Lead Scotland Annual Report 2018 to 2019

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# Chair/CEO Welcome

We are delighted to present our 2018-19 impact report celebrating a good year and our 40th anniversary! Many aspects of our services have evolved over the last 40 years but a personalised one to one approach is still the jewel in our crown. 54% of all learning services and 100% of all befriending services last year started with a home visit. Our bespoke approach was highlighted in the first ever annual report back in 1979: “Our great advantage is our flexibility, our ability to adapt to individual situations and provide the tailor-made tutorial help”.

We performed well against all three of our strategic goals last year: increasing the number of people who can benefit from using our services up by 32% since 2016, extending our national coverage for frontline and helpline services and we have attracted more funding in a very harsh financial climate, income up 7% since 2016.

We have reached more people because our growth has been focussed on adding capacity to our frontline services, expanding our staff team from 14 to 21, at the same time as becoming an accredited living wage employer.

In 2018 we were delighted to become an SQA centre which strengthens our learning offer by providing greater choice to learners who want to undertake qualifications with one to one home or community based support.

We are incredibly grateful to our Scottish government, Local Authority and third sector partners who invest and support us to deliver impactful services. Last year we worked with over one hundred partners providing catalysts for disabled people and carers to build confidence, skills and reduce feelings of isolation. We assisted Contact, MacAndrew Gillespie, ARC Scotland and parents to host the first national conference for parents of disabled children preparing for the transition from school supported by a website full of useful resources.

There is still a strong appetite for core adult learning services: literacy, numeracy and digital skills with a growing number of people wanting to participate more fully within communities and have a say about the decisions which affect their lives. Over the last year we have been bringing more people together celebrating Lead’s birthday with afternoon tea and learning something new like cyber resilience skills and understanding participatory budgeting processes.

Lastly, a HUGE shout out and heartfelt THANK YOU to the amazing team of staff, board, interns and volunteers who are proud, passionate, can-do people who work incredibly hard to do things well and make things happen.

Emma Whitelock Don Jarvie

CEO Chair

# Our Learning Services

More disabled people and carers have taken up personalised one to one adult learning opportunities leading to progression. People told us that they couldn’t get home based, one to one or small group support to undertake qualifications so we decided to become an SQA centre so that we could meet this need. Our Coordinators are fast becoming trained assessors and internal verifiers and we have already delivered our first 10 SQA qualifications.

* We supported 332 disabled people and carers from 9 local authority areas up from 318 last year
* 82% of learners tracked at 3 and 6 months said they were still using the skills they learned with Lead (24% responded to tracking)
* Almost all learners recommend Lead Scotland
* 120 learners have gained Adult Achievement Awards at SCQF levels 3, 4 and 6, thanks to our partnership with Newbattle Abbey College and Lead Scotland learners piloted SCQF level 2 which will widen access to accreditation further.
* 147 assistive technology assessments were undertaken enabling learners to personalise technology to meet their needs. 174 learners were supported to use enabling technology.
* 45% of our learners were men which is significant as other providers find men are generally harder to reach as adult learners

# Quotes from learners

**Gaining an Adult Achievement Award**: “I was very unconfident when I started lead. I now have an adult achievement award which feels great as I took on learning and completed and passed. I wasn’t sure I was capable of doing any learning due to anxiety and confidence.”

**Learning for work:** “J gained confidence with his spelling, we saw a positive change and everyday he became more confident and enjoyed learning with Lead. We are very grateful he has gained employment in the hotel, and he is still working there’’ parent of Dundee learner tracked 3 months later

**Going to college:** "Being comfortable in the College environment and knowing my way around made a massive difference to my confidence on my first day so thank you for that. I couldn't have started without your help and support."

