

# WEA Women@Work Project Evaluation 2012-2015





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# Introduction

The WEA Women@Work Project (W@W) is a network providing information, training and support to women in Highland and Argyll and Bute regions. It enables women to speak about issues that matter to them at home, work and in the community and as a result have increased confidence to take action. The purpose of this report is to look at how these targets were met and what changes came about as the project developed.

The project was funded by the Scottish Government Equality Unit and managed by the Voluntary Action Fund (VAF). It is a development of the original model of Highland networks which provided lunchtime talks on one-off topics: these were directed at working and non-working women to enable them to network. The changing nature of funding and of women's work patterns meant that a fresh look at the needs within the area was required.

The project aimed to target four groups of women: rural, low paid, black and ethnic minority and women under 30. Activities throughout the regions would promote equality both in and out of the workplace and the activities would therefore fall under the themes of employment, economic

activity, along with gender segregation and gender imbalance. Many women fall into more than one of these groups and some of the networks do not contain all four groups within their area.

The delivery structure for the project was already in place with each of the eight networks having a Local Network Coordinator (LNC). Each network was to coordinate three network meetings and a learning event per year. The Advisory Group provided a sounding board for the project as well as overseeing all W@W activities.

To take the initiative forward, a Project Coordinator was recruited and, because of the increasing emphasis on digital communication, the position of a Project Information and Support Officer was also created.

The targets for the project were to have 240 participants at network meetings and learning events over the three year project and to attract 1,500 to 2,000 women using the development of the online network which was to cover a W@W website, Facebook page and the use of Twitter as well as monthly e-newsletter.



# Online Network and Social Media

The project engaged with the target groups through social media linking this to the WEA W@W Website. The newly-developed website went live in January 2013. This website disseminated information about the project and learning opportunities and events in each network as well as featuring issues which were of interest and relevance to women in Highland and beyond. e.g. Caithness and Sutherland Local Development Plan, Violence against Women Strategy and a variety of general resources and pointers to relevant organisations such as Business Gateway and Breaking the Mould Newsletter. On a strictly neutral basis, information was available in the run up to the Referendum in September 2014.

An online monthly newsletter was sent out to an increasing number over the project period. It was noted that website hits increased on the day that the newsletter was emailed out. The website, W@W Facebook page and Twitter were integrated and therefore automatically updated along with the newsletter.

By year two, the project was using Eventbrite to allow women to access online booking facilities for the events. This allowed members to book tickets 24/7 when the part time project staff were possibly unavailable to taking bookings at the office. This also highlighted the need for training in Facebook and online skills within the target group.

Facebook perhaps did not meet its full potential. Although both the W@W Facebook page as well as the individual LNC's pages was well used for advertising events and highlighting relevant news items, there was little interaction. People "liked" but did not comment. The reason for this could have been that the pages belonged to an organisation and contributors had no privacy. The coordinators had to be – and were – totally unbiased and impartial about every topic.



One of the more disappointing aspects of the project was the poor take up of the Online Survey at the end of the first year of the project. This survey was part of the way in which the project coordinator could assess and analyse the issues, challenges and needs of women.

Having looked at the results of the first year's survey, it was noted that no individual from black or ethnic minority groups had completed a survey. In the second year, ESOL tutors took paper copies to their groups to ensure that help was at hand to access the survey. In year three, further assistance was given to all the target groups in that a longer timeframe for completion of the survey was given as well as paper surveys given to all tutors in order that their group could complete them during events.

# Learning Events and Network Meetings

It was planned that over the life of the project, there would be 8 Learner Events which would be cascaded across the 8 networks: these would address the needs, and overcome the challenges, of the target group in terms of economic activity, employment in conjunction with gender segregation and gender imbalance. In addition to this, each Network would have three Network Meetings per year which would address local issues and work with the Project partners. (Appendix 1)

The project used Ketso as an initial consultation tool. (<http://www.ketso.com>) Ketso is a participatory appraisal tool developed as a spin-off from a PHD research project at Manchester University. The Ketso kit offers a structured way to run a workshop is extremely hands-on and encourages everyone within a group to participate. The members of a group are encouraged to express their views and ideas and help to develop future work plans. The information that was gathered during these Ketso consultations was used to develop the future programme of activity in each geographical area. The programmes included assertiveness, confidence and employability.

