

# **Director's briefing: Scotland January 2022**

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## **Aberdeen**

### **Spotlight: Peterhead ESOL classes**

Over the past term, the North East has continued to provide an excellent standard of teaching. The courses have received consistent ratings, or higher, than the previous term by achieving the following:

- 4.93 out of 5 for enjoyment
- 4.88 out of 5 for improving English
- 4.76 out of 5 for online learning experience

These averages are taken from 50 anonymous learner evaluations. In addition, when asked what learners enjoyed about the course, learners said it was the skill of their teachers, the time taken to allow individuals to speak and engage, classroom atmosphere, and the convenience of studying from home and engaging with other learners.

Below are some of the comments we received:

Learner one: *"I really like how the teacher explains each topic and we can all interact in the class, which is very important. I appreciate very much the interest of the teacher that we all understand the topic seen."*

Learner two: *"I like learning online because I can plan my time. it is more comfortable to be at home and I save money and time."*

Learner three: *"In this course I have improved my pronunciation a lot and I am no longer afraid to communicate with other people."*

The significance of the comments relating to online experience should not be underestimated, as they demonstrate the level of skill of our tutors in being able to deliver consistently engaging content to learners that is also supporting their needs on an individual level.

In an online environment, creating a safe and engaging social space, while assessing the needs of individual can be incredibly challenging and is not a simple thing to do.

This is more impressive when we consider that in the Spring of 2021, the WEA previously had to cancel a beginner's class due to low levels of engagement and referrals to the group. When we received new referrals from local CLD and DWP in August 2020, we were told that the group could definitively not engage with online learning. We were told the learners could barely engage with phones, let alone online learning.

Provided with only email addresses, we decided to contest this and offered to support learners with getting set up for online learning.

We introduced a very skilled tutor to the area, Angela Heinrich, who took over the class, supporting learners to overcome significant barriers to learning, such as low digital skills and confidence levels.

With a great deal of hard work and perseverance, Angela managed to support all learners to not only engage consistently with online classes, but to become active users of Canvas.

Over the previous two terms, she maintained class numbers and has made the class sustainable. She has now secured 10 pre-enrolled learners for the January to March term 2022. In this cohort are all her learners from the previous term and newly enrolled learners from other sources. Learners have also begun recommending the class to their friends!

The only feedback learners across the North East gave us in response to "What do you not like?" was that they wanted more classes.

### **Update on Reach Out**

Reach Outs Autumn term, saw us work with 50 separate individuals on a range of different activities, including:

- The student's forum

- The walking groups
- Employability
- Basic IT
- The John Muir Award
- Art
- Gardening
- Residential to Fairburn activity centre

Four learners gained an accreditation on the John Muir Award; two at the starter level and two learners gained the top award.

Outdoor sessions proved particularly popular suggesting learners are more willing to get back out there and start leading 'normal' lives again.

The residential took us to Fairburn activity centre, about 30 miles North West of Inverness, and we stayed for four days. We took part in quite a few different activities; archery, orienteering, bush craft, canoeing, paddle-boarding, and walking in the beautiful surroundings. It was great to see the students get away from the city and become inspired and motivated to carry on their outdoor pursuits once back to Aberdeen.

Reach Outs winter term is due to start on 31<sup>st</sup> January for 8 weeks. The activities that will be facilitated are as follows:

#### Students Forum

- Employability (Zoom)
- Walking
- Basic IT (Zoom)
- Art (Zoom)
- Information and Guidance
- Environmental Art
- Gardening
- Football
- Music/Gaming/Movie (Student led threads on the Reach Out Facebook page)

## **Falkirk**

### **Adult Achievement Award success:**

We're delighted to share that seven learners in Falkirk have completed an Adult Achievement Award. This reflective learning was based on their experiences of the

Thrive for Well-Being course – a NHS, Falkirk CLD, WEA partnership initiative to improve health and well-being, develop skills and improve life chances.

