

January to March 2006: Issue 9

Re-inspection report released

The Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) has released a positive final re-inspection report on the WEA.

The report confirms the significant progress made by the Association since failing its 2004 inspection after a financial and management crisis. The WEA demonstrated to the inspectors improved teaching and learning, a recovery of financial stability, and restructuring that will help it be ready for the challenges ahead.

The report states that, "significant changes in both the structure of the WEA and in the quality of its provision have been well managed. Leadership is strong

and has enabled the WEA to re-establish a clear direction and purpose, and to restore its reputation as a provider". The turnaround has been most dramatic in the quality assurance of courses, which was graded 'very weak' in 2004 but is now considered 'satisfactory' - two grades higher.

General Secretary Richard Bolsin responded positively to the report: "I am delighted with what our staff and volunteers have achieved across the country in the last twenty months in terms of curriculum leadership, restructuring, constitutional change and financial recovery." In a reference to the uncertain future of LSC funding for adult and community learning, he added, "I am pleased that the WEA has recovered from its problems, had this recognised by the Inspectorate, and can now

speak with confidence in favour of adult learning that changes lives and communities".

The ALI re-inspection took place during 2005. A team of twenty inspectors visited over 300 classes in 250 venues across every region of England as well as considering leadership and management in each region and the Association overall.

A full copy of the Re-Inspection Report is available on the internet by searching for 'Workers' Educational Association at: http://data.ali.gov.uk/html/report_s.asp

Staff and volunteers with a FirstClass account will find the report in the 're-inspection news' folder on their FirstClass desktop. Although dated 9 December 2005, the final report was in fact only released on 3 February 2006.

REINSPECTION REPORT

Workers' Educational
Association Reinspection

09 December 2005



ADULT LEARNING
INSPECTORATE

Selected quotes from the final inspection report

"teaching in English courses is particularly good and nearly a third of lessons observed were outstanding."

"partnership working remains a key strength of the WEA and is used very effectively to attract and support new learners, particularly in targeted provision."

"the WEA continues to use the arts particularly effectively to enrich individual lives and communities. Inspired and innovative projects are designed with community groups throughout the provision."

New Chair of Trustees appointed

Dick Taylor has been appointed as the first of the four 'co-opted' Trustees in the new (post-incorporation) WEA governance structure - and will be the chair of the Trustees. His appointment was welcomed by the Association Committee on 14 January, and he formally took up the post on 1 March.

Dick is currently Professor and Director of Continuing Education and Lifelong Learning at the University of Cambridge and Chair of the National Institute of Adult Continuing Education (NIACE). He has worked in university adult education for many years and has published books and journal articles on both adult education and higher education.

He brings a wealth of experience gained from a long association with workers' education, including trade union studies teaching and developing community education with educationally and socially disadvantaged adults.

Press and prejudice

By Francis Beckett, whose piece on the WEA was published in the Guardian on 14 February

The myth about journalism, mostly perpetuated by journalists, is that we're newshounds, sniffing out information. In fact, most of us spend much more time trying to get space in the paper for such information as comes our way.

Remember that scene in *The Front Page* where Walter Matthau, the great reporter, is beating out his story on his Remington typewriter, and Jack Lemmon as the editor looks over his shoulder? "You haven't mentioned so-and-so" says Lemmon, and Matthau replies: "This is only the first paragraph. That's coming in the second paragraph." "Who the hell reads the second paragraph?" says Lemmon. Editors assume that if you can't grab the reader in the first paragraph, you're sunk.

So when the WEA wanted the world to know that it had successfully scabbled its way out of the hole it was in, its marketing folk decided not to do the obvious, but boring, thing: to start a press release by saying that it had been given a clean bill of

health by the Adult Learning Inspectorate. Instead, they crammed as much unusual information into the first paragraph as possible. "For most senior executives, an official grading of 'satisfactory' would be small cause for celebration - but for Richard Bolsin, general secretary of the WEA..."

