

E Brief Text October 2020

1 Introduction

As another month of the WEA adapting to COVID 19 has come and gone I continue to be grateful for the efforts of staff, tutors and volunteers in supporting continuity of learning for our service users. Each month our capacity and capability to offer more alternatives to face-to-face learning grows. With the recent changes to guidelines and generally accepted wisdom that we are on the cusp of a second wave, these alternative modes of learning are more important than ever.

In recognition of these efforts, a large section of this ebrief is devoted to highlighting how on line learning via CANVAS and ZOOM is making a real difference to learners and how: after some trepidation at the beginning, many learners are now embracing this technology. We also highlight the efforts of staff and tutors in embracing this new technology and acknowledge the achievements of one particular member of staff amidst the successes of the whole WEA Scotland Team

2 Laurie Walker: Ayrshire College Student of the Year

Laurie Walker works part time for WEA Scotland in the Kilmarnock Office supporting the provision of the ESOL Register to our ESOL partner's in the West of Scotland. When she is not doing an outstanding job there, she studies part time at Ayrshire College studying HND in Accounting. She manages both these commitments alongside her biggest commitment of all, which is raising her two children Ashton and Holly. At the end of the 2019-20 academic year, Laurie completed her HND in Accounting after four years of part time study and was awarded the Ayrshire College Student of the Year. She is now progressing to the University of the West of Scotland to complete her Accounting degree. This award is a remarkable achievement and we hope Laurie is as proud of her achievements as everyone in WEA Scotland is.

3 Tutor and Volunteer CPD in Highland ESOL

Also engaging in further learning and development are the ESOL tutors and volunteers in Highland. Three CPD sessions were delivered to ESOL tutors in areas such as CANVAS and ZOOM training, engaging learners on line, and improving learner's digital skills. In addition to developing their own skills, ESOL tutors in Highland have been facilitating and supporting the training of ESOL volunteers who will in turn support learners in classes. This development model is potentially scalable across the whole of the WEA and is an innovative way to increase capacity and capability in a way in which all stakeholders can benefit. The coordinator Angie Murray has done an excellent job in developing this and I am sure would be delighted to assist any colleague who was interested in developing something similar.

4 Case Study on the Impact of Tutors and Volunteers

This link between the work of tutors and volunteers is at the heart of the WEA learning experience. Across the organisation, there is evidence of this model of provision working really well to the benefit of everyone. The learners benefit from greater support, the tutor benefits from having additional resources available to them and the volunteers benefit from a meaningful experience in which they make a real difference. WEA Scotland Education Coordinator Les Watson explains in the article below how this model works based on his own experience of working alongside volunteers from the Lloyds banking Group



Tutor feedback.pdf

5 WEA Scotland Learners/Project Updates

PA Network Scotland

PA Network Events to support personal assistants have continued across the summer period with several more scheduled for between October and December. These on line events are a vital source of support for a workforce who are largely self-employed and many of whom are sole traders. These events provide the means of learning from each other's experience and sharing good practice. Since lockdown, the network has grown into new locations and also facilitated delivery from a number of different locations across Scotland where the event is no longer constrained by the geographical location in which it takes place. In addition to these successful events 140 personal assistants have enrolled to on line learning modules to enhance their knowledge and skills with 114 completing their awards and receiving their certificates

Employability Case Study in Highland: Alice Marshall and Lucy Campbell

For the past few months the WEA Employability Tutor in Highland: Lucy Campbell, has been providing invaluable support to learners. A previous ebrief highlighted her success in securing digital devices for some of her learners who did not have access to ICT. This month one of her learners: Alice Marshall was kind enough to provide a narrative highlighting the contribution Lucy had made to her growth and development.

Alice needed some help and support to assess her education and job options and was finding it difficult to navigate her way through all the information available that would enable her to make the best choice. With the help of Lucy, Alice is now registered on a degree programme that will lead her to her planned career destination and that will greatly improve her job prospects. She acknowledges that none of this would have been possible but for Lucy and WEA Scotland

Reach Out Learners

WEA Scotland reach Out Project has also continued over the summer period delivering a range of activities to 40 learners in some of Scotland's most deprived communities. Activities include walking programmes, environmental art, gardening music gaming and a student's forum. Almost all of this activity was delivered on line via a variety of means including Facebook and a recently established Reach Out You Tube Channel. Links to some of the work produced are outlined below-

Environmental art - Offering to the woods

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VuBZ8DffK0o>

Environmental art 01 - Dyes, stones and bones in the woods

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q0XaPWXTcFU>

Environmental art 02 - Stone stack/balancing in the garden

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tG2aVls-rFc>

Environmental art - Create a logo

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l-9b3ObFtoE>

Gardening – Harvest time

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Kf2Uo-Nm1XQ>

There has been comprehensive feedback from learners on this programme. A small selection illustrating the positive impacts of the programme are below

"Yes, it's made a huge difference to my mental health as it's kept me occupied during these very difficult times, without it (Reach Out classes/sessions) I don't know what I would have done"

"I'm glad I joined the Reach Out project as it's giving me something to do & keeps me occupied during the day"

"Yes it always does. Really happy with Reach Out as I don't have much friends in real life so this group helps me a lot"

