

The background of the entire page is a complex, abstract pattern of overlapping triangles in various shades of teal and turquoise. In the center of the page is a large, solid white circle. Inside this circle, the text is centered. The text is in a dark teal color, matching the background's palette. The words "ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT" are at the top, followed by a horizontal line. Below the line are the words "LEAD" and "SCOTLAND" on separate lines. Another horizontal line follows, and at the bottom is the date "2020-2021".

ANNUAL IMPACT REPORT

**LEAD
SCOTLAND**

2020-2021

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Please note:

- Our case studies are anonymised including names and stock photos used (apart from Simon!).
- If some text is underlined, that means it is linked to a website. Click on it to see!

Should you require this report in any other format such as plain text or braille please email us at enquiries@lead.org.uk or call 0131 228 9441.

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Welcome from CEO and Chair

We would like to begin this report by thanking our staff, our volunteers and our partners for their hard work and fortitude. Teamwork, digital resilience and a strong determination to succeed enabled us to successfully evolve our learning and befriending services to overcome the barriers presented by the Covid restrictions. Our immediate priorities at the start of the pandemic:

- Continue to provide personalised learning, helpline and befriending services
- Extend our telephone befriending services across all projects to reduce isolation
- Reduce the digital poverty and skills gap
- Stabilise our financial position in the face of uncertainty

We are pleased to have so many positive stories to tell in this report when it has been an incredibly challenging period. Midway through the year, we raised the ambition of our strategic plan striving to extend our remote learning services and we successfully reached people across all 32 local authorities.

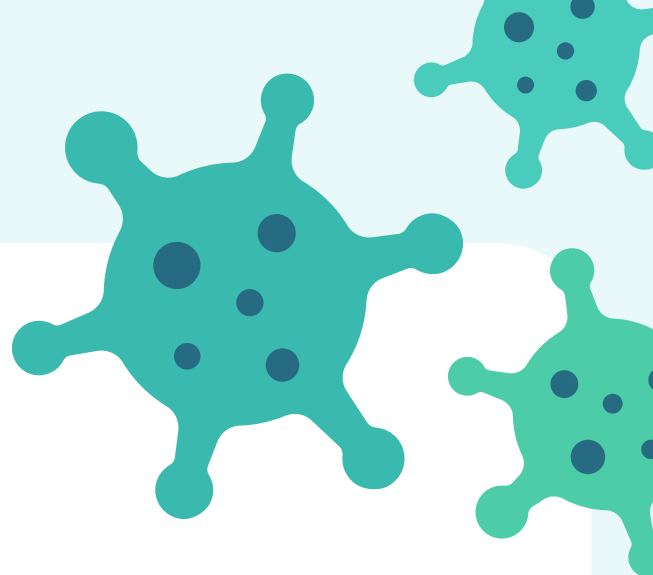
We worked with staff and volunteers in over 110 organisations, and you will read some very positive examples of effective partnership working throughout this report. We are grateful to partners who opened their arms to work with us particularly around the distribution of devices and data and new course development.

Looking ahead to 2021-22 we will build upon our success and the new learning from this year. We will play our part in the Covid recovery effort to support more people to move positively forward.

Emma Whitelock (CEO)
Paul Smith (Chair)



Covid-19 Update



We reacted quickly to the pandemic and followed Government guidelines to keep staff, volunteers and service users safe. All of our in person services moved to phone and online support.

We saw that some people needed extra support now that most parts of life had moved to the digital world.

We hosted **18 webinars** from April-October 2020 for carers and support workers who wanted extra support to be safe online or to help someone else to be safe online during the pandemic.

We researched and compiled a list of **Helpful Links** and a list of **Free Online Learning Options** for people that wanted to keep learning while stuck at home.

We supported learners and befriendees to get access to digital devices and data via **Connecting Scotland**.

We also offered **extra befriending support** across our learning projects for people feeling isolated and recruited extra befriender volunteers from University of Edinburgh.

As of August 2021, we are slowly phasing back to a blended approach and assessing each activity on a case by case basis. 70% of learners said they preferred a blended approach of face-to-face and remote support.



