**WEA Lothian Local Association**

**The group**

WEA Lothian Local Association. Student representatives from Theatre Studies, Diggers Writers’ Group, Book Talk, Exploring Books, Breaking the Mould Women’s History project and Lothian Women’s Forum.

**Aim of the session**

Capturing the learner voice, from our Student Groups, in fulfilling Workers’ Educational Association (WEA) educational priorities in the context of funding from City of Edinburgh Council and its community learning and development priorities.

**Method**

Committee meeting to discuss the following:

The priorities of City of Edinburgh Council in its Community Learning and Development Plan 2015-2018 are likely to prioritise learning that tackles poverty and inequality whilst supporting the life wide and lifelong learning championed in Scottish Government’s Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition.

How does the South East Scotland education team demonstrate the impact of its Open Programme of fee paying courses?

How does the South East Scotland education team run an Open Programme of fee paying courses whilst maintaining the organisational capacity to tackle poverty and inequality and target those most in need across Edinburgh.

**The Results**

The committee understood the difficulty of reconciling the need to support universal and targeted work but emphasised that most of them collect their own fees and organise their own venues and curriculum. This frees up the South East Scotland education team to pursue more targeted work. The self-organisation of our student groups is a good example of maintaining universal provision through co-production and using the assets of the learners.

**What impact might this activity have on the organisation involved?**

IT helps learners to have an understanding of the organisational, political and financial constraints that the WEA is working under whilst valuing the input of learners in meeting those priorities in a fair, open and transparent way.

The committee provides learners with a forum to articulate the impact their learning has both individually and collectively.

**What impact might this have on local or national planning for adult learning?**

By adopting this method it helps promote co-production of educational services and an asset based approach to providing universal provision for lifelong, life wide learning in financially challenging times. The Lothian Local Association committee captures the learner voice in way that is both supported and required by The Requirements for Community Learning and Development (Scotland) Regulations 2013: Guidance for Local Authorities; and Adult Learning in Scotland: Statement of Ambition.

**How are expectations generated through engagement managed after meeting the group?**

This will be followed up by future Lothian Local Association Committee meetings and visits to the groups either to encourage existing groups to become student groups with representation on the Local Association committee or maintaining their status as student groups.

**What the learners said about their learning:**

Learners stated the importance of their learning and group activities for health and well-being. This was expressed in terms of: keeping their minds active; getting them out of the house and combatting depression; meeting new people; and getting some brief respite from caring responsibilities. They were also devoted to being part of an organisation with a social purpose and are committed to the WEA prioritising work that tackles poverty and inequality whilst enabling their groups to continue as self - organising student groups.