

The logo for the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), consisting of the letters 'WEA' in a bold, white, sans-serif font with a slight shadow effect, set against a dark teal background.

**WEA**

The title of the report, 'Annual Review 2016', written in a white, sans-serif font, centered over a background image of people in profile. The background image is partially obscured by dark teal geometric shapes.

Annual Review 2016

# Introduction

Since it was founded in 1903, the WEA has been providing educational opportunities that change lives and transform communities. How we have delivered this education has naturally evolved over the years to reflect the changing needs of our students, but at its core has been a belief that education can help deliver a more equal, democratic and just world.

Our mission is to make sure there are always opportunities to learn - wherever you live, whatever you earn and at every age and stage of your life. We also have a duty, as the largest voluntary sector provider of adult education in the UK, to lead the campaign to protect investment in adult education and ensure it is available for everyone who wants to learn.

This year, the WEA has continued to focus on its three strategic priorities – Educational Excellence, Sustainability and Profile Raising. We continue to aspire to become an “outstanding” education provider to deliver the best possible education to our students. We are making great strides in diversifying our income and building partnerships with private, public and third sector organisations to make us more sustainable. We are building a higher profile through our campaigning work, including setting up a new All Party Parliamentary Group for Adult Education with the other Specialist Designated Institutions. Finally, we are revitalising our systems, such as our website, to provide the best possible experience for our students, tutors and volunteers.

The heart of the WEA continues to be the volunteers, members and tutors who make the charity unique. The significant contribution of volunteers to the work of the WEA has consistently been identified as a strength both internally and in external assessments such as Ofsted. The WEA values the skills, enthusiasm and many hours of time given by volunteers in organising local courses where no other provision exists and many courses would not be same without their input.

Over the next year, we will be further developing volunteer roles, recognising their contributions and highlighting the difference they make.

Our members have also played a central part in helping maintain the WEA's government funding by contributing to our Save Adult Education campaign.

Over 11,000 supporters signed our petition, which was delivered to Downing Street, and hundreds more wrote individual letters to MPs to highlight the importance of adult education. This made a real difference to our discussion with government and I would like to thank everyone who contributed to this vital campaign.

Finally, I would like to thank our President, Colin Barnes, and our Chair of Trustees, John Taylor, who are both standing down in 2016. Both have played a significant role in modernising the WEA and achieving our strategic objectives. Their time and expertise has been invaluable and they have steered us through some choppy waters with funding under threat, changes in the political landscape in both England and Scotland and major internal changes to the WEA. They both leave the WEA in good spirits and have managed to raise our profile in a way which has been positive and constructive.

2016 is set to be one of the most exciting years since I became Chief Executive and General Secretary. Our plans to transform both externally and internally will have a real positive impact for students. I hope you will continue to support us on our journey to create a better world - equal, democratic and just.



**Ruth Spellman**

Chief Executive & General Secretary  
Workers' Educational Association



# Vision, Mission and Values

## Vision

A better world - equal, democratic and just; through adult education the WEA challenges and inspires individuals, communities and society.