Summary of the Year

330
learners

...in local community-based learning projects. 88% of survey respondents reported an increase in confidence.

981
online
learners

...across 32 local authority areas. 99% of survey respondents would recommend our training.

85
befriendees

...across 2 projects in Fife. Increase of 107% befriendees compared to last year.

305
enquiries

...in depth support for 122 people across 24 local authority areas. 100% survey respondents reported benefits.

156
volunteers

...across Scotland. 97% of volunteers would recommend volunteering with us.

Where do we work?

- Local community based adult learning projects in Fife, Dundee, Perth and Kinross, North Lanarkshire, Moray, Highland, Aberdeen City and Aberdeenshire.
- Two befriending projects (adult and young carers) in Fife.
- A national helpline and information service.
- National webinars and training in cyber resilience and accessibility for the public, practitioners and employers.

What do we do?

We offer personalised learning and befriending support to meet the needs of each individual. This can include:

- Core skills learning like literacy, numeracy and communication
- Digital skills and access to a digital device home loan scheme
- Employability skills and confidence building
- Qualifications like Adult Achievement Awards
- Advice on all aspects of post-16 learning for disabled students and carers
- Befriending support

Update on Strategic Goals



Strategic goal 2020-21

Increase the number of people engaged and progressing in our learning and befriending services per year to 700

Performance 2020-21

Reached 1396 people, significantly exceeding our target by 99%, due to demand for our remote, short term learning services.

Increase the number of disabled people and carers actively participating within communities per year to 150.

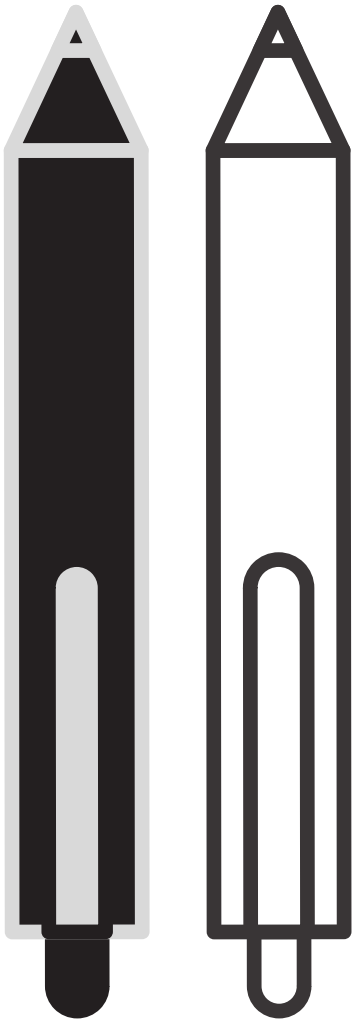
Supported 123 people to participate in their communities, 18% short of our target due to Covid-19.

Extend our learning and helpline services across Scotland across 27 local authority areas.

Reached all 32 local authority areas with remote learning and our helpline supported people from 24 local authority areas.

Increase our unrestricted funding with a target of £45,000.

Exceeded our annual target by 30%, raising £58,697 and exceeded last year's performance by 214%.



Learning

Each learner that works with us has their own personal learning goals and interests. Here are some examples of what they did this year:

- Achieving SQA Core Skill qualifications
- Completing an online CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Theory) course
- Attending a college course despite leaving school without qualifications
- Learning to use Zoom and how to screen share
- Receiving iPads through Connecting Scotland and being given set up support
- Getting support with using their technology in an accessible way (changing font size, screen reader, etc.)
- Working with a volunteer to improve spelling and form-filling
- Supporting the development of Lead's digital projects, such as giving feedback on an online safety course and easy read guide
- Using the video chat feature on Whatsapp to be remotely supported by a volunteer with simulated online banking and shopping
- Starting an online mindfulness course to help with mental health problems and improve digital confidence



Sandra was nervous about meeting online rather than in person. Over several weeks of email conversations, she worked up to meeting online to discuss options for working towards more qualifications. Slowly Sandra became more comfortable with Zoom and was able to work on her AAA level 4, attend Lead's online safety webinar, gain a Core Skill Numeracy Unit in Time SCQF Level 2 and a Communication Unit in Writing SCQF Level 3. She now looks forward to her weekly online sessions!