Its refreshing honesty would have caught my eye even if I hadn't known the background - but as it happens, I did, because I'd written of the WEA's troubles in the Guardian.

I'm a freelance journalist, specialising in education. I rang the Education Guardian and spoke to its editor, Will Woodward.

The timing wasn't perfect. It was Monday. The Education Guardian goes to press on Friday, and appears the following Tuesday. That meant they could not run anything I wrote until eight days later. Meanwhile someone else would probably run the story. The most likely suspect was the Times Educational Supplement, which



Photograph: Steve Rushton

Dick Taylor (right) with WEA General Secretary Richard Bolsin at a lunch held on 10 February to celebrate the successful ALI re-inspection result. The lunch was attended by Trustees and staff representatives from each English WEA Region and WEA Scotland.

could run it that Friday.

Newspapers hate running a story that someone else has already run.

I persuaded Will that the story mattered - no easy task, since he had a pile of press releases on his desk, all clamouring for attention. He said I would have to dress it up a little, so I would have something the TES didn't have. Could I go to a WEA class, take a photographer, and talk to Richard Bolsin?

WEA marketing manager Maria Flemmer wanted coverage, and was prepared to go to a lot of trouble for it. Twenty four hours and 20 phone calls later she had a class in Barnet and a time when I could talk to Richard Bolsin, and I had arranged for a photographer.

As it turned out, the TES didn't run anything. It was worth the extra trouble, all the same, because it resulted in a longer and more interesting article. The lesson, I suppose, is that it's worth time and trouble to accommodate friendly journalists.



SPEAKERS' CORNER

WEA: A Shy, Retiring Violet?

For all the time that I've been associated with the W.E.A. as a tutor I've wondered why it is so retiring.

"Publicity" and "Public Awareness" seem to be dirty words. The WEA seems to treat its publicity in the same way that the local Council in "The Hitchhiker's Guide To The Galaxy" treats its planning notices. In the book, the planning notices are on show only in a locked ill-lit cellar.

In my experience so many local Branches rely on dreary notices pinned up in the local library or on the village notice board. Sometimes a notice may be hidden away in the "Neighbourhood News" columns or in a village newsletter. There are County booklets giving details of courses, published at the start of each term (too late) but these are not well distributed. It seems as if each local Branch thinks of its own members as their own treasure and are scared that some may go to a neighbouring village or town for a course of greater interest.

When I have suggested that a

course is publicised using a press release to local newspapers, the normal reply is "But that will cost money". Certainly a formal advertisement will cost money but most local newspapers are prepared to publish material simply to fill the gaps between the adverts. Seldom do I hear of Branches advertising their courses on the local radio stations, whereas organisations such as The Ramblers advertise frequently.

And then there is the web site. It is something that I've tried to use and have found it most unfriendly. I tried for information on my local village branch and couldn't find it at all; I was totally defeated. I found other courses in local villages as being advertised as if being held at the nearest town ten miles away.

I have numerous friends from all walks of life and the vast majority have never heard of the WEA even though there is an active Branch within their own town or village. Many would attend courses if they were aware of the Association's existence.

Surely this is where the regional and national networks should come in. Surely the national organisation should be doing more to draw to the attention of the public just what a wonderful institution the WEA is. The WEA is not a retiring violet; it is a plant as wonderful as the most interesting orchid. Everyone involved with the WEA should be shouting from the rooftops about our excellence.

We, by which I mean everyone involved from the students through to Branch Officers, to Tutors, to County Organisers, to Regional Organisers right to the General Secretary himself should be promoting the Association. We need to expand the number of Branches, we need to encourage more students to attend courses, and we need to attract younger people to come along. But then there is the justified comment "You call yourselves the Workers' Educational Association but you hold your meetings during daytime hours".

by Roger Bawden, a regular WEA Tutor in Eastern Region

Get your point of view across in WEA News

WEA News aims to give voice to the opinions of WEA tutors, members, students and staff on current issues affecting the Association - but this does depend on these opinions reaching us.