## Approach

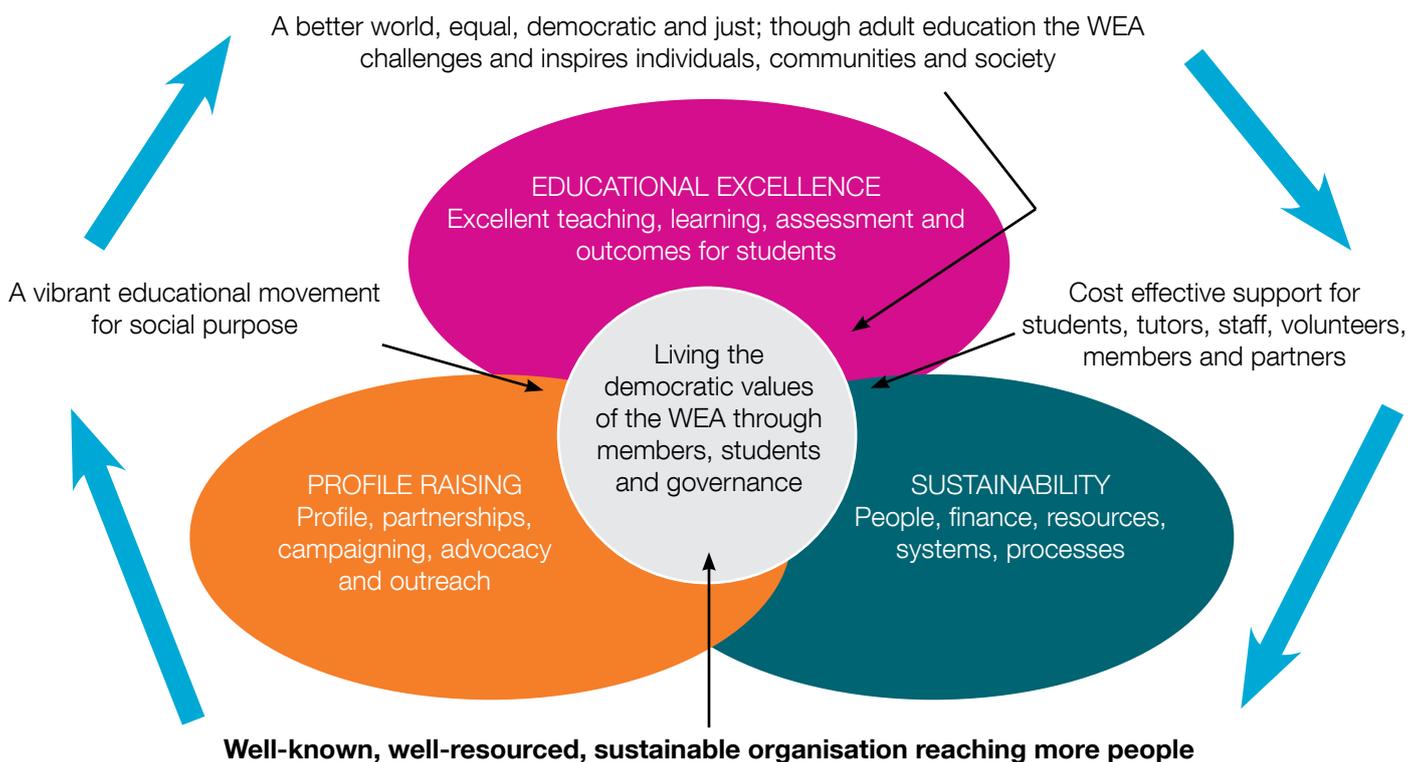
We deliver our mission by developing partnerships to meet individual and collective needs, using active learning and a student centred approach in which teachers and students work as equals. We constantly strive to adapt our services to meet people's needs, making full use of technology.

## Mission

- Raising educational aspirations
- Bringing great teaching and learning to local communities
- Ensuring there is always an opportunity for adults to return to learning
- Developing educational opportunities for the most disadvantaged
- Involving students and supporters as members to build an education movement for social purpose
- Inspiring students, teachers and members to become active citizens

## Values

- Democratic
- Equal
- Inclusive
- Accessible
- Open



# Who we reach

**67,895**

Students in England and Scotland

Over

**9,500**

Courses

Over

**2,300**

Venues

**74%**

Female

**26%**

Male

**51%**

Aged over 60

**26%**

Identify as BAMER (Black, Asian, Minority Ethnic or Refugee)

“

We are all much more confident and independent since doing the course.

”

*WEA Student*

Our Students

WEA England

English Average

Living in disadvantaged postcode

40%

9.5%

In receipt of income related benefit

38%

20%

Previous qualifications Level 2 or below

45%

37.5%

# Employability

WEA employability education develops confidence, understanding and skills to help adults, at all stages of their lives, participate more fully in the world of work.

We believe that decent employment is the best way to combat poverty and inequality while encouraging social mobility. Our role is to help the most disadvantaged adults, particularly those who are unemployed, are in low-paid positions or have precarious employment to develop the skills and knowledge to improve their job prospects.



# Case study: Tesco Grangemouth

When Tesco Grangemouth announced the store closure in 2014, the WEA offered to support staff with employability skills.

After discussion with Tesco employees at risk of redundancy, and conducting a Learning Needs Analysis, it was clear that most of the staff were lacking ICT and literacy skills or the skills to write high quality job applications and CVs. Literacy capabilities and computer skills were essential for learners when liaising with the Job Centre Plus.

17 Tesco staff attended a series of courses that built their ICT skills and developed their literacy to enable them to produce a CV and covering letter, and for some, the opportunity to practice interview skills.

The WEA provided flexible workplace delivery at times that accommodated shifts and childcare responsibilities, which in turn reduced barriers to learning and increased learner participation.

A number of learners said that as a result they now had confidence to progress on to other learning opportunities. At the end of the WEA workplace provision, learners were signposted to a range of provision offered by partners such as literacy programmes, local job clubs and library facilities, where further support could be accessed.