**55 learners
registered for an
AAA (Adult
Achievement
Award)**

Sophie was interested in working in mental health because of her own experiences of mental health issues. We supported her to complete a vocational course remotely with Lead and this inspired her to go on to sign up for a formal mental health course. Sophie was also motivated to become self-employed and with support from Lead, she now creates handmade products to sell. She also benefited by receiving a Chromebook and mobile data from Connecting Scotland.

**68 learners were
supported to
successfully apply for a
device and data via
Connecting Scotland
and the Digital Inclusion
Fund.**

Matt started off with 1-to-1 support which moved to remote support during lockdown. Since working with us, he has learned how to use assistive technologies, gained experience of using online software, taken part in informal online courses and has now signed up to the Open University to study Physics.


'No one in my family has been to University, my family is happy for me'.

**267 learners
were given
support with
assistive
technology**

Transitions

We act as a positive bridge for individuals to overcome any barriers they may be facing so they can access education, volunteering, community involvement and employment. We are an important step in the longer term pipeline for people progressing in their goals. When they begin with us, learners may have found other services inaccessible or lacked the confidence to access them or knowledge of what services are available. Below are some examples of the positive destinations learners have transitioned into this year.

67% of learners tracked 6 months after leaving us report positive destinations sustained including volunteering, further learning and work.



Applying to a local college after doing an AAA (Adult Achievement Award)

Began part-time employment after working on anxiety and doing an AAA

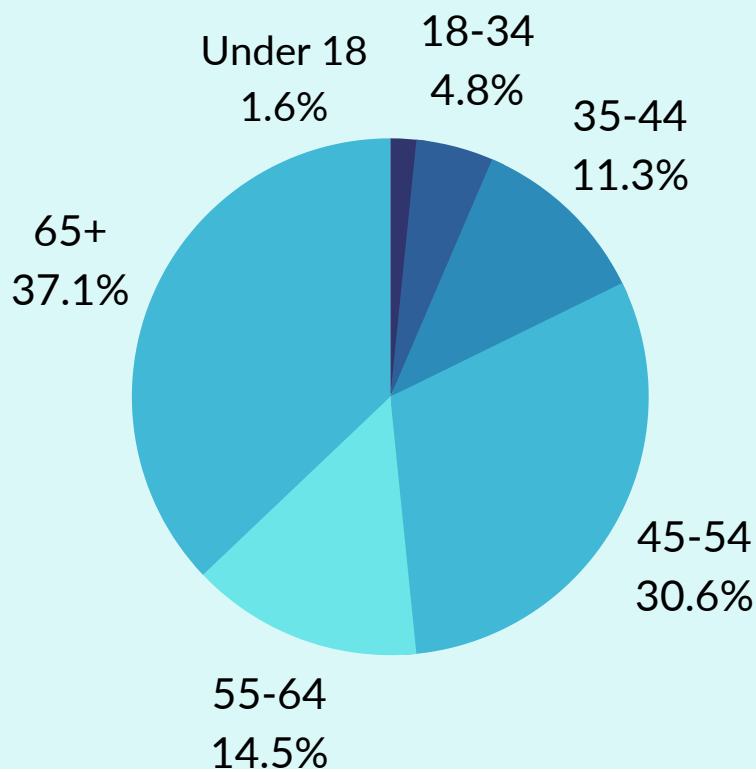
Started a hairdressing course

Set up local support groups to help their community during Covid-19 lockdowns

Getting a job after lots of interviews with accessibility adjustments

Befriending

We have 2 befriending projects in Fife, one for adults and one for young carers. They tackle loneliness and social isolation through weekly chats and outings. Our Coordinators and volunteers kept befriendees engaged with the projects through the phone, online and by email during Covid-19.