If you have a view that you feel needs attention - or if you'd like to agree, disagree or expand on anything you've read in WEA News - please let us know by emailing news@wea.org.uk or by post to the address on page 8. If you're sending a piece intended for publication, please try to restrict it to 500 words or fewer.

Exeter Branch Secretary Richard Crisp will return in the next issue of WEA News - so please contact Richard for input on branch issues whether you are a tutor, student, member or staff - by emailing rcrisp@wea.org.uk or by post c/o WEA News using the address on page 8.



New management information system

Management information is essential to help WEA tutors and managers review and plan provision. Such data in turn provides information for accountability to funders and governance structures. It is also central to the WEA's course administration processes.

To meet this need, the WEA uses an integrated Management Information System (MIS) which takes the form of a course/student database located in each Regional office. Currently the regional databases are not linked but go through a regular process of consolidation to obtain national data. Due to the requirements of various funders (especially the Learning and Skills Council (LSC)) the MIS is in a permanent state of evolution.

In order to continue to meet these demands as well as our own developing requirements it is time to consolidate the MIS into one national database with regional access. This represents

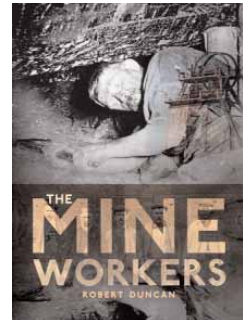
an investment in the WEA's future and should place the Association in a good position to respond efficiently and effectively in a constantly changing sector. Ultimately, good management of provision, supported by first class management information, is about improving our services for learners.

The new MIS will be in place by late autumn but has yet to be named. The current MIS system is called the Course Administration Module (CAM) but MIS Manager Marilyn Lynch is keen to find a new name for the new system. If you have any suggestions for a name for the new MIS please e-mail them to mlynch@wea.org.uk, or post them c/o WEA News to the address on page 8, by 4 May. Remember to include your contact details, as a vote will be held to select the best name - with the winner receiving a £50 book voucher.

WEA staff member in print

Congratulations to Rob Duncan, Education Quality Co-ordinator in WEA Scotland's Return to Learn Team, on the recent publication of his book entitled "The Mineworkers".

The book concentrates on the work, working conditions and struggles of men, women and children who laboured underground and at the pitheads of Scotland's mining industry from the middle ages right up to the extinction of deep coal mining in 2002. The research for the book was based not only on a wide range of published work, but also on the voices of mineworkers themselves, official reports and oral and written collections, which together tell a story of great human interest.



Branch Chair Mike Jefferson, former Tutor Organiser Rex Russell and Yorkshire & Humber Regional Secretary Ann Walker join Branch Secretary Eileen Mumby at the Nettleton Branch 50th Anniversary bash

Nettleton Branch Celebration

The new year brought changes to the Nettleton Branch in Lincolnshire, as they transferred from Yorkshire & Humber to East Midlands Region. The Branch had been part of the former Yorkshire North District since 1955 and requested that they should keep their traditional links until they celebrated their 50th Anniversary at the end of 2005.

They celebrated in style with a meal in the village of Rothwell, organised by the seemingly indefatigable Branch Secretary, Mrs. Eileen Mumby. Remarkably Eileen has been Nettleton's Branch Secretary for all 50 years of the Branch's existence. WEA 'elder statesmen' Rex Russell and Geoff Bryant were eloquent after dinner speakers as they joined other past and present tutors, staff, members and students for a most enjoyable evening.

What has the re-inspection really changed?

Asks **Frank Evans**, a WEA tutor in Southern Region

So the inspection is finally over and everyone is happy; but what happens now? I try to ask this in a constructive spirit, although it is prompted by a rather sacrilegious question about how class members will actually know what has been happening. Will they really see any improvement in the service they get?. Good tutors will still attract larger classes consistently, and poor tutors will still appear and disappear. I certainly have over 2lbs of Tutors' Handbook to guide my own activities, and that must be an indicator of huge effort from someone in the organisation. Have students even been aware of the drama being played out inside the WEA? A small fraction will have been 'inspected'. But basically, I still feel a yawning gap exists between the customers and the management, and ultimately it is the customers that matter.