“

I feel a lot more confident and the skills I have learned will hopefully help me get a job

”

# Health & wellbeing



WEA health education combats inequalities and promotes a social and preventative model of health and wellbeing.

Health courses can often enable students to become more socially connected while physical activity programmes can significantly improve the fitness and life chances of adults vulnerable to conditions such as diabetes, stroke and coronary heart disease. As a result, the WEA helps reduce demands on medical services and supports people in taking an active part in society.

# Case study: Get Out, Stay Well

The Get Out, Stay Well project team has developed new educational approaches through a contract with NHS Stoke-on-Trent Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG).

This has led to the development of new partnership arrangements, new courses and the engagement of new students facing multiple disadvantages. An example is a partnership with pulmonary nurses to offer WEA chair based gentle exercise provision for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease.

In terms of new educational approaches, the team has produced and distributed an instructional DVD as a result of student feedback. The DVD demonstrates chair based exercise and so gives a visual aid/support to those who are keen to practice outside of a session, those who are unable to attend in person, and those with low literacy levels. The team has also developed an innovative hospital discharge support service. Through community based gentle exercise and tailored health literacy courses, this helps people who are about to be, or have recently been discharged, to stay out of hospital.

During project delivery the team has had a very successful level of engagement from dietitians, Bariatric Dietetic Assistants, respiratory nurses, physiotherapists and 'hospital at home' services, matrons, ward managers, as well as patients in a range of settings. All stakeholders have recognised the value of education within the discharge pathway and the need to give people in-depth post-discharge support to maintain and improve their health to help reduce GP appointments and avoid re-admission.

To date the project has seen over 400 people engaged in information and advice sessions and a fantastic range of people involved in the project with the youngest person aged 26 and the oldest aged 98.

This innovative project is providing substantial value to the WEA, by developing provision in collaboration with NHS staff and thus raising the profile of the Association among medical professionals and the general public.



# Community Engagement

WEA community engagement education combats social exclusion and promotes active citizenship.

Working with socially and economically disadvantaged adults along, with members of marginalised communities, the WEA runs courses to help students appreciate political and social issues. Our active citizenship programmes encourage greater participation in democratic decision-making while our community volunteering courses empower students to take a stronger role in civil society.





## Case Study: Why Vote?

In the run up to the 2015 General Election, the WEA's "Why Vote?" campaign sought to encourage voter participation across the country with a series of events and courses around democracy.

Cambridge University's Henry Tam gave a series of day schools on "Politics: What is it good for?" across Eastern region; free "Should I Vote?" courses were held in Derby and students in Birmingham learned about voting through mock elections. Hustings events with candidates were also held by branches across the WEA to engage people in the election.

As part of the campaign, the WEA also interviewed Guardian columnist, Owen Jones, about the power of voting and the importance of adult education. Others interviewed included Lord Speaker of The House of Lords, Baroness D'Souza, the Mayor of Bristol, George Ferguson and WEA Ambassador Dr Finn Mackay.

# Culture

WEA cultural education broadens horizons through understanding cultures, identities and environments embodying our commitment to social purpose.

We know that learning about culture can cause life-changing personal development, which teaches us to engage with ideas critically and independently. Through such learning, students develop the skills, understanding and resilience to deal with change and help shape the future.



# Case Study: Field to Fabric



The Field to Fabric project was a hugely successful partnership involving over 165 students.

The project helped students of a demographic generally considered the most vulnerable and least likely to engage in education or training, gain life skills, greater independence, the confidence to challenge the perception of others and the motivation to progress on to higher education activities. Students included people with multiple physical and learning disabilities, community carers, black and minority ethnic women, those with language needs or a lower than a level 2 qualification, ex-offenders and those recovering from abuse.

Together, the students designed a garden showcasing the materials used by Lancashire's textile industry to produce cloth.

Field to Fabric secured £53,000 funding from the Heritage Lottery, and won a bronze award at the RHS Flower Show in Tatton, an exhibition at the Atkinson gallery in Southport with local press interest and an invite to exhibit at any of the RHS Flower Shows in 2016.

The project was viewed by over 80,000 people at the RHS show alone and has been effective in promoting the work of the WEA.