**Gaining confidence to move out:** "I found it hard at times but I learned through it. I learned that I am able to make changes in my life and I now have moved into my own flat. There were things I learned about myself that I hadn't really thought about before. I'm not used to talking or writing about myself but I found the reflective process useful. I feel good about myself and working in a team. I learned about the strengths I have and a few others I didn't know I had!" Aberdeenshire learner

**Going to university after gaining a qualification with Lead:** “Just thought I’d get in touch to let you know how I was getting on - without you I wouldn’t have made it to uni for a start. I passed all my assessments in the first semester so was really chuffed and very relieved! I just wanted to say thank you for all your help. I’m loving uni but know I wouldn’t have been able to without your help.” Email from learner to Coordinator

**Reducing the need for social work services**: “Managing a lot better” The support requested was for numeracy, including money skills and time management and personal safety to help the learner to be more independent. His family were providing some help to manage his money, but he was finding it very difficult to plan bus and train journeys. The learner was matched with a volunteer and they met weekly at a local library. One outcome of his increase in skills and confidence is that the social work has now been able to withdraw their support and employment has become a real option.

Our Befriending Projects Reduce Social Isolation

Our Befriending services are able to reduce isolation and loneliness because of the magic that happens when you bring people together and you get a match that works well. There has been a great synergy between our befriending and our learning projects this year with joint volunteer forums and new volunteering opportunities. Some learners have taken up befriending services and some befriendees have been keen to learn as a result of becoming more active within their communities.

We are delighted to have set up a new Fife Young Carers Project in partnership with Fife Young Carers, building on the success of our Adult Befriending Project in Fife. Both projects are funded by Fife Council Health and Social Care.

“It speaks for itself that Fred called me the other day for a chat." Fred and Bill became friends and so he has now moved on from the project. As well as supporting Fred to become more active Bill also showed him how to use ‘Alexa’, an unused Christmas gift, because as well as being a befriender he is also a learning project volunteer.

“The companionship has been a great thing – sharing, and somebody coming to the house.”

* 50 befriendees were matched last year, up from 24
* New Fife Young Carers project for children and young people aged
* Fife learning and befriending volunteers have enjoyed joint get togethers and have set up a brand new Friends of Lead Fife community group to raise funds and awareness.

“In the winter I was clinically depressed. This project and Link Living (carers) support made a difference. It gave me a reason to leave the house.”

Some new ideas in the pipeline:

**Telephone Befriending:** There have been so many referrals to the project (last year 65 on the waiting list) that volunteers came up with the idea of developing some telephone befriending services for people on the waiting list. We are exploring the feasilbiyt of this and

**New drop in service:** We are exploring working with the Fife Learning Project to investigate demand for a new weekly drop in service in Fife to offer digital, literacy & numeracy and befriending support –combining our projects in a unique way. We are testing the idea that people of any age would be welcomed to drop-in for support such as form filling, how to use their laptop/tablet/mobile phone, reading a bus timetable, understanding a utility bill. There will also be a social area with refreshments so that people can pop in for a chat and meet people from their local area.

‘We have some laugh. She just makes herself at home (volunteer). It lifts you up (to have someone to chat to).’ After eight months of meeting regularly Claudia (befriendee) said she didn’t need the support anymore as she now regularly gets out and about. “I could feel the difference. Sometimes I feel empty. It was good to go out.”

# Our Work Strengthens Communities

More disabled people and carers are confidently participating in communities, speaking up as active citizens, taking up related learning opportunities and becoming volunteers.

* 121 people engaged in community participation events, took up an active citizen course or become a volunteer
* 60% of all learners tracked 3 & 6 months later said they were more involved in their community, often an extra outcome they hadn’t initially expected.
* 25% of our volunteers are disabled, which is higher than Scottish average (12%)
* 2 of our current board members used to be project volunteers.
* Volunteer numbers rose to 151 up from 119 last year.
* We now have three Friends of Lead groups set up to raise funds and awareness in North Lanarkshire, Dundee and Fife made up of ex learners, volunteers and members building social networks and giving something back.

We held two Democracy Matters events in Fife late in 2018 and when we realised that none of the 22 attendees had heard of participatory budgeting (PB) before we spoke to Fife Council who immediately wanted to help us organise an event to bring PB to life. We brought 43 disabled people, volunteers and partners together and four Fife Council staff facilitated groups simulating the participatory budgeting process from identifying potential PB projects through to voting with tokens. Participants on Facebok understand how to stay connected with up coming PB events. Fife council staff said, “we learned how to adapt a session to widen access for people with learning disabilities”.