Age of Befriendees in Adult Project

During the first lockdown, 1 in 4 Scottish adults felt lonely because of Covid-19 (Mental Health Foundation). Meanwhile, 69% of young carers felt less connected to others and 66% felt more stressed (Carers Trust). We offered extra befriending across our learning projects to support people through the pandemic.

Covid-19 extra befriending survey:

How did Lead Scotland help you during the Covid19 outbreak?

- Put me in touch with other services 19%
- Felt less isolated 69%
- Looked forward to chatting 88%
- Felt more able to cope 53%

Laura

Laura was hardly attending school and experiencing mental health problems. She received the Young Carers toolkit, weekly remote befriending support, an iPad through Connecting Scotland and a grant through the Creative Breaks fund. Laura has benefited from having someone to talk to about life in general during weekly phone calls with a volunteer or coordinator. She has reported an improvement in school attendance since accessing the service and has been very grateful for the iPad which she has said has 'helped my learning so much'. We are currently exploring avenues for future volunteering.



Tony

Tony received parallel learning and befriending support to keep moving forward during the pandemic.

Tony got support with his literacy and form filling skills from a volunteer. Before the pandemic, they met at the local library and used a library computer. Tony was keen to learn and make good progress through the work. When lockdown was announced, he was very likely to become isolated and withdraw from the learning. The volunteer continued to support Tony by combining her weekly telephone calls to encourage Tony in his learning and befriending to reduce isolation.

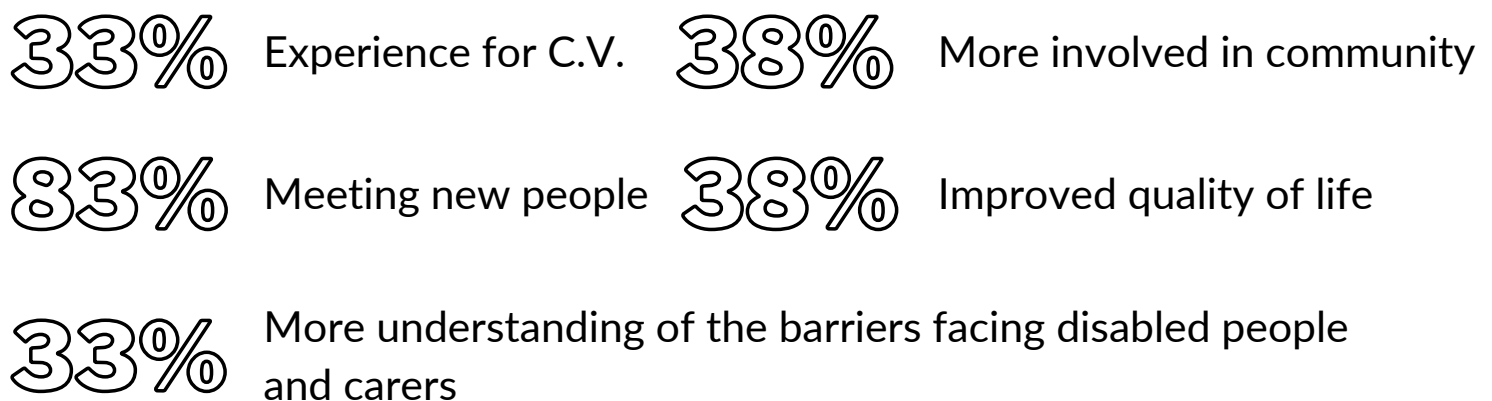
Tony through the continued support has now successfully applied to the local college. His confidence has increased, and he is now on a more positive pathway in line with his future goals.



