

Lead Scotland Annual Report 2019-20



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'Lead helped me see that I
have options to do things
with my life.'



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Welcome from CEO and Chair

We are pleased to present our 2019-20 annual impact report complete with positive stories of change, resilience and achievement.

Hundreds of supporters joined our 40th birthday parties across Scotland. It was a real privilege to meet Lead Scotland champions connected across four decades at our parliamentary reception, all of us woven together by a shared vision for a fairer society.

In 2019, we refreshed our vision and mission, rebranded, moved our Edinburgh and North Lanarkshire offices and launched an ambitious 2020-23 strategic plan, shaped by almost 100 stakeholders.

We are excited to be working with Adult Learning partners and the Scottish Government on the new Lifelong Learning Strategy for Scotland and we welcome the move towards inclusive growth and a forward looking wellbeing economy.

The very first annual report in 1979/80 tells us why Lead Scotland was originally set up. Disabled people were worried that a lack of funding for REHAB Scotland would mean the end of support to access post school learning opportunities. Disability rights are now enshrined within the Equality Act 2010 but many disabled people and carers still experience barriers and discrimination accessing lifelong education opportunities.

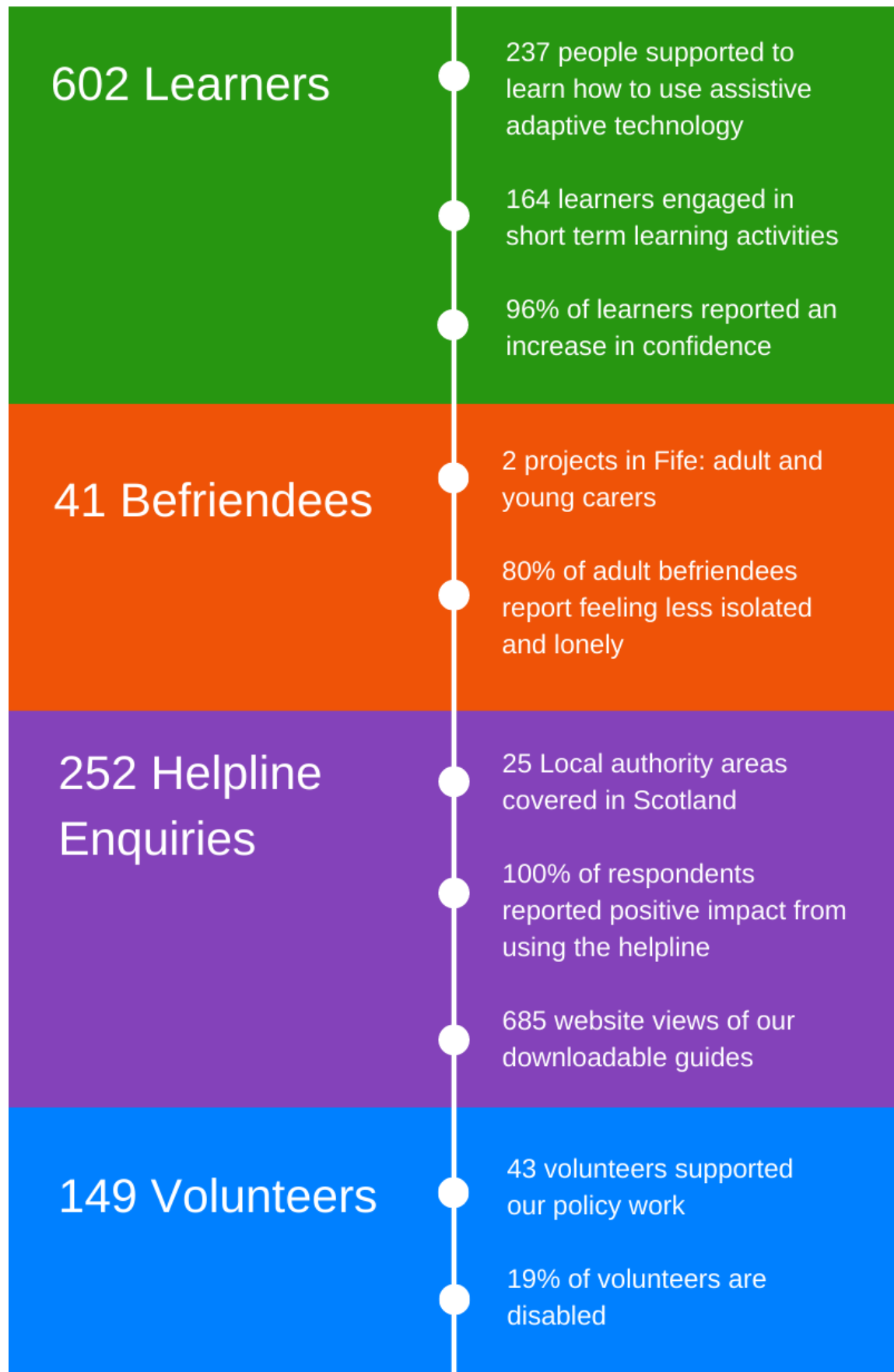
Covid-19 is amplifying the inequalities experienced by disabled people and carers. We must support disabled people and carers to contribute to the social and economic recovery from Covid-19 to build a stronger, fairer country. We are very grateful to our staff and volunteer team who have adapted so well to the sudden change to online service delivery in March. The energy and enthusiasm of our team has kept people engaged, supported and emotionally afloat.