# Our Volunteers

**Supporter numbers are growing:** This year we had 151 volunteers supporting our work and an additional 131 supporters which is brilliant! Up from 119 last year.

“All the amazing learners I meet. They inspire me!”

**Volunteering has two way benefits:** Did you know that one in three learners are supported by our volunteers? And there are gains both ways, “I hadn’t been living here for long when I started volunteering and it has helped me meet people and feel more at home.”

**Quality standard:** Were delighted to be Awarded Investing in Volunteers, a quality standard we have proudly held since 2005.

**What motivates me as a volunteer:** “Being able to support someone who faces challenges in their day to day life, with working towards achieving Adult Achievement Award level 2 and watching their confidence and motivation grow through one to one sessions and to see them realise that Lead Scotland can offer more for them to choose to do once this Award has been completed.”

# Our Policy Work

Our policy work makes a positive difference to key areas related to our vision: increasing access and provision of high quality lifelong, life-wide and learner-centred adult and community learning opportunities, the further and higher education widening access agenda, digital participation, halving the disability employment gap, reducing isolation, post school transitions and Fairer Scotland for disabled people action plan ambitions.

Last year we supported 97 disabled people and carers to speak up to decision makers about things they’d like to change. We were involved six policy consultations last year striving to improve outcomes for disabled people and carers.

Whilst we work closely with government colleagues, we are impartial and independent from the Scottish Government. We add value as a specialist organisation and sat on 20 policy groups the last year, harnessing the direct voices of people with lived experience to overcome barriers to learning.

Our Senior Policy Officer was on the STV News at Six in March! She was asked to take part in a [televised interview for STV](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kFzR63_8Zng) in response to the Fair Access Commissioner's [discussion paper on Disabled Students at university](https://www.gov.scot/publications/commissioner-fair-access-discussion-paper-disabled-students-university/). She also wrote an [accompanying blog](https://www.lead.org.uk/disabled-students-at-university-in-scotland/). The story highlighted the difficulties students with mental health issues are facing when trying to sustain their place at university.

We [submitted a response to the Scottish Government's consultation](https://www.lead.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Lead-Scotland-response-to-consultation-on-the-SG-draft-resource-Supporting-Disabled-Children-Young-People-Families.pdf) on their draft resource for [Supporting Disabled Children, Young People and their Families](https://www.gov.scot/publications/supporting-disabled-children-young-people-and-their-families/pages/introduction/). We highlighted the lack of information in relation to post-school education and included suggestions for improvements to make the resource more accessible and practical for families to use.

We strongly advocated for changes to the Disabled Students’ Allowance, a fund that supports disabled people to participate in higher education. We worked closely with the Scottish Government around what those changes might look like and as a result we were invited to be part of a small steering group to help design an upcoming public consultation. We will also support disabled students to respond to the consultation.

We responded to the [Equality & Human Rights Commission Draft Strategic Plan](https://www.lead.org.uk/ehrc-consultation-of-draft-strategic-plan-2019/), to advocate the importance of the Commission prioritising improving access to justice for disabled people experiencing discrimination in education. We also responded to their research on legal aid for victims of discrimination and took part in a follow up telephone interview, where we raised awareness of the issues disabled people face in accessing legal aid or appropriate legal counsel to take forward a case.

We were selected to provide a [response to the Scottish Government’s Equality Impact Assessment for the Care Experienced Bursary](https://www.lead.org.uk/lead-scotland-response-to-the-equality-impact-assessment-for-the-care-experienced-bursary/) with a focus on how the increase to the award may impact disabled people in particular.

We were also asked to take part in a telephone interview as part of the ILF’s research into how well their new Transition Fund is working. We made some suggestions of how the criteria for funding could be clarified for families and raised awareness of some issues with accessing the fund that families have told us about.

# National Helpline and Information Service

"Outstanding service with empathy, sensitivity and understanding throughout, backed up with knowledge, experience and commitment. When it’s impossible to ﬁnd a solicitor in this area and the institution is putting up even more barriers, this service is essential. The relief I experienced from my interaction, is immeasurable . Thank you."

