network has been justifiably recognised by the Scottish Government who have recently granted the project a further 18 months of funding.

2.4 WEA Provision in Glasgow

SDF Financial Literacy Sessions

A new WEA Tutor: Liam Casey has successfully developed and delivered a number of sessions on financial literacy around Universal Credit for in and out of work claimants. As many will be aware there are immense challenges for claimants around Universal Credit. These sessions aim to enable clients to better understand the system and to access the correct levels of benefit to which they are entitled. . It is planned to develop future sessions for this client group around debt, pensions benefits and understanding wage slips

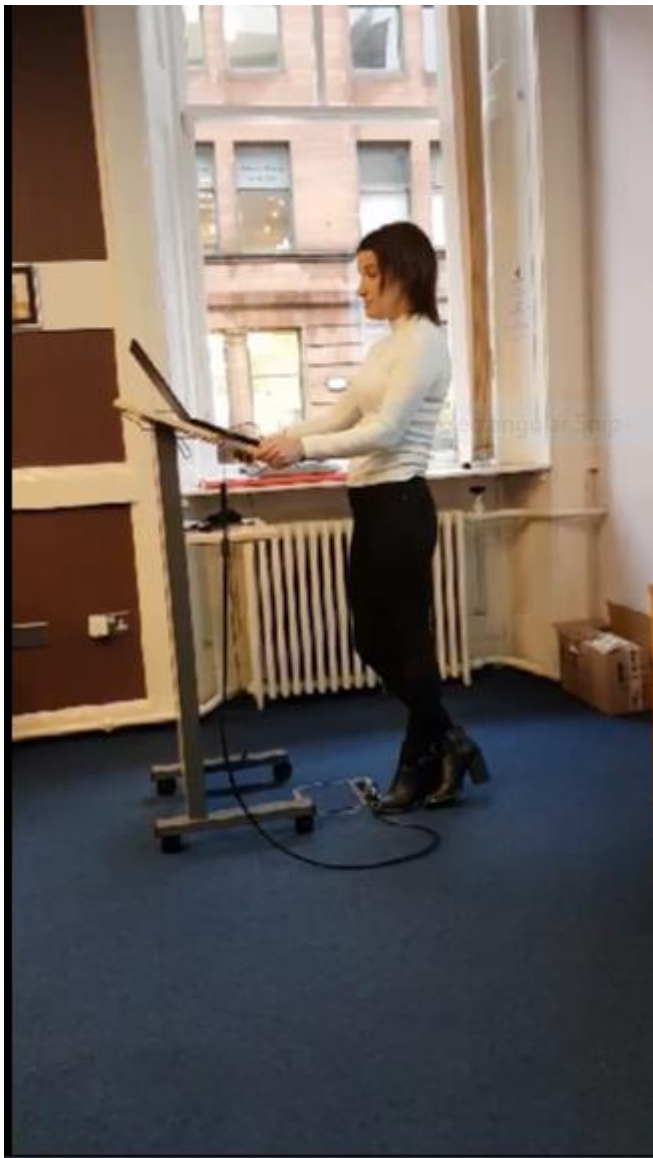
Journaling for Well Being and Journaling with Service Users

These new WEA courses have ran as tasters at Gartnavel and the QEUH. They provide ideas and skills for workers to start and maintain their own journal or to support patients with their own journaling. The workshops show learners how journals can be used not only to record thoughts, feelings and ideas, but also to begin to problem-solve, plan for the future, find ways of talking to others about your

problems or feelings, or as a tool for working more effectively with patients. Journaling has also been shown to be an excellent literacy tool, giving literacy learners the space and time to play with language without fear of getting it wrong.