In year two of the project, full day Personal Development courses were held in some areas. This helped to maximise the opportunities for



both the facilitator and the participants. There was time for revisiting, and therefore developing, certain points. The full day courses also made sense because of the geographical spread of some of the networks.

The Network Meetings had to balance attracting the target groups within their areas given the Ketso findings and meeting the W@W themes.

Social Media and IT skills proved popular attracting all the target groups for both employment opportunities and personal purposes. In order to attract participants in some areas, there was a straying from the W@W themes e.g. bookbinding, Style Me! However, this may have been an appropriate first step enabling individuals within the group to become more confident in learning.

The format for the courses changed over the three year period from half day events to short courses spread over four to six weeks. These longer periods helped in the consolidation of learning and confidence building. In cases where women were referred and supported to attend by Women's Aid or Job Centre Plus, this longer structure provided continuity and assistance in building relationships.



# Annual Collective Events

The project delivered one conference per annum targeting 75 women at each and, working with the project's partners, aimed to look at what changes could be made to promote equality. Three conferences were held at Eden Court in Inverness and an additional STEM conference at Wick. All conferences exceeded the target of 75 women participants. A list of speakers and workshop topics at each conference is listed at the end of this report. **(Appendix 2)**

The first conference was **A Bright Future for Women in STEM** which aimed to support women in exploring roles in STEM industries in Scotland. Eighty Five participants attended including young women from nine schools. A high level of collaboration with the projects partners, particularly from STEM UHI, provided "inspirational" speakers and interactive workshops. The whole experience was enthusiastically received. An additional satellite event in North of Scotland which was held six months later received the support of the STEM ambassadors and showed the need for such conferences in the schools of that area. Again in conjunction with its partners, a Topic Briefing Paper was produced in order to provide facts, contacts and links for those wishing to research further details about STEM in Scotland; this Paper was used to help assess how further events could be developed.

*"The inspirational stories from the speakers and the importance of inspiring female role models really made it worth coming along."*

*"More women are needed in STEM jobs: I will consider engineering."*

In February 2014, **Women in Public Life** attracted 100 participants to Eden Court in Inverness with Lorna Norgrove, the Founder and Trustee of the Linda Norgrove Foundation, the

principal speaker. Again, the day revolved round a series of talks and workshops encouraging women to have the knowledge and confidence to participate in public life.

*"A better understanding of public appointment process, uplifting talks about adversity and how to turn it around."*

*"Inspiring women in public life – you delivered. All interesting and enjoyable."*

In November 2014, the conference concentrated on **Women and Economic Activity "How to Fund your Future?"** This time 85 participants attended including forty young women from five Secondary Schools. This group was particularly interested in Social Enterprise as this forms part of the Curriculum for Excellence and had been given an Early Bird Warning about the conference to ensure that they could take part. Once again, the tried and tested format of high-calibre speakers and workshops was used. Once evaluations for this event had been processed, there was a feeling that workshop providers would benefit from meeting up beforehand to look at the difficulties of engaging with women of different ages and backgrounds in order to put together really interactive workshops.

*"The smallest things can make a difference and there are some amazing and inspiring people in the world."*

*"How social media can help promote your business and enhance your network connections."*

*"By thinking globally and acting locally, we can help make a difference."*

*"A better understanding of public appointment process, uplifting talks about adversity and how to turn it around."*

## The Local Network Coordinators (LNC)

The Coordinators were employed on average for 80 hours per annum in order to facilitate three network meetings and one learning event and attend the quarterly Advisory Group meetings. They were also advised to use one hour per month updating their social media.

In some areas, contacts were already established but in others, the eighty hours proved insufficient. There are vast differences in the networks, both geographically and demographically, and both the development and administration of events was not possible in some of these networks in the hours given.

It was found to be almost impossible to keep the same LNCs throughout the life of the project; in all geographical areas, except one, there was a change of LNC as the existing position holders left for different jobs or positions with more hours. For some, it became clear that the position proved insufficient to be a career choice in spite of the high level of skills required. One of the inequalities in terms of employment for women is that they are underemployed and the LNC positions seem to highlight this. Although part-time work suits the other life commitments of women, it still needs to be at a certain level to make a difference.