# Profile raising

The WEA has a long history as a campaigning organisation, committed to promoting adult education and giving our students a voice at the highest levels of politics and the media. The Association, Scottish and regional marketing teams, supported by our active volunteer base, have continued to build our profile and our campaigns throughout the year. Highlights include:

- In 2015, the Association secured 489 items of coverage in national, local, trade and broadcast media. This was over double the amount of coverage compared to 2014.
- Working with the eight other Specialist Designated Institutes, the WEA established a new All Party Parliamentary Group for Adult Education.
- The WEA has secured the support of over 70 MPs and Lords as part of our Parliamentary Friends scheme.
- 175,767 users visited the national website with over 900,000 pages viewed.
- The WEA campaigned to protect adult education funding, with a petition of over 11,000 handed into Downing Street and nearly 1,000 supporters writing individual letters to their MPs.
- The WEA's social media activity continued to grow, with 3,486 followers on the national Twitter account, 1,796 likes on Facebook and 1,591 views for our most popular video – an interview with Owen Jones. Regional and branch social media has also been active, with every region now on Twitter and Facebook.
- The WEA held its first parliamentary reception with Scottish Widows, to launch a new report on encouraging women back into work. The event secured national media coverage and over 30 MPs were in attendance.
- In Scotland, the WEA is represented on 13 national committees and strategic partnerships as well as over 30 local committees and groups.
- WEA membership currently stands at 9,940 in England and 981 in Scotland. We continue to explore ways to improve volunteer/member engagement as well as broadening the diversity and other demographic profiles.



# Our impact

The WEA Research Unit investigated the impact of WEA courses in the four areas of WEA's work (employability and skills, health and wellbeing, community engagement, and cultural education). The data was gathered using a quantitative online survey sent out to all autumn term WEA students with email addresses. 1,112 WEA students responded to the survey in spring 2015 (about four months after their WEA courses finished). The sample included students who completed short (15 – 30 hours) courses in various subject areas within community learning. The key findings from the research revealed:

### WEA helps students to develop key skills

<b>77%</b> of all students reported developing at least one skill as a result of the WEA course;	Students under the age of 60 reported greater skill development -	<b>61%</b> of ESOL students developed language skills and
<b>39%</b> of all students said the course developed their communication skills;	<b>52%</b> of them developed communication skills,	<b>32%</b> developed their literacy;
<b>18%</b> developed their literacy;	<b>27%</b> problem solving skills,	<b>18%</b> of BAMER students developed their numeracy;
<b>18%</b> developed their problem solving skills;	<b>26%</b> language skills,	<b>70%</b> of all students knew where to go to improve their English, Maths, ICT or vocational skills as a result of the course.
<b>70%</b> developed their language skills;	<b>24%</b> organisational skills and	
	<b>24%</b> literacy;	

### WEA helps to promote community engagement and active citizenship

<b>77%</b> of all students met people they did not normally mix with on the WEA course - 92% of them enjoyed meeting these people;	<b>29%</b> became more interested in making local community a better place to live;	<b>24%</b> of students became more involved in voluntary work as a result of the WEA course;
<b>74%</b> shared coursework with their friends, family or community;	<b>12%</b> joined WEA as a member or volunteer;	<b>88%</b> recommended WEA course to their family, friends or community;
<b>71%</b> of all students said their community engagement improved because of the WEA course;	<b>41%</b> reported they became more involved citizens;	<b>99%</b> would recommend adult learning as a way to improve local community and 96% to become a more involved citizen.
<b>43%</b> of all students engaged in debates and listened to people who think differently;	<b>54%</b> students claimed that the course gave them skills they could use in voluntary work;	

### WEA has a big impact on health and wellbeing

<b>95%</b> of WEA students reported at least one positive health and wellbeing outcome as a result of their course;	<b>59%</b> felt better about themselves because of the course (76% of students on means-tested benefits);	<b>75%</b> of students with mental health disabilities claimed the course helped them with their mental health;
<b>69%</b> of students reported that the course helped them to keep their body or mind active (82% of students over the age of 60);	<b>32%</b> took up a hobby or other pastime;	<b>22%</b> of students with physical disabilities claimed the same with physical health;
<b>61%</b> made new friends (77% of students on means-tested benefits);	<b>39%</b> felt better equipped to make health decisions (71% of BAMER students);	<b>99%</b> of all students would recommend adult learning as a way to improve health and wellbeing.