Five of the learners have opted to continue their learning with WEA and are currently working on SQA Communication units.

Here is what one learner had to say: *“This award helped me in so many ways. Getting a qualification, meeting people, computer skills, improving my writing and giving me the confidence to do other courses.”*

## **Glasgow and Ayrshire**

### **Rich history secured in the Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre**

Thanks to hours of work by staff, volunteers and expert archivists, over a hundred years' of key documents relating to WEA Scotland's history, is now safely secured in the Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre.

Over a number of months WEA Scotland staff and Christine Ewing: a retired Ayrshire archivist, Kirstine Simpson: a former WEA Scotland Manager and Norman Newton: a retired librarian and former member of the WEA Council and Scotland Board, painstakingly determined whether the 400 boxes of material were of significant legacy value and should be part of the future WEA Scotland National Archive.

Experts from the Highland Archives, Aberdeen Archives, Edinburgh City Archives and Glasgow Archives supported us to make the material available to the Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre. In the process some real gems were uncovered, including remnants of the P. M. Dott Memorial Library - a subscription library of over a thousand books curated by Eric Dott.

While imprisoned during the First World War as a conscientious objector, Eric spent time debating religion, philosophy and politics, developing his father's ideas of socialism. Once released Eric became a respected doctor working at the Royal Hospital for Sick children. When his father, Peter McOmish Dott, died he administered the profits of his father's art dealership for the benefit of socialism. He built the Memorial Library, which made an important contribution to non-partisan political life in Edinburgh in the 1930s and 1940s, at one point serving over a thousand users. Part of that library was later gifted to the WEA.

We are very grateful to the Glasgow Caledonian University Archive Centre for ensuring our heritage lives on for present and future generations. If you wish to find out more please email [archives@gcu.ac.uk](mailto:archives@gcu.ac.uk).

## ESOL students speak to Queen Margaret University

Our AMIF project has the advantage of having QMU staff as research partners. Researchers from the University recently met with two of our ESOL learners, who took part in our New Scots programme.

The researchers used participative mapping methods to ask the two learners about the people and organisations that helped them settle into Scotland.

Both learners credited the WEA, both learners said they appreciated not only the content, but the friendly and engaging learning style and opportunity to meet others in the class.

For more information, please download this summary report.

[WEA Summary final 270122.pdf](#)

## WEA Glasgow ESOL

It has been a very busy start to the year for WEA Glasgow ESOL. We were fortunate enough to receive additional funding from the Community Based Adult Learning Recovery Fund (CBALRF), the AMIF Scotland's Learning Refugee Integration, and Language Project – as well as having our existing funding from Glasgow Communities Fund and the ESOL Network Strategy Project.

Through The AMIF fund we are running a 90-hour SQA National 3 blended course for 14 students who are Refugees and Asylum seekers and were unable to get a place in college this year.

The course has started online, but it will return to face to face for one of the twice weekly classes on 1 February. The course will continue until the end of July 2022.

The CBALRF allowed us to hold a two-week block of online ESOL level testing for those “awaiting testing” on the Glasgow ESOL Register.

We were able to offer 284 appointments and a team of WEA tutors tested 203 people. We then contacted the learners to offer them a variety of Glasgow Online courses and national Digital Skills and ESOL for Employability courses through the NTTF project.

In January 2022 we opened the following courses in Glasgow:

	WEA ESOL Glasgow Courses	Length	Class Fill
1	Queens Cross Housing Association Beginners Morning	2 x 2 hrs for 10 Weeks	15
2	Queens Cross Housing Association Beginners Afternoon	2 x 2 hrs for 10 Weeks	10