Lastly, thank you to all our funders and partners who believe in the power of our work. We continue to evolve our services to make a positive difference.

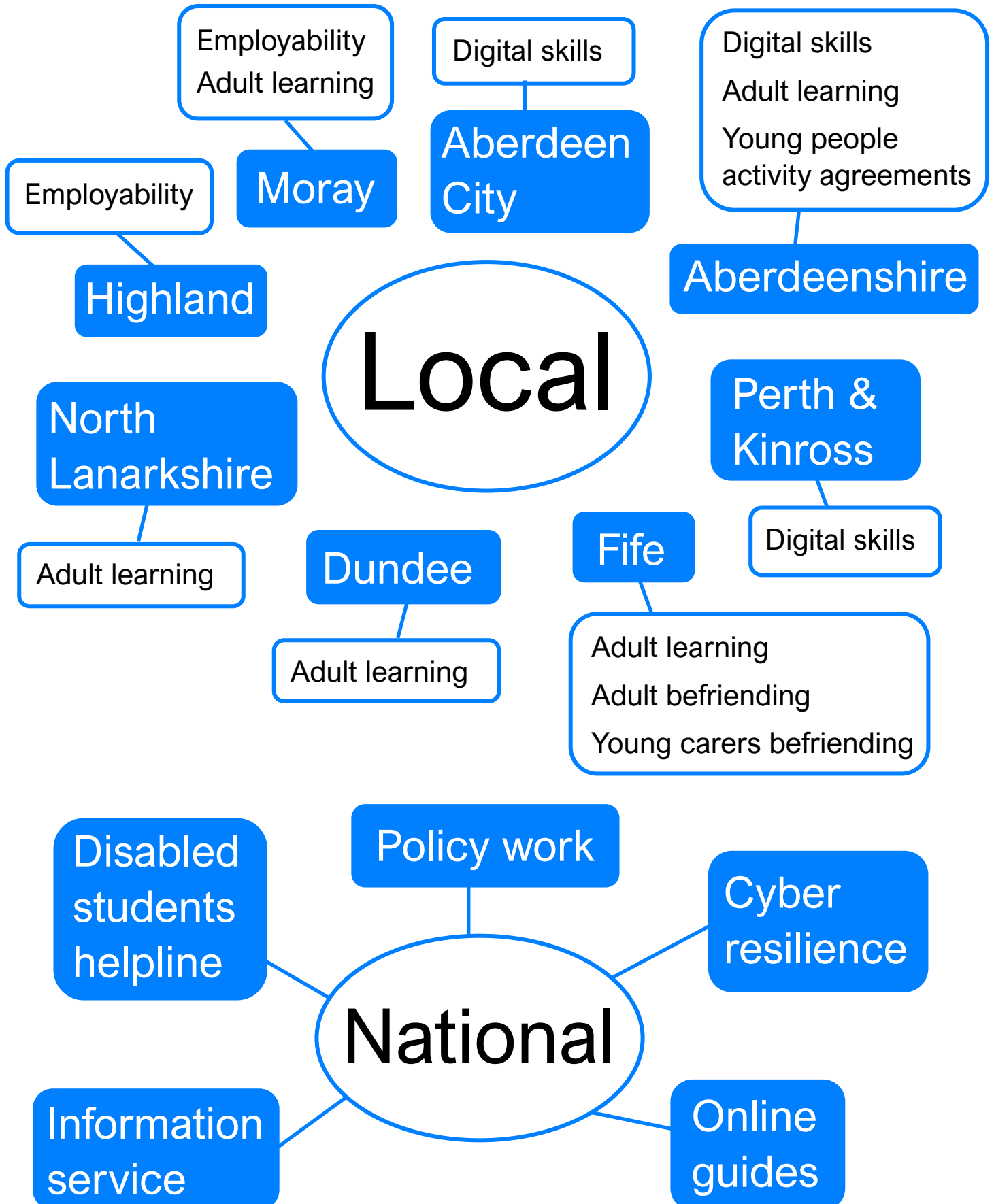
Emma Whitelock, CEO

Paul W Smith, Chair

2019-20 Summary



Where we work



Learning

Our service is personalised and each individual designs their learning plan around their goals and interests. We offer non-formal learning opportunities such as improving reading, writing, number and digital skills. Being an SQA centre, we can support learners to achieve accredited qualifications such as SCQF level 3 & 5 Community Action and Leadership Award and Adult Achievement Awards. Our learners also learn how to use assistive and enhancing technology for day-to-day life. 100% of learners tracked three months after moving on from Lead recommend learning with us.

We've been building our capacity to reach more learners: we supported 602 people this year compared to 382 last year (an increase of 58%). While the majority of our learners take part in one-to-one learning with a coordinator or volunteer, 164 learners this year engaged in short term learning activities. This included carers and staff in Perth learning how to use the Jointly app (a mobile app which assists carers in their roles).



One in five adults in Scotland do not have the basic digital skills needed to use the internet for things like emailing, accessing public services and applying for jobs. This year we ran a series of physical and online events in [cyber resilience](#) in order to support 100 learners to stay safe online. A sample of participants completed an online feedback form. 94% of respondents understood a bit or a lot better how to create a strong password, identify fake websites and recognise a scam like an email asking you to share personal details. 97% of respondents said they felt a little bit or a lot more confident.

Every person we worked with this year had a different learning journey and goal. Here's some examples:

- Used the diction function on an iPad to write novels.
- Improved money skills so was able to operate the till when volunteering at a shop.
- Used digital skills to connect with local groups online to discover new hobbies.
- Started an Open Learn course on Introduction to Psychology and looking into applying for a degree at the Open University.
- A group of 6 Learners took part in a Scottish Government focus group as part of their Community Leadership and Action Award.
- Started work experience in a café and began to receive a range of food/service-related accredited training.
- Learnt how to use Smart Home devices so lights, electrical appliances and door lock can be voice activated.

Fiona's thoughts (our 2018-19 James Hill Learner of the Year)

'Lead has helped me to continue my weekly learning in times when I need it most. They have introduced me to new ways of doing my learning sessions. I have felt that the staff have always given me simple and easy to understand contact. They have fully supported me through the learning and their advice has been useful and reassuring and helpful and it has given me the confidence to keep up my learning each week. I feel that thanks to Lead Scotland I was able to learn at a suitable day and time that fitted around my new life style. They have helped me to achieve my dreams and goals in my learning. They are always looking for and suggesting lots of different ways I can learn new skills. It always turns out to be full of lots of interesting stuff. The service gives me my own freedom to choose how and what where I want to learn.'



Learner transitions



We act as a bridge to support people into further learning opportunities (including formal education like going to college or university), volunteering and work placements. 89% of learners move into further learning, volunteering and work. This year, 75 of our learners have volunteered or have done work placements, including advocacy work, support groups and working in charity shops, cafes, a dog grooming salon and a nursery.