Our specialist helpline and information service focuses on disabled people becoming informed and advocating for themselves to overcome barriers which are preventing them accessing, staying in or progressing on from college or university. Our impartial service enables students to feel conﬁdent in making a timely and effective complaint or discrimination claim without fear of repercussions or stigma. Helpline callers and data support our policy work to remove institutional level barriers.

“This service gave exceptional advice when I was desperate - thank you”.  “You have been the most reliable, accurate, joined up service I've made use of for my son.”

Through our helpline and information service more disabled people, supporters and practitioners are empowered, informed and confident to access education, funding, support and challenge discrimination.

* We received 275 calls to our helpline from 25 local authority areas of Scotland
* 51% from people aged 16 to 24 years.
* Over the last 3 years there has been casework for 691 calls, representing a 28% rise since 2016.
* 21% of helpline callers responded to tracking via survey monkey, 100% of whom reported positive impact benefits from accessing the Information Service, such as getting the right funding or support or confidently appealing a decision.

“Thank you for offering such sound and comprehensive advice, support and information which helped my adult son make the best possible informed decision he could.”

We received 33 survey responses in 2019 to help us improve our helpline service. The overarching message was deep satisfaction with the quality of our service, people found the way we deliver the service appropriate and flexible enough but they would like to see increased hours and more awareness raising of the service.

Three of our downloadable guides were refreshed this year: Higher Education in Scotland guide, update of Charitable Trusts guide and the Disabled Students’ Allowance Factsheet.

We are delighted to be involving a new volunteer to help us refresh more guides in 2019-20.

"Your services and support was very much needed and helped me take a complaint further. I was unsupported and was contemplating leaving my course. The advice given made me see a clearer way forward. To be signposted to the relevant legislation helped cement my argument and got my case investigated."

# Moving forward 2020 to 2023

**Policy Work -Adult Learning:** We will supporting the work of the Strategic Forum for Adult Learning and the writing of the new Adult Learning Strategy.

**Policy Work – Further and Higher Education:** We are Chairing and co-hosting the national Improving Outcomes for Disabled Students group alongside the Scottish Funding Council. We have identified common themes and issues and are moving on the actions arising from these themes, such as making recommendations about changes to the Disabled Students’ Allowance to reduce the delays.

We will work with partners to investigate gaps identified by stakeholders such as advocacy and mediation support for disabled students and the lack of post-school options for people with profound and complex needs.

**Promoting Cyber Resilience**: We are committed to playing our part to implement the national Cyber Resilience learning and Skills Action plan across our work to bridge the digital divide which exists for disabled and older people.

**Contextualised Admissions campaign**: In late 2019 we are launching a campaign to ask universities in Scotland to consider a disabled person’s circumstances during the admissions process. We delivered a workshop at this year’s SFC Fair Access Conference to raise awareness of the issues that can impact on a disabled person’s chances of getting in and getting on at university. We screened a [video case study of our helpline caller Suley](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JRNGugsI_3U), who told her story of trying to access university after a long break in education.

Our new strategic plan 2020-2023:huge thanks to the 70 stakeholders who helped shape our new strategic plan for 2020-2023. The new plan will be on our website from November 2019, here’s a headline summary:

* We will deliver more personalised adult learning and befriending opportunities, doubling our current provision by 2023.
* We will extend our local and national coverage so that we reach more people across Scotland.
* We will capitalise our SQA centre status by increasing the range of qualifications we offer, filling gaps left by other providers.
* Enable more disabled people and carers to actively participate within communities
* Extend the reach of our helpline and information service to 32 local authority areas, up from 25.
* We will strengthen our branding and marketing to drive greater visibility and positioning of our services to make it easier for people to find us and the support they need.

# Thank you to all our supporters 2018-19

Aberdeenshire Council

Scottish Government

North Lanarkshire Council

Skills Development Scotland NTSF

Fife Council

Highlife Highland

Perth & Kinross Council

Dundee Council

The Robertson Trust

Big Lottery Awards for All

Tesco

Persimmons

Hugh and Mary Miller Trust

Rotary Club of Perth St Johns

Faculty of Actuaries Student Society

Sight and Sound

The Open University

The Co-op