Despite this, the Project enhanced the coordinators skills and there was some really excellent work done by them throughout the three year period.

The LNCs received good training which was used within their networks e.g. Ketso and the OU Reflection Toolkit as well as social networking skills. The coordinators themselves gained confidence in carrying out their roles and showed some really excellent practise.

The LNCs were all enthusiastic about the project and felt that the work that they did do achieved the aims of W@W: "It made people think differently about what was possible for them to do or clarify what they wanted." Their position entailed working with various partners e.g. Women's Aid, OU, Business Gateway, and there was some real thinking out the box from some LNCs in order to attract the target group.

## The Advisory Group

This group comprised the Project's employees and WEA Highland Education Development Manager along with representatives from the public and private sectors, voluntary bodies and the project funders. **(See Appendix 3)**

The representatives from out with the WEA would promote W@W activities in their own workplaces and enable the project to keep up to date with equality matters: this would assist W@W to increase involvement in consultations. The Advisory Group would also contribute to the development of the plans, policies and proposals of the project. The Group carried out its remit professionally with all concerned "hitting the ground running" in terms of finding and utilising contacts, ideas and information. Digital inclusion was one topic which was revisited frequently which is understandable given the geographical spread of the area.

It soon became clear that transport costs and time constraints were a real problem for some of the LNCs as far as attendance was concerned. In order to ensure that the best use of people's time was utilised, both video conferencing and Skype was used in some of the meetings. Similarly, support and suggestions for individual LNCs were always forthcoming which must have mitigated some of the essential isolation in their day to day work.

This proactive way of working for the group is apparent with evaluations of various matters being acted upon in a thorough and timely manner. Even where developments were an obvious success, as in the Conferences for example, evaluations were noted and acted upon where necessary. As the project progressed over its three year period, more work was done strategically to inform and promote the project activities and influence. **(See Appendix 4)** Out with the project itself, the members of the Advisory Group from the various sectors and bodies created a network for themselves.

Towards the end of the project's life, the Project Coordinator became involved with the Scottish Equalities Strategy group attending their six-weekly meetings in Dundee. The members of this group are made up of women's organisations which are funded by the Scottish Government's Equality Unit. Good practise is exchanged and the way forward is discussed.



# The Successes and Challenges of the Project 2012 - 2015

Over the three years of the project, there were some developments which were a great success for the participants and which highlighted the good practise strived for throughout by all concerned.

These include the two courses **W@W Thematic and Skills based Workshops for non-native speakers of English**

<http://www.weawomenatwork.org.uk/resources/article/431/Thematic-and-Skills-based-Workshops-for-non-native-speakers-of-English>

and **W@W Craft Skills workshops for wives of army personnel.**

<http://www.weawomenatwork.org.uk/networks/article/464/Case-Study-Wives-of-Army-Personnel>

However neither the work done in the **On Your Doorstep Pilot** held at Raigmore Community Centre nor the **Shetland Feasibility Study** provided the anticipated outcomes.

**The thematic and skills based workshops** arose out of WEA's normal ESOL provision. The **W@W** course was to have two strands – cultural classes and core IT skills. By the end of the course, evaluations showed that there had been new friendships forged within the group and the confidence of the participants had grown. Not only had their skills and knowledge improved but the learners found it easier to talk to people in a range of everyday situations and their understanding of native speakers was beginning to improve. Barriers had been broken down between the learners and technology and particular needs recognised there.

**The Craft Skills Workshops** were equally a success and the course became more popular with the number of learners growing from six to fourteen. All participants were army wives with some non-native speakers amongst them. A crèche was provided for their children which was crucial to the success of the group. As army wives, the learners can be left to bring up their children alone for long spells and attendance at these classes allowed them some personal development time. There were a broad range of activities and each learner was encouraged to bring their own knowledge and experience to share with others. Individual confidence grew and friendships within the group grew.