Here's some examples of what our learners are doing after moving on from Lead:

- Gained an SQA creative industries qualification, received college places because of the training and skills developed with Lead.
- Began part-time employment after completing an Adult Achievement Award with Lead in relation to volunteer work in a café.
- Began working as a house keeper for a care home and learning how to use a computer to do online courses.

'You have taught me so much already and helped me to grow into a stronger, more confident person.'



Befriending

We run two Befriending projects in Fife, one for adults and one for young carers. They tackle social isolation and loneliness by matching up volunteer befrienders with befriendees to spend time together every week. 80% of adult befriendees reported feeling less isolated and lonely as a result of the project.

Individuals participate with these projects because they want to feel more connected to local networks and feel more confident being active in their community. Here are some of the things that befrienders and befriendees did together this year:

- Going for a walk with their dogs
- Daytrips to St Andrews, Dunfermline, Glenrothes and Burntisland
- Indoor golf
- Going to the beach
- Going to a museum and to the theatre



Our Young Carers befriending project is in its second year and gaining momentum. We've seen improved well being in the young people engaged with the project and active citizenship interest amongst their families to improve the lives of local young carers. One Mum has said: 'I wish I knew you months ago, all this information is really useful and will be very helpful for my daughter.'

- New telephone service

Last year volunteers came up with the idea of telephone befriending to overcome geographical barriers so volunteers and befriendees could be matched up based on their interests even if they live far apart. Having trialled this system meant we were better prepared for Covid-19 when we moved to telephone and online support.

- Drop-In service development

Last year we had the idea for a drop-in service where people from our learning and befriending projects in Fife could come together for learning support and a chance to socialise. We have been developing the idea and applying for funding. Once Covid-19 lockdown is lifted, we hope to continue with the development of the drop-in idea.

Eric was referred to us by a local partner. He is in his late 80s and had been caring for his wife for some years. When she died, he moved to Fife to live with his son. The partner was no longer able to offer support but felt that he was in need of someone to chat to and to get out and about with, as he didn't know the area. His mobility was very limited due to his physical impairment and he was unable to walk long distances.

Eric had travelled extensively on holiday and was matched up with Agnes, a lady in her 70s who has travelled and lived abroad too. Agnes collected Eric once a week and took him out for a coffee locally, went for a drive or even fed the ducks at a local park. Eric enjoyed having weekly outings with Agnes, he said, 'I look forward to Tuesdays. She is very nice.' When asked what she had gained from her befriending experience, Agnes said, 'Being patient, considerate and encouraging, all helped me to enjoy my time with Eric. I also gained a friend.'



'You couldn't have matched me with a better befriender. It's a two way thing, it's not just about me. He has really helped me on my journey.'

Helpline and Information Service

We provide Scotland's only specialist helpline for disabled students and supporters who want advice on educational opportunities. We advise people on applying for courses and training programmes, accessing community learning, finding funding support, advising on their rights under the Equality Act and signposting to specialist support.

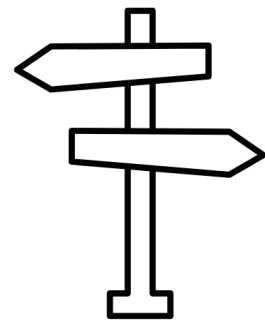
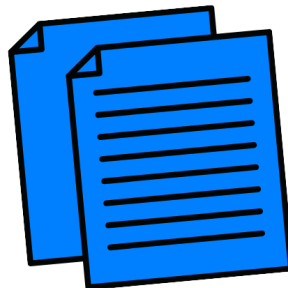
This year we received 252 in depth helpline enquiries from 25 local authority areas in Scotland. Like last year, 100% of calls tracked (16% response rate) reported positive outcomes. We kept our [online factsheets](#) up to date, including our guide to charitable trusts that give grants to disabled students and our Equality Act guide. In March, when the Covid-19 outbreak started to disrupt people's lives, we developed a factsheet for disabled students as an immediate response.

We ran a survey with 33 previous helpline callers so we could get feedback on our service. 100% of respondents said that a combination of telephone, email and online information guides suited their needs. People would like to see the helpline hours expanded but recognised more hours requires more funding. We also read that people benefited from being able to communicate with us by email as well as talk on the phone and they'd like us to deliver disability awareness training to colleges and university staff.