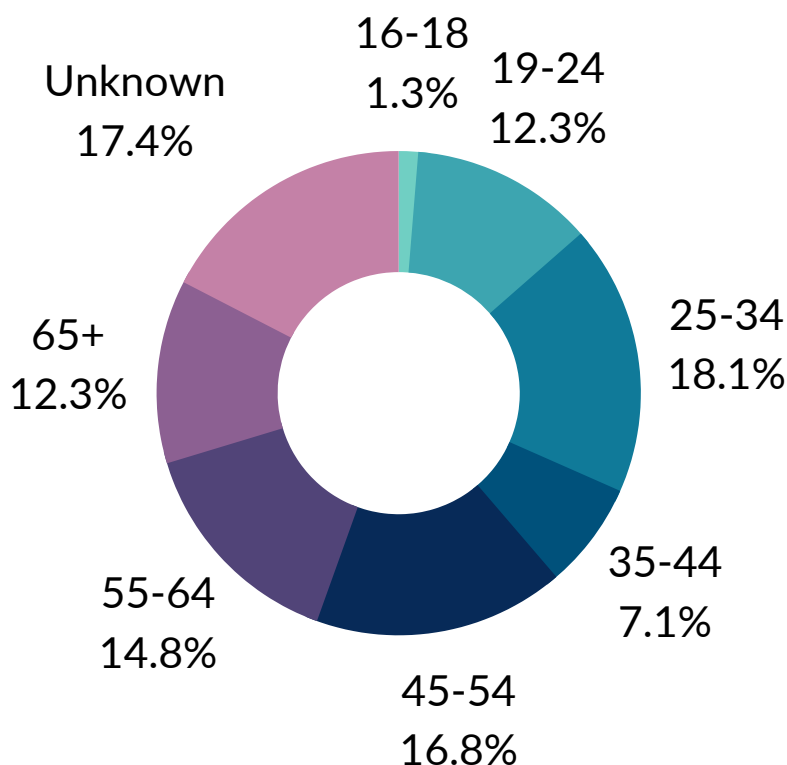
Volunteers

Volunteers are vitally important to the success of our work. We have volunteers from a range of backgrounds who add value to all of our projects, including supporting learners 1-to-1 with their literacy or numeracy, helping out with groups of learners online doing their Community Action and Leadership Awards, reducing isolation and loneliness and providing feedback on the accessibility of Lead's marketing and course development.

What have volunteers gained from volunteering with us? (latest report, 2019)



Age of volunteers



'I can't speak highly enough about my volunteer who is a lovely person with lots of patience' - Learner

'The volunteer has made so much difference with me. I look forward to seeing her. She's the highlight of my week' - Befriendee

Simon

'I had been out of work for over a year following redundancy and a life-changing injury. I was apprehensive about going back into work and had decided that I no longer wished to work in the same sort of industry as before. I met with Jan (Learning Coordinator) who convinced me that my existing skillset would be useful as a volunteer at Lead and quickly brought me on board.



I supported Jan with a CALA Award course. It was a small group and that allowed me the opportunity to enjoy the experience - and to contribute - almost as though I were a participant as well as a volunteer.

During the time that the course was being run I realised that 'helping' people was what I wished to do, going forward, as I saw the change in confidence exhibited by the participants.

During the time that I have been volunteering with Lead, I have received digital thinking, equality and Assistive Technology training, including training over - and about - Zoom, and been encouraged to attend and contribute to the Adult Learning Strategy consultation process, as well as being signposted toward Fair Start and to an online wellness course for job hunters. I also registered for - and am very nearly finished - a CACHE Level 3 Certificate in Understanding Autism.

I am pleased to say that the training I received, both directly and indirectly, as a result of Lead has helped me to obtain a job, and the support from Jan played a major part in me choosing the particular role to apply for, and having the confidence to go for it.