What both groups had in common was that the learners concerned were very much at the start of

their learning journeys. They all were full of praise for their tutors and in some ways, were still reliant on them. This may be why, in part, the **On your Doorstep Pilot** was unsuccessful. This was an opportunity for the two groups to join in the activities led by the International Women's Group. The purpose of this pilot was to lead on from the work already done and give the learners an opportunity to access more learning activities and meet native speakers of the older generation to socialise and build friendships. A great deal of effort was made to support this pilot but no woman from either group took part.

Investigation showed that some learners found the venue difficult to access and there had been a turnaround of families at the army base with some of the original members of the craft group no longer there. But it was perhaps just a step too far in too short a time for these learners. Similarly, perhaps the host group were out with their own comfort zone.

W@W was approached by Shetland Island Council's equality officer regarding their work around gender segregation. A Feasibility Study was agreed to by VAF. Representatives from W@W went to Shetland and had meetings with both the Policy Officer (Equality) for Shetland Island's Council and with the Manager of Shetland Islands CAB.

It was apparent that there was both vertical and horizontal segregation and that the 20–30% cuts in social care over the next three years would affect female employment more than male. Initial meetings went well and the Equalities Officer and other partners agreed to take part in the next Advisory Group meeting. A Ketso workshop was undertaken: of the eighteen partners invited, only four attended so the consultation was limited in scope. At a later date, W@W was advised that due to major department restructuring in the Council, they were not able to work with W@W at this time.

Once again, the time element comes into play here. There was obviously a definite need for tackling gender segregation but it was clear that more time and effort would be needed to get all partners on board. Similarly the timing of the study was not the best for Shetland as the council restructuring was out with the control of the council officials involved.

# Conclusion

The most successful aspect of the project was the development and research done so that all the outcomes of the project have been met. However, the design and scope of the project was affected from the outset by funding constraints. Nevertheless, the project's geographical area was largely left unchanged thus underscoring that always-present dilemma of Highland-wide projects. All such projects have two main challenges: the geographical expanse of the area and the diversity of the many communities within it. In general, there is little recognition for the vast differences between diverse rural areas and concentrated urban communities where the funding and timeframe of projects are concerned. The outcome of this is generally to spread both resources and hours too thinly but the professional mindset of all concerned here ensured the project's success.

Over the three years of the project, learning events and network meetings developed and changed with full day events and blocks of two hours over a period of weeks dominating. This had the effect of improving the learning experience for the participants who saw the benefits of investing in their learning. The evaluations taken from one course would act as a springboard to inform demand for further courses. In some cases, it was recognised that the W@W themes and aims were not the initial place to start with a group but that the participants would progress to this.

One of the problems with the underfunding of the project was the shortage of hours attached to the LNC positions. Contracts with more meaningful contact hours might have ensured that the coordinators stayed in their posts for the full three years allowing their work to be built on over the period of their project. This is especially the case where network participants lacked confidence and more time could have been taken to create that safe learning environment before progressing.

The number of active partners of the project is truly amazing and there was a tremendous networking value at all levels of the project. Particular praise should be given to the Project Coordinator but the Advisory Group as a whole was forward thinking and proactive throughout the three year period. However, this work could

all be lost if the project is to come to an end. If we are serious about improving women's political literacy and improving gender imbalance, then projects like this should be open ended.

In year two of the project, additional hours were given to the project employees and this is reflected in the amount, and quality of the developments throughout that year. In particular, the gender imbalance in STEM was really "attacked" leading to a second satellite STEM event along with a Topic Paper which was developed with the STEM partners to inform the Director of Education and Skills Development Scotland. Had the project been fully funded, additional events like these might have become the norm and not best practise.

It was the grassroots ideas which seemed to work with further events and courses stemming from evaluations. Where there were challenges, these events tended to have been encouraged or advised by external influences e.g. Shetland Feasibility study, On your Door Step Course

In a project like this, those concerned with its development need time to pause for reflection. Only then can lessons be learned and changes instigated. W@W accomplished its aims and targets but perhaps its impact would have been even greater had it had a greater resource attached to it. In effect, the project was too big for the amount of women hours granted to it.



## Appendix 1: Project Partners

The following list does not include all the local network partners.