'I believe that the service was indisputably beneficial in helping resolve the issues I had in college.'



The parent of a disabled student called the helpline several times and we supported them. We provided them with information, advice and a supporting letter to overturn a decision to not provide repeat funding for tuition fees which was successful. We also supported them to challenge a decision not to fund taxi travel through the Disabled Students Allowance which was successful and helped them get charitable trust funding to buy a musical instrument.



We supported a disabled student who was trying to access her university's complaint procedure. The caller requested reasonable adjustments from the university which were refused without proper justification. As a result, she failed part of her assessments, was prevented from accessing supervision and had a significant deterioration in mental wellbeing. The student had complained to the university who had denied her complaint. We consulted with appropriate legal contacts in order to develop a supporting letter to challenge this decision. The student said about our work, 'To have an external body corroborate my concerns is a relief and extremely gratifying'.

Policy work

To further our vision of a fair society where disabled people and carers have equal access to education, we influence change through policy work. We listen to the views of disabled people and carers and act as an impartial voice to advocate for the issues that may affect them in post-school learning, training and employment. 43 disabled people and carers were involved in our policy work this year.

This year we attended 9 policy consultations and 20 policy groups. We launched our campaign to make access to university fairer for disabled people by asking universities to include disability as a contextual indicator. We chair and co-host the 'Improving outcomes for Disabled Students' group with the Scottish Funding Council and are key members of the Scottish Government and SAAS 'Disability related student support review' steering group.

Here are some of the activities we've been involved in:

- We responded to a private member's proposed bill about Transitions. We voiced concerns about the potential negative impact and cost implications of introducing further bureaucracy for disabled learners with the proposed transitions plan.
- We responded to Policy Connect's Disabled Study Inquiry. We raised concerns about the rights, advocacy and redress aspect of disability complaints and discrimination claims for disabled students.
- We responded to the Scottish Funding Council's consultation on the future use of WARF (Widening Access and Retention Fund). We highlighted the need for money specifically to support disabled people to access university or retain their place.



Fairer Access to Higher Education Campaign

Many of our helpline callers tell us that inadequate additional support to learn at school, interruption to school education because of serious illness and inability to relocate due to complex needs are just some of the issues that can impact their chances of going to university.

Our campaign promotes the use of disability as a 'contextual indicator' in the university admissions process in order to help widen access to university. Currently only a small handful of universities in Scotland consider being disabled or having experienced an interruption to school education due to serious illness in their admissions process. We want to change that and ask all Scottish universities to recognise that being disabled *might* impact school attainment and present barriers to access.

As part of the campaign, [we started a petition](#) which currently has 455 signatures. We spoke about it with our helpline caller Suley, who is partnering with us on the campaign, at our parliamentary reception, where Daniel Johnson MSP pledged his support. He submitted a question to parliament about this issue and as a result we were invited to the first meeting of a new Access Policy Group at Universities Scotland, the sector's representative body.

We presented to the group in January 2020 on why we thought this change was needed and how it might look in practice. In response the group committed to making changes going forward to ensure access to university for disabled people would be fairer. While work was delayed due to the pandemic, Universities Scotland are now working with Advance HE and Lead to support the sector to identify concrete actions to tackle the challenges faced by disabled applicants.

40th Birthday

We celebrated our 40th birthday with events across Scotland, including a reception at the Scottish Parliament. We held Afternoon Tea parties in Ellon (Aberdeenshire), Dundee and Kirkcaldy (Fife).

During the event in Kirkcaldy, we co-hosted a hands-on learning session with Fife Council about participatory budgeting (how local people can have a direct say in how public money is spent). Our event in Ellon focused on the contribution of our fantastic volunteers to the success of Lead and we had a brilliant performance from Freeze Company Drama Group. In Dundee, our CEO gave a presentation on the history of Lead and we learnt about the volunteer charter.



We also had joint birthday roadshow events with the Open University in Scotland in North Lanarkshire and Perth for our staff, volunteers and partners. Together we ran an informative workshop about the free, informal learning resources available from the Open University. Attendees signed up as Open Learning Champions to build a stronger peer network so they could continue to champion free online learning in their communities. We also enjoyed some tea and cake!