3	Queens Cross Housing Association Intermediate Afternoon	2 x 2 hrs for 10 Weeks	8
4	Saheliya F2F Mornings Beginners	2 hrs for 18 weeks	8
5	Saheliya Online Elementary	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	10
6	Saheliya Online Pre-Intermediate	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	8
7	SQA National 3 Blended	7.5 hrs for 24 weeks	14
8	Beginners ESOL Morning	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	12
9	Beginners ESOL Afternoon	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	13
10	Elementary ESOL Morning 1	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	12
11	Elementary ESOL Morning 2	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	12
12	Elementary ESOL Evening 1	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	12
13	Elementary ESO Evening 2	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	13
14	Pre-Intermediate Afternoon	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	13
15	Pre-Intermediate Evening	2 x 2 hrs for 9 weeks	13
		Total Enrolled	173

### **Chrysalis courses – partnership with British Red Cross**

Across the latter part of 2021 we worked with British Red Cross (BRC) in Glasgow to deliver essential English skills to a group of young, vulnerable refugees and asylum seekers.

This long running programme, entitled Chrysalis, assists learners to build their confidence, get their bearings in their new city/ country, and to make connections with other young people.

Our tailored ESOL classes are a vital part of the wider BRC programme and we ensure that learners are prepared and looking forward to their progression to college classes

Here are some quotes from learners on the course:

Learner one: “I like the class for having good habits, setting goals, having positive mindset. Helping us know who we are, improving self-confidence and optimism.”

Learner two: “I missed you and I missed everyone! I'm very happy to come to class after holiday. I did not like not coming to class. Now I feel very happy!”

## **Adult Learning Recovery Fund**

We are delighted to have been awarded around £30k from the Scottish Government Adult Learning Recovery Fund, to support English as a second language learners and literacies learners in Glasgow.

The classes focus on Low level ESOL and literacies learners. There are not enough places in the city for ESOL learners and some have been waiting for years to access a class – a situation exacerbated by Covid.

The funds allow us to provide Initial English assessments for up to 240 learners from the Glasgow ESOL Register who will then progress into classes supported by this and other funds.

The fund is also supporting Study Skills classes for health and social care workers currently working towards level 2 SVQ and a Journaling for Wellbeing course for people experiencing mental health issues

## **Edinburgh**

WEA have been successful in securing AMIF (Asylum Migration and Integration Fund) funding for an exciting new partnership project: Building skills for construction certification.

On the project, WEA will work closely with Dundee City (lead), Fife, and Clackmannanshire Councils to try to drive forward the employability of refugees with suitable skills into the construction industry.

Currently there are far too many barriers, not least the difficulty in passing the CSCS test. Part of WEA's remit is to find out what materials and resources are already available throughout Scotland to support this, pool them, and build on them to provide a nationally available resource.

This multi-faceted project will also involve interviewing refugees with experience of attending CSCS courses (or indeed any other relevant courses) and taking the CSCS test in order to draw on their experience. We will be running four pilot courses of the

CSCS ESOL course when it is ready, and encouraging other authorities to participate. We will update you on this as the project develops.

If you or your organisation previously supported New Scots to access construction skills training such as IOSH or CSCS operatives test we would love to hear from you! With that in mind we would be very grateful if you could complete this survey monkey questionnaire: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/XTFV3Q5>

If you do have resources that you are willing to share, please let us know. Likewise, if you or your employer have learners with construction skills who are trying to achieve the CSCS test or find work in their field, we would be interested in speaking to them. This project will help to identify barriers to employment in the construction industry, and hopefully lead to refugees being able to utilise their undoubted skills to their benefit. It is clear there are considerable skills that are not being utilised among our refugee community, and this pioneering project hopes to go some way to addressing that.

If you would like to find out more about this project and get involved, please contact:

Clare Cameron, Education Coordinator, at [CCameron@wea.org.uk](mailto:CCameron@wea.org.uk)

### **Personal Assistants Programme update**

In the last quarter we are delighted to share that a further **108** PAs registered to take part in some of the PA Learning courses that are on offer, this brings the 2021/22 figure up to **355** with one quarter still left to go. This year's figure is substantially up on last year.