Scottish Drugs Forum and the WEA

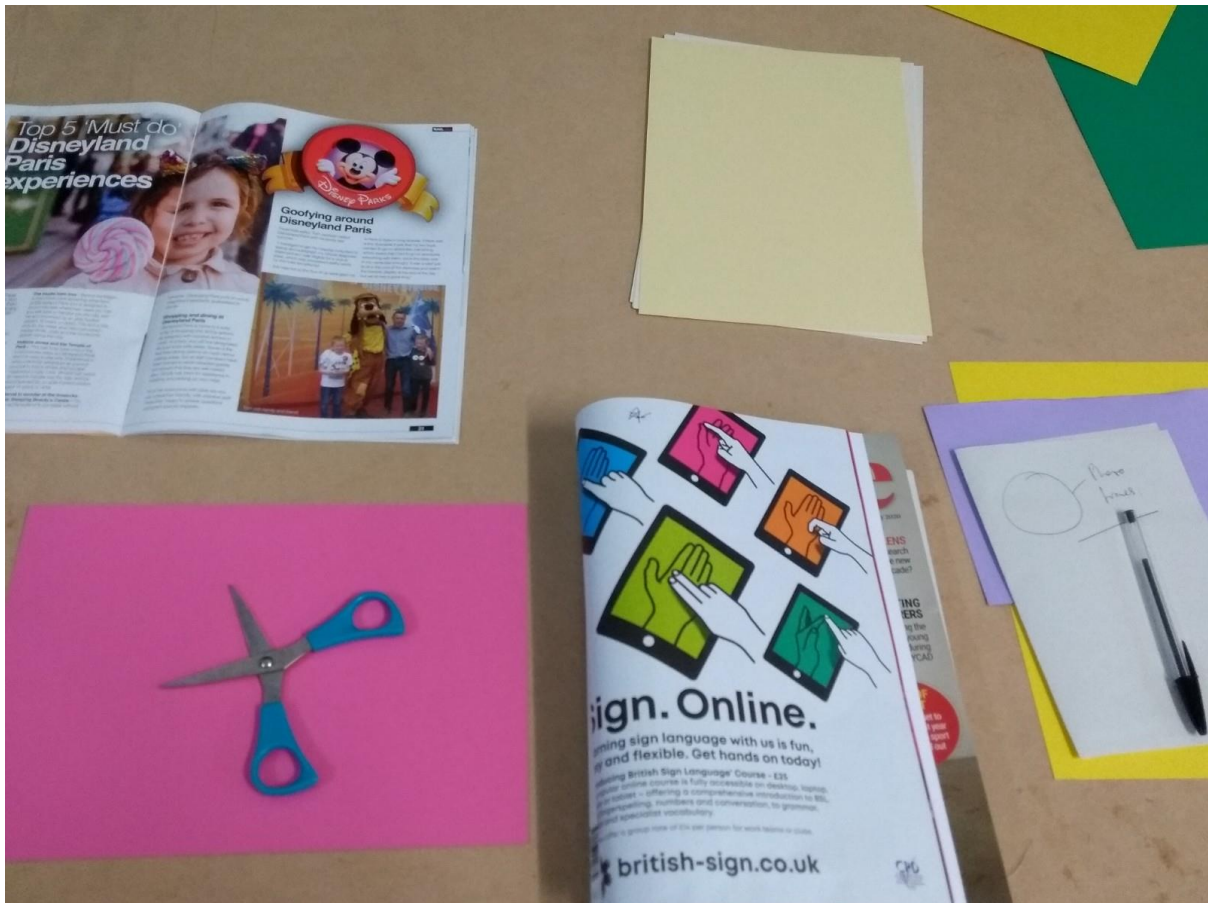
Learners from the SDF's award-winning Addiction Workers' Training Project celebrated the end of their literacy and ICT sessions, run by Claire McManus from the WEA, by giving PowerPoint presentations about the project, which they wrote, designed and delivered using new skills developed through Claire's workshops.



Possibilities

New WEA tutor, Keira McLean, has been running a literacies group at Possibilities since last November. The group started gathering material for a magazine, looking at

local issues, with a focus on disability issues. They were determined to make the magazine as accessible as possible, to reflect the needs of the local community as well as those creating the magazine. After a successful funding bid to the Ruchill and Possilpark Seedcorn fund, the group used their £1000 budget to produce a full-colour, multi-sensory magazine, complete with braille inserts, links to online audio content, and plenty of visual story-telling. They hope this will just be the first issue of a regular magazine about issues that matter, produced in multiple languages and voices so that these stories can be heard throughout the community.