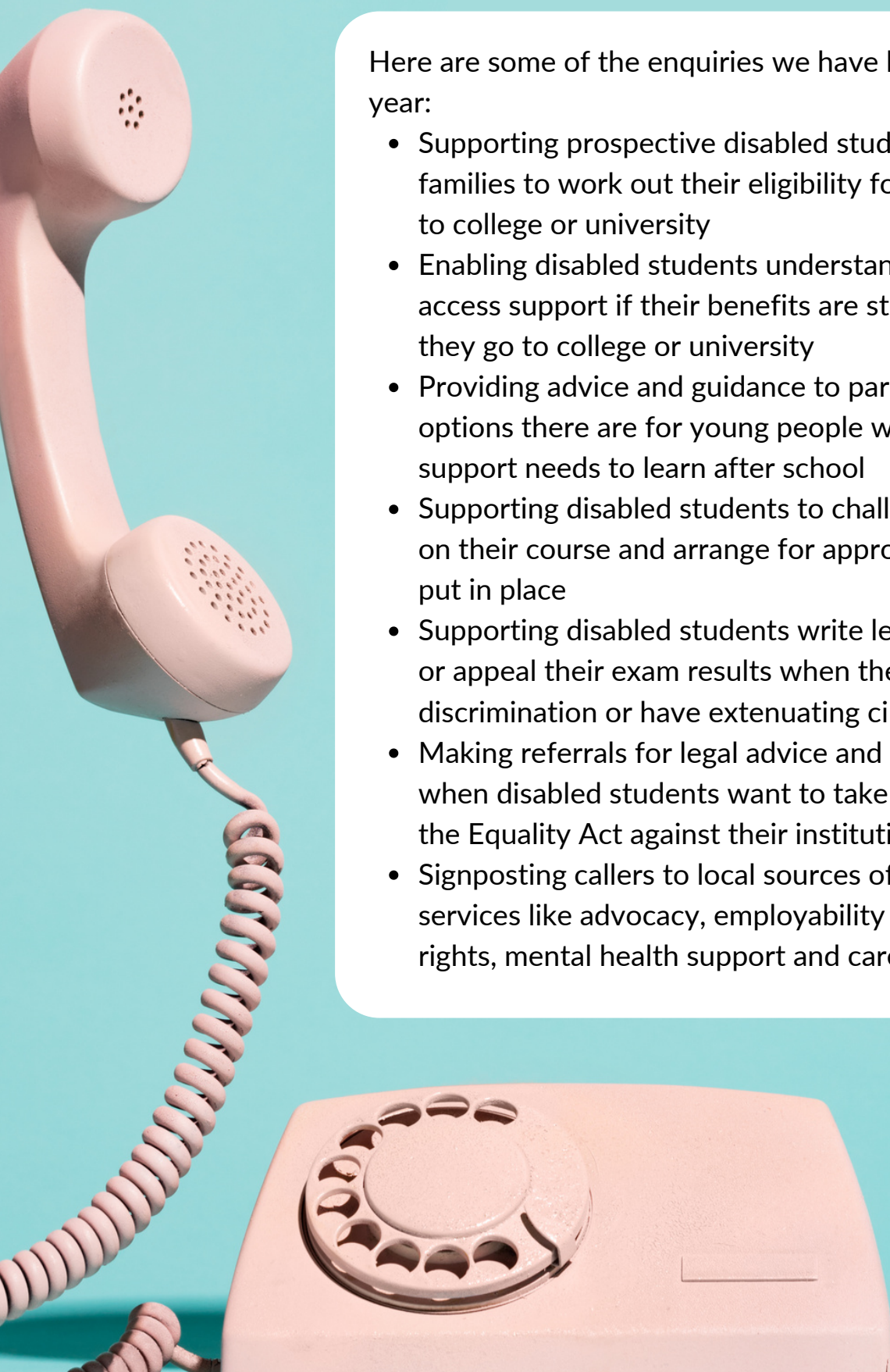
I have been trained, supported and encouraged throughout my time at Lead, despite the difficulties imposed by Covid-19, and I have enjoyed the experience immensely. It has helped me personally, it has been extremely rewarding and it has provided a real springboard for me into employment and a new industry.'