When will the tutor organisers get closer to the curricula and the teaching, and justify the first part of their title? Tutor organisers should, I feel, have some professional areas of expertise in order to make a real contribution to the quality of the teaching. To actually prise tutor organisers out of the office to discuss education seems unheard of. Is my branch and regional experience unusual? It is constantly being suggested that I have more training - in what? When will WEA News actually get to the classes, and

cease being just an office 'house-mag', so that the student members begin to feel part of an organisation, and not just a member of a small group? If there were no students there would be no office.

When will the WEA get involved in educational technology seriously, and ask that it too has a share of the vast national funding available to all other organisations in this area, from primary schools to universities, and then back this with the appointment of staff to seriously encourage its use? How much modern equipment is actually held by the Regions? I do find a flip chart a bit restricting, and if I do ever get a young person in the class what sort of impression will it make? Why didn't the inspection pick up at least some of these questions, because I feel they are the ones that ultimately will decide if the WEA moves on excitingly into the next millennium.

What do other tutors, tutor-organisers, or students think about these questions?. With age not only comes experience but also, I think, a better focus on what really matters - wherein the value truly lies. I still have the ability to get excited about education as an ideal, and an activity in which individuals can be influential, and now the WEA itself should start talking about it more.

What are the WEA's plans for the future?

Based on General Secretary Richard Bolsin's comments in the forthcoming WEA Annual Review 2004/05

We're now looking ahead with a new optimism and confidence in the preparation of an ambitious medium-term Association Plan built around the needs of our current learners and a generation of learners who will be new to the WEA.

The plan will be developed by the Association Management Team (which consists of the nine English Regional Secretaries, the Scottish Secretary, the General Secretary and the Directors of Education, Resources and Finance). It is still in the early stages of drafting, but the focus

of the work will be on seven key themes, which are:

- The WEA curriculum
- Renewing and revitalising membership
- Diversifying income, which includes reducing overhead costs
- Improving the capability of our staff and trustees
- Improving the external image of the WEA
- Addressing any structural issues that may arise
- Defining and dealing with cultural changes required to make the other themes happen

We are already working on further improving the quality of

teaching and learning and establishing an online WEA 'Tutor Academy' to attract the best adult educators and offer them shared expertise and support.

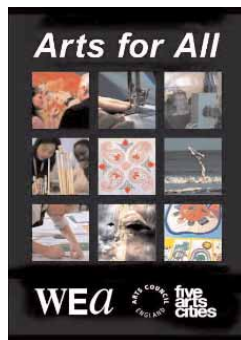
We are committed to reviewing the benefits and expectations of WEA membership, both for members and for the Association.

The WEA also has a responsibility to campaign on behalf of adults for access to affordable education. We aim to lead that argument, using compelling evidence and examples from around the country.



An exhibition of students' work from the Arts for All project is on public show in Newcastle Gateshead from 2-26 March. The venue is centrally located in the Guildhall on the quayside.

The project has been funded by fivearts cities, and has involved over 2000 learner hours of WEA arts courses since Autumn last year. It aims to reach people who may have thought the arts were not for them.



New interpreting service for WEA

When a deaf person enrolls for a WEA course the course organiser will need to know how to respond to the particular language needs there may be to ensure ease of communication between tutor, deaf student and others on the course. The same issues may well need to be considered at the point of assessment too.

Tutor organisers and branches may therefore be interested in a directory of qualified interpreters that the WEA has recently subscribed to. The directory, run by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People (CACDP), includes Language Service Professionals in the deaf field such as BSL to English Interpreters (though not in Scotland), Lipspeakers, Deafblind Manual Interpreters and Speech to Text Reporters (UK-wide).