At the Scottish Parliament event, sponsored by Sight and Sound (who were also turning 40!) and hosted by Daniel Johnson MSP, we were joined by four decades of supporters, including Lead's first ever employee.

Our Moray learner Rita Graham had never given a public speech before but spoke eloquently about her transformative learning journey. Emma Whitelock, our CEO, spoke about the origins of the organisation. Our Senior Policy and Information Officer, Rebecca Scarlett, and our helpline caller Suley, spoke about our Fair Access to University Campaign. The next day Rita bumped into Richard Lochhead MSP, her constituent MSP, who was delighted to give her a tour of parliament.

'The golden threads of what we stood for in 1979 are still very visible today. Lead Scotland then and now is all about fighting for fair access: into education, into work and participation with communities. '

- Emma Whitelock



New Strategic Plan 2020-23

We are excited to share [our new Strategic Plan](#), outlining our main goals for the next three years. These are:

- ⇒ Deliver more personalised learning and befriending opportunities
- ⇒ Enable more disabled people and carers to actively participate within communities
- ⇒ Extend our local and national coverage
- ⇒ Strengthen our financial sustainability

Working towards these goals take forward our vision of a fair society where disabled people and carers have equal opportunity to learn, participate and achieve their potential.

In August 2019, our head office moved to a new location in 525 Ferry Road, Edinburgh EH5 2FF. We were sad to leave the Edinburgh Napier family but we are happy to share the new premises with other charitable organisations. Our Motherwell office moved to Unit 13, Carron House, Carron Way, Cumbernauld in May 2019. Both office moves reduce ongoing costs, increase staff wellbeing and provide more meeting space.

In order to expand our presence, we are focusing on our marketing to increase our visibility.

We rebranded this year by launching our new logo. 50 stakeholders were involved in the development of the new logo. They decide we should change the logo to a tree but keep the tag line 'Linking Education and Disability'.



Covid-19 update

Even though the Covid-19 lockdown began at the very end of the 2019-20 financial year, we want to keep our supporters updated with how we've been adapting to this challenging time.



As soon as the Scottish Government announced the lockdown in March 2020, we switched our learning and befriending services from face-to-face to telephone and via the internet. We kept our supporters informed and tried to do our bit in helping people to adapt to this new way of life by producing webpages with [useful links related to getting support during Covid-19](#) and [links to free online learning resources](#) so people could continue their learning journeys under lockdown.

With funding from the Scottish Government, we ran 21 online safety webinars, reaching 233 learners, designed for learners, carers and practitioners who were having to quickly adapt to delivering services online. We wanted to make sure they had the knowledge to stay safe online and to pass on the correct information about online safety to their clients. 100% of 46 survey respondents said they would recommend this training to others and 100% said they understood a lot better how to create a strong password, identify a fake website and identify an internet scam.

The Covid-19 epidemic and lockdown has created new challenges for our learners, befriendees and volunteers. Despite these challenges, we've seen our learners adapt, gain confidence using the phone, video calling and a range of online platforms to connect with us and continue their journeys. Read some of their stories during this time on the next page.

Amy was very anxious about meeting online and didn't like using the phone. Amy is on the autistic spectrum and was finding it very difficult to adjust to so much change. After some email conversations, Amy agreed to trying an online meeting. Slowly she became more comfortable with the online meetings and screen sharing function so that she could work with the Learning Coordinator. She attended Lead's Online Safety workshop, gained a Core Skill Numeracy Unit in Time SCQF Level 2 and a Communication Unit in Writing SCQF Level 3. Amy is now really enjoying the weekly online sessions and looks forward to them. Quite a contrast from a few months ago. Amy said: 'I have surprised myself how quickly I have been able to get used to using Zoom for my online learning. It has been good to be able to keep up my learning and continue my qualifications.'



Jane is in her fifties and lives alone. She has Aspersers Syndrome and experiences anxiety and depression. She was referred to Lead at the beginning of lockdown. Jane is usually quite sociable and attends a number of groups and support services in the local area, she was also in the final stages of a college course which had been moved online. Jane expressed to the Coordinator her worry about poor mental health during the lockdown as felt she couldn't concentrate on her college work. Jane was matched with a volunteer befriender who lives in the local area and they've been talking on the phone regularly since April.