Information Service

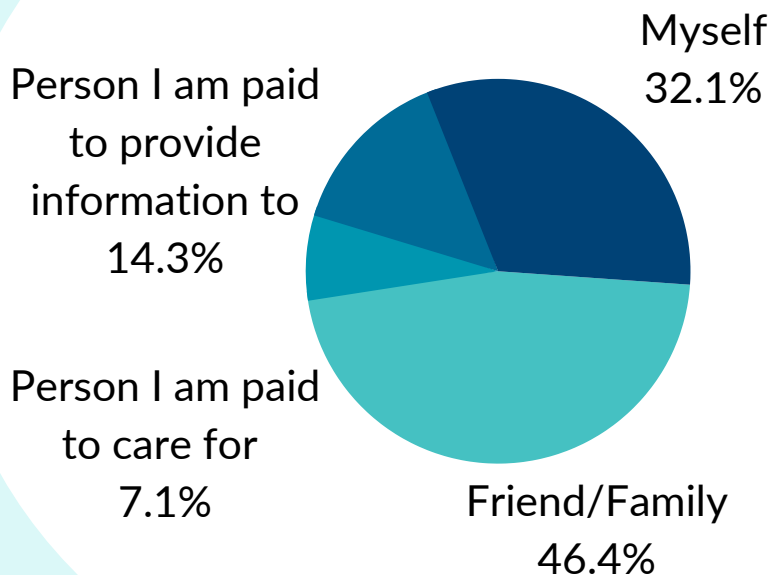
Our helpline and information service provides free, impartial advice on post-school learning and education for people who are disabled, carers and to their families and friends. Individuals ring or email the service and receive expert advice, guidance and referrals for as long as they need it. The service also have a range of downloadable online guides including advice on grants, transitions and support.

Here are some of the enquiries we have helped with this year:

- Supporting prospective disabled students and their families to work out their eligibility for benefits if they go to college or university
- Enabling disabled students understand their rights and access support if their benefits are stopped or affected if they go to college or university
- Providing advice and guidance to parents about what options there are for young people with additional support needs to learn after school
- Supporting disabled students to challenge discrimination on their course and arrange for appropriate support to be put in place
- Supporting disabled students write letters of complaint or appeal their exam results when they have experienced discrimination or have extenuating circumstances
- Making referrals for legal advice and representation when disabled students want to take legal action under the Equality Act against their institution
- Signposting callers to local sources of support to access services like advocacy, employability training, welfare rights, mental health support and carer services



Who are you enquiring on behalf of?



'They are also quick in responding to enquiries.'

'Really helped me organise myself financially for university.'

'Incredible amount of support. From beginning to end, so helpful & professional.'

'They went out of their way to find me relevant information with a good sense of humour too, felt listened to and well advised.'

'Provided the relevant information to help my son get his life back on track. They gave us both hope and the confidence that there were options available to him that would enable his return to further education.'



Policy work



We influence national policy and strategy and support disabled people and carers to have a say. We work with disabled learners and those who support/care for them in issues related to post-16 learning, training and employment across Scotland.

As one helpline caller said '**Lead are great at trying to challenge education policy and try and make it a fairer system for disabled students**'. Here are some examples of key policy work done this year:

Providing feedback on Scottish Government's Adult Learning Strategy, Digital Strategy and Cyber Resilience Strategy and Action Plan Framework.

Member of Scottish Funding Council and Equality and Human Rights Inequalities Group. Co-chairs of the Disabled Outcomes group with the Scottish Funding Council.

Joint response to Scottish Funding Council Review of Coherent Provision - highlighting opportunities for increased focus on equality and equity for disabled learners.

Strengthened response to Proposed Transitions Bill and provided feedback to SQA's Equality Impact Assessment of their Alternative Certification Model.

Cyber Projects

We've supported people with their digital skills and cyber security skills throughout the pandemic, particularly around Cyber Scotland Week. Our cyber work has been recognised by the **Scottish Charity Awards 2021** and **Scottish Cyber Awards 2021** where we were shortlisted as finalists in both.

- Everyday computer skills: a beginner's guide to computers, tablets, mobile phones and accessibility

Using what we've learnt from decades of home based and community learning, we co-designed an essential digital skills course with disabled learners and volunteers in partnership with the Open University in Scotland.

- Webinars in online security and supporting others to be safe online

During lockdown, everyone was forced to use the internet more for essential tasks, including online banking and shopping. We responded to anxiety about being safe online during this period, and supporting others to be safe, by holding 18 webinars from April to October 2020.

- Cyber Scotland Week 2021

We ran 24 webinars with 7 different topics about online safety, shared 10 digital artifacts (infographics and short videos), created and shared Easy Read documents. Following this, we have been developing our current project in alternative formats for online security messaging.