Anyone who needs to use

the service should contact their regional office - each region has its own password that can be used to access the directory. Please note that further information about the use of interpreters and aimed at educational staff is available in the FirstClass folder "reception area/learner support/learner support STOP PRESS".

In addition to its role as a registration body, each year CACDP assesses 35,000 candidates for a range of qualifications to do with communication methods used by Deaf, deafened, hard of hearing and deafblind people - some of these assessments take place at WEA centres. CACDP is also collaborating with the WEA on a customised communication course for healthcare professionals - we hope to bring you more on this in a future issue.

Expense claims for WEA staff and voluntary members

WEA procedures on expense claims have changed as a result of the approval of new Financial Regulations. The change most likely to affect staff or voluntary members attending meetings or committees is that every expense claimed must now be presented with a receipt.

Previously, claims for expenses below £5 had been approved without a receipt being produced. If for any valid reason a receipt cannot be produced with a claim, a 'Missing Receipts Form' must now be completed and attached to the claim.

The updated Regulations were approved by the NEC on 15 January 2005; more detailed information on expense claim procedures is available from Regional offices or Corporate Services.

Staff and volunteers with a FirstClass account can find the financial regulations document in the folder "Reception Area/Conferences/Financial Regulations 05". Paragraphs 173 to 179 concern staff and volunteer expenses.



The WEA's Association Committee recently upheld a Conference resolution from 2003, calling upon WEA staff, when buying for office use, to buy fair trade products whenever possible. The resolution recognised the benefit of fairly traded goods to poor producers in developing countries.

CHARITY NUMBER TO CHANGE

The WEA will officially incorporate on 31 March. After that date, the Association will be both an incorporated charity and a company limited by guarantee (for charitable purposes). Any WEA material at branch, regional or national level released publicly after this date should display the following information:

Workers' Educational Association

Registered charity number:
1112775.

Company limited by guarantee in England and Wales no:
2806910.

Registered office: Quick House,
65 Clifton Street, London,
EC2A 4JE.

WEA Truro banking lecture

An audience of two hundred enjoyed a public lecture by former Bank of England governor Lord Eddie George on 25 January. Mr George's spoke on his banking experiences and Europe, and his speech was followed by a question and answer session.

The lecture was held at Truro college and chaired by its Principal. The Mayor of Truro began the speeches by explaining that WEA courses had enabled him to go on to university after leaving school.

The event was organised by the WEA Cornwall Federation Branch as their annual lecture. Thanks go to John Hurst for arranging the speaker.

World Book Day

World book day took place on 1 March, and WEA London Region marked the occasion with a Speed Reading event the following day.

About twenty-five learners and staff took part, circulating and talking for 2 minutes to others about books they were reading or had read previously.

Attendees were pleasantly surprised by how much they could find out about someone from a two minute conversation about their choice of books.

The first twelve Quick Reads books, which aim to introduce books to those who don't regularly read, were also launched on 2 March and are widely available for £2.99. The NIACE Quick Reads website contains a printable token which gives £1 discount from this price. The books are written by best-selling authors and are described as compulsively readable, short paperbacks.

WEA Branch Banking Changes Imminent

The WEA will soon have a single banking provider, in an important change that will require the involvement of Branch Officers across the country. It is envisaged that branches will start using their new accounts from 1 August 2006 - however preparations for the change will begin in earnest from 1 April. The decision is a result of incorporation, which was approved by Conference in October. Following a competitive tender process, RBS NatWest has been chosen as the provider.

A project team to manage the changeover has been formed with Jeremy Brocherie, Projects & Programmes Finance Officer at WEA Corporate Services, serving as Project Manager. He said he is expecting a high degree of interest from branches in the changes and stressed the importance of consulting branch treasurers fully before

implementation plans are drawn up.

Jeremy also assured branches that there are a number of options open and staff will be flexible to ensure the needs of branch treasurers are met. A pilot group of four branches in different geographical circumstances will switch to RBS NatWest in March and their experiences will help inform the final plans.