The volunteer said of the match: 'I have really enjoyed my calls with Jane, and feel we have really gotten to know one another well. She has had a hard life in many ways and lacks a lot of confidence. I hope that our calls have helped to develop her confidence a little bit, particularly when it comes to making friends going forward. She really has a lot going for her, but finds it difficult to see this herself.'

Looking forward to 2021

Our one to one community based adult learning and befriending services will continue to have a hugely important role to play in the Covid-19 response and recovery period.

Learning and befriending opportunities provide more than just a distraction from the pandemic, people report feeling valued and kept afloat by our personalised services. We will keep doing the things which have worked well during lockdown, delivering more online learning opportunities and reducing feelings of loneliness.

We will help to close the gap on digital poverty and support more people to realise the potential of technology. In 2019/20 in partnership with the Open University we co-produced an [Everyday Computer Skills](#) course with disabled people which is hosted on the OpenLearn Create site. We will proudly roll this out to hundreds of learners across Scotland.

We will work with partners to extend our learning and helpline services further across Scotland. We will develop and deliver more [digital products](#) which promote inclusion and build confidence to safely operate in online environments.

Securing funding will be harder during this recession, but the Scottish Government have extended our core funding until March 2022 and we will work hard to attract investment for our work.

Disabled people and carers have been the hardest hit in this pandemic. Our learning, befriending and helpline services encourage people to speak up at a local and national level about what needs to change to create a fairer society.



Thank you to our supporters

Scottish Government
Aberdeenshire Council
Highlife Highland
Dundee Council
North Lanarkshire Council
Fife Council
Perth Council
Skills Development Scotland
Scottish Council for Voluntary
Organisation
Remploy
Big Lottery
Robertson Trust
Adam Family Foundation
Learning Link Scotland
Perth and Kinross
Association of Voluntary
Services

Hugh and Mary Millar Trust
Tesco Bags of Help
Tay Charitable Trust
Co-op Community Fund
The Kilt Walk
SCVO Cyber Resilience
Persimmons
Tough Construction



Our staff and board

Our Board 2019-20

Donald Jarvie (Chair, resigned 30th June 2020)

Paul Smith (Chair, appointed 18th August 2020)

Tricia Illsley (Vice-Chair)

Colin Anderson (Company Secretary)

Anne Kidd (Treasurer, appointed 20th August 2019)

Kevin Mallon

Pamela Maxwell

Sandra Wilson

Senga Armstrong (appointed 20th August 2019)

Kirsty Gemmell (appointed 18th August 2020)

Ahmed Yousaf (resigned 19th November 2019)

Our Staff 2019-20

Main Office

Emma Whitelock,
Chief Executive Officer

Doreen O'Donnell,
Finance & Administration
Manager

Rebecca Scarlett,
Senior Policy &
Information Officer

Gail Phillips,
Engagement &
Development Officer

Sibyl Adam,
Engagement &
Fundraising Officer

Elke Miller, Administrator
North Team

Sarah Burton,
Regional Development
Manager - North

Jan Harrison,
Digital Progression
Learning Coordinator

North Team

Fiona Fraser,
Digital Progression
Learning Coordinator

Barbara Taylor,
Aberdeenshire and Moray
Learning Coordinator

Pat Paterson,
Aberdeenshire Learning
Coordinator

Heather Gordon,
Learning Coordinator

Marie Law,
Digital Progression
Learning Coordinator

Brigitte Vallance,
Digital Progression
Learning Coordinator

Paul Jarvis,
Digital Progression
Learning Coordinator

Caroline Lindsay,
Learning Coordinator

South Team

Stephen Fernand,
Regional Development
Manager - South

Donna Morley,
North Lanarkshire
Learning Coordinator

Dawn Robb,
Fife Learning Coordinator

Amulree Welch,
Perth Learning
Coordinator

Amy Browne,
Dundee Learning
Coordinator

Louise Andree,
Fife Befriending
Coordinator

Emma Pauley,
Fife Young Carers
Befriending Coordinator

Naomi Smith,
Dundee Learning
Coordinator