## WEA courses help students to develop culturally and grow personally

- 81%** of all students reported doing at least one cultural activity more frequently because of the course (such as reading or visiting cultural sites);
- 36%** value art, music, literature more;
- 7%** became involved in a local cultural group;
- 66%** tried to improve their knowledge independently;
- 35%** of students (and 60% of ESOL students) have greater understanding about other cultures;
- 96%** would recommend adult learning as a way to develop culturally.
- 42%** enrolled on taught courses;
- 31%** appreciate that people from different backgrounds are needed to build culture;

## WEA courses improve employability

- 21%** There was a 21% increase in students gaining employment after the WEA course;
- 67%** of unemployed students said they got new skills they might use in a job;
- 36%** of unemployed students had better knowledge of support services provided for the unemployed people;
- 59%** of employed students said the course gave them skills they could use in a job;
- 59%** of unemployed students were more confident about finding a job in the future;
- 98%** of all students would recommend adult learning as a way to improve one's employability.
- 36%** of employed students felt more confident in progressing in their career in the future;
- 48%** of unemployed students said they got a new job as a result of the course;
- 25%** of employed students felt they were able to do their job better;
- 45%** of unemployed students knew better what to do to get a job;

## WEA courses support parents and families

- 25%** of parents with children under the age of 18 felt more confident about helping their children with reading;
- 62%** of BAMER parents felt more confident about helping with reading, 62% with writing and 47% with Maths;
- 27%** of parents (49% of BAMER parents) with teenaged children felt more confident when dealing with issues that affect teenagers (e.g. smoking).
- 23%** felt more confident about helping with writing;
- 27%** of all parents (46% of BAMER parents) improved relationships with their children as a result of the course;
- 19%** felt more confident about helping with Maths;
- 27%** of parents (59% of BAMER parents) improved their confidence in engaging with children's school activities;
- 71%** of ESOL parents felt more confident about helping with reading and 70% with writing;

# Our approach

**Working very locally:** The WEA has worked continuously in many neighbourhoods for decades. Activities happen very locally – often well below the level of local agencies and authorities.

**Being responsive:** Local networks are the key to widening participation. WEA work around tackling race inequality or health issues faced by migrant communities arose from continuous outreach working. This work is highly responsive and often built on non-accredited learning programmes – well before a suitable qualification is available.

**Professional tutors:** Over 2,000 tutors work with the WEA, working in their communities, understanding adult needs and building a curriculum from the community context. They are a vital ingredient in raising educational aspiration, making the return to learning a success, helping people through transitions in their lives and treating them with respect – as citizens whose views matter.

**An active and student centred approach:** Wherever learning takes place with tutors and students working as equals.

**Networks of partnership:** Where adult educators can bring their expertise to work with other organisations locally or over wider areas.

**Volunteers:** Some 2,500 volunteers currently work with the WEA. We also run an Ambassador scheme for students, tutors and volunteers who can help promote the WEA to wider audiences.

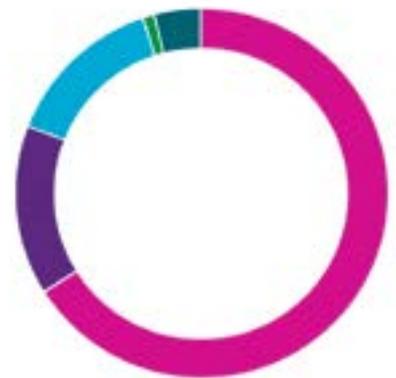
**Pathways to progression:** We will continue to work with partners, providers and services, such as the National Careers Service, Scottish Widows and The Open University, so that people are supported to take their next steps.

**A clear vision:** Promoting the purpose of adult education and the benefits it brings to individuals, community and society.

# Financial information

## WEA Income Sources 2014/15

SFA Grants	£19.4m	63%
Fees & Contracts	£4.5m	15%
Grants Receivable	£5.2m	17%
Other Income	£0.4m	1%
Investment Income	£1.4m	4%



As a Specialist Designated Institution (SDI) in England the WEA is contracted to receive public funding from the Skills Funding Agency (SFA). This platform secures additional income and a carefully structured fee policy ensures that those who can afford to pay do so, generating additional income from fees.

Further income is sourced from a wide variety of grant sources including the BIG Lottery Fund, European Social Fund (ESF), central and local government, health organisations and trust funds and foundations.

WEA Scotland receives core funding from the Scottish Government in the form of a Strategic Funding Partnership Agreement with Education Scotland.

The WEA is distinguished by the extensive roles played by volunteers, from governance through to classroom support. The significant contribution of volunteers has been consistently identified as a strength both internally and in external assessments such as Ofsted visits:

*“a key strength of the organisation has been, and continues to be, the strong historical bond that exists between employees and volunteer members of the organisation.”*

The input of volunteers makes our adult education work unique and it is estimated that volunteering contributes approximately £5m in-kind contribution each year in England and Scotland.

The WEA is extremely grateful to all those individuals and organisations who have generously contributed to the charity’s work. Thank you.

Read our vision, mission and values at: [www.wea.org.uk/vision](http://www.wea.org.uk/vision)



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