Future Developments in our Services



- Extend our presence within existing areas
- Deliver high-quality blend of face-to-face and telephone/online services
- Involve more disabled people and carers in the design and delivery of our services
- Seek new funding to deliver online peripatetic services

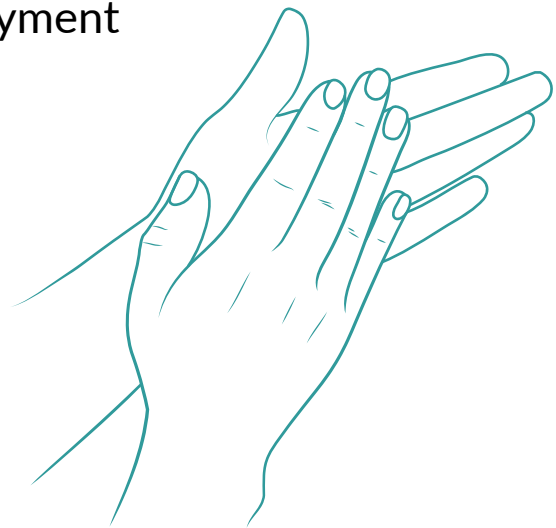
- Develop our digital learning products and offer more accredited pathways as an SQA centre
- Sustain Cyber Essentials Accreditation and promote cyber resilience behaviours
- Contribute to key policies areas which match our strategic ambition and support the Covid-19 response and recovery effort



- Strengthen the professional identity of staff and volunteers through learning and mentoring
- Continue to expand our range of partners
- Embed community participation outcomes within our project milestones ensuring our service participants have opportunities to become changemakers

Thanks to our supporters

Hugh and Mary Miller Bequest
Tesco Bags of Help and Covid-19 Fund
Tay Charitable Trust
Co-op Community Fund
Kilt Walk
Asda Green Token
Meikle Foundation
Ina Baxter Foundation
WM Mann Foundation
Hoare Trustees
Baillie Gifford
Befriending Networks
Alexander Moncur Trust
Cash 4 Kids Fund
Wolfson Foundation
Leng Charitable Trust
New Park Charitable Trust
Walter Craig Charitable Trust
Scottish Union of Supported Employment
Hugh Fraser Foundation
Agnes Hunter Trust
Skills Development Scotland
Stafford Trust
Remake
Robertson Trust
Remploy
Adam Family Foundation
Scottish Council of Voluntary Organisations
Perth & Kinross Association of Voluntary Service



Our Board and Project Details

Board:

Paul Smith (Chair)

Tricia Illsley (Vice-Chair)

Colin Anderson (Company Secretary)

Anne Kidd (Treasurer)

Kevin Mallon

Pamela Maxwell

Andy McMahon

Sandra Wilson

Senga Armstrong

Kirsty Gemmell

Gillian Brown (appointed 18th May 2021)

Current Projects:

Aberdeenshire Employability

Agreements Project

AberdeenYPP@lead.org.uk - 0131 228 9441

Aberdeenshire Employability (16-24 year olds) Project

AberdeenshireEP@lead.org.uk - 07768 917248

Dundee Adult Learning Project

Dundee@lead.org.uk - 07768 917492 / 07741 899507

Fife Adult Befriending Project

FifeAdultBefriending@lead.org.uk - 07768 916460

Fife Young Carers Befriending Project

FifeYoungCarers@lead.org.uk - 07775 844885

Fife Adult Learning Project

FifeAdultLearning@lead.org.uk - 07768 916460

North East Digital Skills and Adult Learning Project

NorthEast@lead.org.uk - 07741 742 560

North Lanarkshire Adult Learning Project

NorthLanarkshire@lead.org.uk - 07920 782674

Perth and Kinross Digital Skills Project

Perth@lead.org.uk - 07768 917492

Supporting People, Connecting Communities (Highland and Moray) Project

SSPC@lead.org.uk - Highland: 07741 902566, Moray: 07741 899506