- 1 Anne Maclean OBE – Convener of the Mobility and Access Committee Scotland
- 2 Army Welfare Service (Highland)
- 3 Blythswood Care
- 4 Business Gateway
- 5 Cantraybridge College
- 6 Changing the Chemistry
- 7 Commissioner for Ethical Standards in Public Life in Scotland
- 8 Connecting Carers
- 9 Digital Inclusion
- 10 Diversity Centre of Expertise, Scottish Government
- 11 Dounreay
- 12 Eden Court
- 13 Energy North
- 14 Environmental Research Institute
- 15 Equate Scotland
- 16 Everything Baby
- 17 Fairtrade, Inverness
- 18 Glasgow Caledonian University
- 19 Glasgow Women’s Library
- 20 Global Resources
- 21 Harper Macleod LLP
- 22 Highland Business Women’s Club
- 23 Highland and Argyll and Bute Council Equalities Officer, Employability Team and Councillors
- 24 Highland LGBT Forum
- 25 Highland Secondary Schools
- 26 Highland Violence Against Women Group
- 27 Highlife Highland / Libraries
- 28 Institute of Physics National Officer (Scotland)
- 29 International Women’s Group
- 30 Inverness College
- 31 Inverness High School Parents Council
- 32 Lifescan Scotland
- 33 Linda Norgrove Foundation
- 34 Lochaber Hope
- 35 Louise Morris Photography
- 36 Multicultural Friends
- 37 Napier University
- 38 New Start Highland
- 39 North Highland College
- 40 Open University
- 41 Pulteney People’s Project
- 42 Sarah Young Photography
- 43 Scottish Women’s Convention
- 44 Shetland Council
- 45 Sign Post
- 46 Social Enterprise Academy
- 47 STUC
- 48 The Scottish Highlands and Islands and Moray Chinese Association (SHIMCA)
- 49 Tuminds
- 50 UHI STEM North of Scotland / STEM Ambassadors
- 51 Velocity Inverness
- 52 Women’s Equality Strategy Group

## Appendix 2: Speakers and Workshop Leaders at Annual Conferences

Full details about these conferences can be found on the WEA W@W website.

### A Bright Future for Women in STEM, Eden Court Inverness: 26th March 2013

<http://www.weawomenatwork.org.uk/resources/article/329/A-Bright-Future-for-Women-in-STEM-Post-Conference-Report>

#### **Speakers:**

Dr Heather Reid, OBE

Diane Rawlinson, Inverness College UHI Principal and Chief Executive

#### **Workshops:**

STEM and UHI Ambassadors and Experiments Workshop – Dr Kathleen McDougall & Evelyn Grey

All systems Go workshop: Employment rights for women – Gilliam Shaw LLP

Does Gender Matter Workshop – Geraldine Wooley MRICS

Counting on a Greener Scotland workshop – Heather Reid OBE

What are the Odds Workshop – Dr Andrew Duncan.

### STEM Event, Wick: 13th November 2013

<http://www.weawomenatwork.org.uk/events/article/423/Wick-STEM-Event-Report>

#### **Speakers:**

Dyan Foss, Deputy Managing Director, Dounreay

Alison McLure, National Officer (Scotland), Institute of Physics.

Dr Elizabeth Masden, Environmental Research Institute.

#### **Workshops:**

STEM ambassadors and experiments – STEM North of Scotland. This workshop was coordinated by Pat Kieran CEng BSc MIET, Senior Engineer at Dounreay and supported by Dr Evelyn Gray, STEM Administrator, UHI

Does Gender Matter in SET – Geraldine Wooley, MRICS, Scottish Resource Centre for Women in Science, Engineering and Technology.

Environmental Science: Investigating the Minutiae of Life – Environmental Research Institute.

**Women in Public Life: Real women Making Real changes, Eden Court, Inverness:  
13th February 2014.**

<http://www.weawomenatwork.org.uk/news/article/420/WEA-WomenWork-Annual-Conference-2014-Women-in-Public-Life>

***Speakers:***

Linda Norgrove, Founder and Trustee of the Linda Norgrove Fund  
Lisa Buchanan, Chief Executive, Cantraybridge College  
Mags Duncan, Principle Sports Development Manager, Highlife Highland  
Rhoda Grant MSP, Member of the Scottish Parliament for the Highlands and Islands (LAB)

***Workshops:***

Illuminated Letters: Glasgow Women's Library – Morag Smith  
Moving forward: Confidence in Public Life – Elsie Normington  
Take your seat on the board: Learning about Public Appointments – Melanie Stronach.