Walk, Talk, Learn

A group of learners at Possilpoint have been doing some urban drifting at Joey Simon's new Walk, Talk, and Learn sessions. Together, the group organise walks around Possil and investigate how the area has changed over the years, why it has changed, and who has been responsible for those changes. They have already looked into where much of the wealth generated in Possil by Saracen Iron Foundry workers ended up, tracing a route all the way to Glasgow's luxurious Park Circus, where the foundry's manager, Walter Macfarlane, lived and comparing living conditions of the working- and upper-middle classes in 19th century Glasgow. The walks are not only a good way of getting some fresh air and sharing your own

knowledge and histories, but also of continuing to learn, and of using that learning to shape the future of your community.

RSBi: Monday Magazine Group

After the success of the multi-sensory magazine with literacy learners at Possibilities, Keira Mclean has started a new Monday Magazine group with learners at the RSBi factory in Glasgow, where over half of its 260-strong staff have a disability. The group have started mapping their childhoods, using visual storytelling as a way of sharing their own narratives.

Poems by WEA Falkirk Job Club Learner on Corona Virus

As mentioned in previous ebriefs, the Job Clubs exist to provide employability support and prepare clients for employment. One of the learners there has developed sufficient levels of confidence and capability to write poems on the Corona Virus which we are proud to include in this ebrief. Beyond the poems themselves it is the extent of personal development that has taken and is taking place with these learners that we should celebrate through the sharing of this work.

Social Distance

The space between

YOU and ME

Contact or no Contact

A social distance

Are you prepared to be

resistant and be

socially distant

Isolate and mutate

Social Distance

Exclude and not include

Social Existence

2.5 WEA Provision North East: Reach Out

In previous ebriefs I have mentioned the fact that Ross Weatherby who leads the Reach Out Project in the North East, has been promoting WEA programmes in local radio stations. Ross has been doing some guest spots on the radio and there is the

possibility of him getting his own show in the near future. Outlined below is a link to one of the recent shows in which Ross appeared and a photo of Ross about to go on air

www.shmu.org.uk/fm/shows/so-why-dont-you



2.6 WEA Provision Highland

Better than any item that we can capture in the narrative of this ebrief, the most compelling stories of the differences the WEA makes is found in the words of our learners themselves. The WEA Tutor Lucy Campbell has worked alongside a WEA learner Mike Grist to share the story below. In describing the differences learning has made to Mike he says that:-

“It has made me feel more confident and I go out more”

“It has made me more proactive and given me a better perspective to go about knowing what I was looking for. I now have a job offer and am about to go on an induction”

In commenting on the impact it has had on his family life and community involvement, Mike said that through learning “I have found myself going out more and going further afield. It has given me something else to focus on”



ESOL Classes

WEA ESOL learning in Highland has been evolving and improving to deliver a better more valued experience for learners. Delivery of general ESOL classes by other delivery partners has reported a generally poor uptake and low levels of attendance. To address that issue WEA classes in Highland have adopted a much more targeted approach driven by learner interest and need. There has been a large focus on employability sessions and very effective engagement with local business and a number of learner successes in terms of job outcomes and interviews

In addition to these employability sessions, classes have also focussed on learners requests to socialise and practice their English. A number of classes are now supported by both tutors and volunteers who encourage the learners to practice their conversational skills. This has had the effect of enabling the learners to become better connected to their local communities and to develop social networks and friendships that would not otherwise have happened

What Matters to You

This was a partnership between NHS Highland, the Merkinch Partnership and the WEA. The aim was to work in an area of multiple deprivation and engage with the learners in a way that would enable them to think more positively about themselves and their communities and think of ways to improve both. The project generated a number of really good ideas, significantly improved the health and wellbeing of the group members and has attracted £1000 of NHS funding to take the project ideas forward.



Arting Around

This is another piece of new provision that was open to the public as an art and wellbeing course. It was aimed at people who hadn't done any art for a while but that were interested in developing their creativity. Below is a sample of some of the work the group produced