6 On Line Learning Case Studies and Successes

In the introduction, we referred to the growth in WEA Scotland's capacity and capability to deliver virtual learning. Below is an illustration of several learners and learner groups who are benefiting from this new technology that is enabling them to continue with their learning in the absence of face-to-face delivery

North East Fife Book Group

The North East Fife Book Group recently completed its second lockdown term via on line delivery. Members of the group come from across northeast Fife and the on line delivery has been particularly helpful in facilitating accessibility to learning among people who might otherwise be marginalised and isolated. The group participants are all 50+ and many live in areas of fuel poverty. The costs of travelling to and from venues might make learning inaccessible to some, whereas on line learning provides a cost effective and flexible mode of engagement

Falkirk Job Clubs

Three learners are working towards their SQA Communications Award at Level 3 and 4. One learner is working towards their Adult Achievement Award. A number of other Job Club learners are being supported by both telephone email and ZOOM to continue with their job searches and applications. Other learners are similarly supported with their ICT skills and creative writing

Many of the learners in the Job Clubs are particularly vulnerable and some were reluctant to engage with learning via virtual delivery. However this is now beginning to change as evidenced by two learners below

“I was initially a bit reluctant (to accept a laptop) because this might mean the community centres will close and we’ll be left on our own. But it’s been great. I can check my Universal Credit is ok, which calms me down, and I can keep in touch with folk. I’ve recently had a stroke and I’m house-bound. I’m converted.”

Vic, Lauriston, Falkirk

“Loving zoom and the creative writing. All these experiences I’ve had and the chance to share them. Given me a new lease of life. Thanks.”

P.O. Future Pathways client

Aberdeen ESOL

In Aberdeen seven classes that had previously ran face to face are now delivered on line. This is proving particularly advantageous to Syrian New Scots who were previously excluded from face to face delivery as there were no local classes available to them.

With the flexibility of online classes, WEA Scotland is now able to offer classes to a wider audience. Learners; who for different reasons, cannot attend their nearest (geographical) class can now be slotted into classes which run at different times in different locations.

While on line learning is proving hugely advantageous, it can bring about its share of unforeseen challenges. WEA Scotland staff and tutors have: as ever, gone the extra mile to meet learner's needs. One challenge was the completion of the digital enrolment form by learners, so the team organised for the form to be translated into Arabic. To take that one stage further they have now organised for an instructional video to be produced on how to complete the form with the film being made by the New Scots Learners themselves.

On Line Language Assessments on WEA AMIF Project

This project assists New Scots in Glasgow with their fundamental English language skills when they first arrive in Scotland. An essential first step in that process is the initial language assessment for every new learner to ensure the learner is put into the correct level of class. Previously all language assessments were conducted on a face-to-face basis every fortnight. Now, the Lead Tutor: Emma Williamson, has devised an on line language assessment process using a mix of cloud based resources for reading and writing via Microsoft Forms and ZOOM or telephone calls for speaking and listening skills. This is another huge step forward in WEA Scotland's innovative capability and capacity to offer greater levels of flexibility to ESOL learners across Scotland.

7 WEA Scotland and Scottish Government Policy Delivery

Digital Inclusion Fund

Last month's ebrief featured the announcement of a new Digital Inclusion Fund as part of an ongoing effort by Scottish Government and third sector partners to promote digital inclusion and connectivity. For some months the WEA has been working with Scottish Government, Youthlink Scotland and LEAD Scotland to secure £250,000 that will enable the purchase of laptops Chromebooks or other devices for those who could benefit the most from support to access digital equipment and the internet. WEA Scotland made an application on behalf of 45 learners. The assessment panel met on 30th September and their decisions will be announced in the next two weeks.

Learning at Work or For Work: Ministerial Briefing

As part of Adult Learning Week, on 10th September, the Director for WEA Scotland provided a briefing to the Minister for Business Fair work and Skills: Jamie Hepburn, along with a large number of conference delegates from across Scotland. As part of Scotland's Plan for Economic Recovery, the Minister was keen to know what learning is available for those out of work or to upskill those in work and particularly: given the current challenges, how much of this learning can be delivered virtually.

For those people currently in work looking to upskill, we were able to share with the Minister the excellent work with trade union colleagues across Scotland involving a number of trade unions, the STUC and Scottish Union Learning. For those trying to access the workplace our employability and pre-employability programmes were also

of significant interest. The fact that WEA Scotland is now able to deliver all these programmes via CANVAS and ZOOM is of particular interest as many organisations in the third sector are unable to offer these facilities.

This briefing to the Minister coincided with the launch of the WEA's Facing Change Together Programme that aims to address similar issues identified by the Minister. This programme is a UK wide WEA initiative to address the current skills challenges in both Scotland and England. A link to the Facing Change together Programme is below



WEA Facing change together - Scotland.

8 WEA Scotland Funding Announcements

When the current financial climate is clearly challenging, it is particularly pleasing to be able to announce the continuity of funding for two significant WEA Scotland Projects. A new award from the Glasgow Communities Fund will provide financial support for literacies and ESOL work across the city until March 2023.

Also announced in the past month is the continuation of WEA Scotland Partnership with the Scottish Refugee Council and Bridges programme until December 2022. This partnership receives funding support from the Asylum Migration and Integration Fund to support the integration of New Scots. This funding will enable WEA Scotland to provide language assessments and English language tuition for refugees.