**Women and Economic Activity: How to Fund your Future, Eden Court Inverness:  
November 2014.**

<http://www.weawomenatwork.org.uk/networks/article/516/2014-Annual-Conference-How-to-Fund-Your-Future-Women-and-Economic-Activity-Eden-Court-Inverness-27th-November-2014-9-00-am-1500-pm>

***Speakers:***

Gill Shaw LLB, Associate at Harper Macleod  
Laura Nicolson, founder of Velocity cafe and Bicycle Workshop  
Dr Angela O'Hagan, Institute for Society and Social Justice, Glasgow Caledonian University  
Karen Darke, Paralympic Silver Medallist and Adventurer.

***Workshops:***

Transforming Lives through Social Impact - Isobel Yates and Alie Wright, New Start Highland  
Find that Job – June Crombie, Global Resources  
Highland Council Budget Consultation – Maxine Smith, SNP Councillor  
Social Media for Business – Rene Looper, Tuminds Social Media  
Local Work: Global Impact – Hilary Lawson and Janis Keast, Inverness Fairtrade Group  
Victoria Erasmus, owner of Glen Mhor Hotel and shareholder in the J & R Group  
Business Gateway Workshop – Mark MacKintosh, Senior Area Business Manager, Business Gateway, Inverness and Nairn  
Change Management and Leadership – Karen Darke

### Appendix 3: Advisory Group Members

This list contains the members from both private and public sectors and charities.

1. Cath Findlay, WEA W@W Project Co-ordinator
2. Rosemary Grant, WEA W@W Information and Support Officer
3. Sue Mitchell, WEA Education Development Manager, Highland Office
4. Gillian Shaw, chair, Solicitor, Harper Macleod
5. Eileen Flanagan, Equalities Unit, Scottish Government
6. Angela Wilson, Energy North and Chairperson Highland Women's Business Club
7. Eleanor Adam, STUC
8. Elizabeth McAllister, Councillor, Highland Council
9. Evelyn Fraser, Scottish Women's Convention
10. June Crombie, Business Manager, Global Resources
11. Monica Lee Macpherson, Highland Chinese Association
12. Nicola Mackenzie, Employability Team, Highland Council
13. Rosemary MacKinnon, Equalities Officer, Highland Council
14. Tanya Castell, Changing the Chemistry Organisation
15. Dr Evelyn Grey, UHI STEM Community Development.

### Appendix 4 – Development and Research for the Project

Some examples of the meetings and conferences attended in order to develop and inform the project. Whilst this does not catalogue all events, it gives a flavour of the depth and breadth of the development and research carried out.

- 1 Creative Conversations: Workforce Development for Community Learning and Development
- 2 Director of Education, Highland Council
- 3 Highland Business Women's Club (Regular meetings)
- 4 Harper Macleod LLP Employment Matters Equality Update training
- 5 Health Inequalities Debate
- 6 Highland Council Budget survey consultation
- 7 International Futures Forum re. WEL Town Nairn Civic Conversation
- 8 Jean Kilbourne Event, Edinburgh (Violence Reduction Unit)
- 9 North Alliance Conference
- 10 Scottish Women's Convention (Regular meetings, conferences and referendum debate)
- 11 Sunderby Folk High School (Scandinavia). Presentation to adult educators.
- 12 SCVO Highland
- 13 Sexual Violence Improvement Group
- 14 Train the Trainers Political Literacies Course, Dundee, organised by WEA
- 15 Talking Science Project, UHI
- 16 Women's Employment Summit, Edinburgh
- 17 WEA Strategic Review, Stirling
- 18 Women's Business and Enterprise Conference, Glasgow
- 19 WEA Memorable Tales: A history of the work of the WEA
- 20 Youth Development Officer for Scottish Police Highlands and Islands Division.





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The Workers' Educational Association is a charity registered in England and Wales (number 1112775) and in Scotland (number SC039239) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (number 2806910). Registered address is WEA, 4 Luke Street, London, EC2A 4XW. [www.wea.org.uk](http://www.wea.org.uk).