Final arrangements have yet to be made, but all branch accounts will be fee-free and interest bearing with competitive rates of interest. Branch officers dealing with the bank will receive responses to any queries from a dedicated charities' customer support team in London. The changes will not affect Scottish Local Associations.

An information note will be circulated to regional governance, management and staff within the



"Right from the start some experienced branch treasurers came on board in an advisory capacity which has been extremely helpful. We will

be communicating with all branch treasurers to identify their closest RBS NatWest branch for carrying out basic banking services - and asking them to tell us where this will cause difficulties"

Jeremy Brocherie (pictured), who will be project managing the branch banking changes

next two weeks and all branches will receive a pack by the end of March 2006 containing detailed information about the changes. Following this, Jeremy can be contacted directly for any queries on 020 7426 3470 or by email at jbrocherie@wea.org.uk.



Arrivals, departures and exchanges

Eastern Region

Staff at the regional office in Cambridge welcome Administrative Assistant **Liz Baker**, who started work on 13 February.

East Midlands Region

Welcome to **Martin Hyams**, who began work as Programme Organiser at Hinckley Road on 11 January. Martin has a background in community work and experience in supporting community volunteers; developing, delivering and managing liberal arts, ESOL and basic education programmes, and working with a variety of other providers and partnerships.

London Region

Joseph Williams joined on 23 January 2006 as Finance Officer.

Dragana Jakovljevic, Development Worker for the National Community Interpreting project, left on 29 December 2005.

Andrew Brattle moved to the GMB offices in Chessington from 1 Feb 2006, and continues to carry out administrative work for courses run by the partnership between the GMB and the WEA.

North East Region

Michelle Scott, Development Worker for Durham, has just returned from maternity leave as the proud mother of a bouncing baby boy - who misses her greatly when she is at work.

Three new members of staff have recently joined in the North East. They are: **Margaret Manchester**, who has been a WEA tutor and has now taken on the role of Development Worker with the County Durham Learn to Engage project; **Madeline Sutcliffe**, formerly Chairperson of the Teesdale WEA Branch, who has taken up the post of Information, Advice and Guidance worker, also with the Learn to Engage project, and **Sean McGuire**, who has been appointed Development Worker on a basic skills contract with the Five Lamps organisation in Tees Valley.

Stuart Miller retired recently - but is still working on behalf of the WEA in

Sunderland by chairing a local authority community education forum and doing some volunteering work in the Sunderland office.

Southern and London Hub

The Cross Regional Support Centre welcomed three new staff during January 2006. They are **Gemma Smith**, **Phyllis Thompson** and **Amanda Smith**.

Julie Gear took over the role of Equal Project Administrator part-time on 3 Jan 2006 in addition to her role at the Hub.

Southern Region

Rabena Sharif joined the Reading Centre on 27 February as Community Development Worker for Reading.

Emma Leavey took up the position of Equal Project Worker, Brighton & Hove on 19 December 2005.

South West Region

Lesley Linsley retired in February after 14 years, and will be greatly missed by colleagues in the Region.

Jack Taylor

Jack Taylor, former WEA Deputy General Secretary, has died aged 80. Jack was appointed a National Officer in 1971 and worked at the first Temple House, located at Marble Arch. Jack leaves a son and a daughter from his first marriage. His second marriage to Jean Lloyd, who also worked in Temple House, was attended by staff at National Office. His partner Betty nursed him through his final illness.

Jack's funeral took place on Friday 17th March at Eltham Crematorium, and the WEA was represented by former South East District Secretary Vernon Hull. A small donation to the Ellenor Hospice Foundation was made by the WEA in place of flowers.

Corporate Services

Phil Coward, who was previously working for East Midlands Region but spending 30% of his time working on a national contract, has now taken up a full-time position with Corporate Services to co-ordinate initial tutor training and continuing professional development.

Genna Pasch joined the Education Team as Education Strategy Officer on 16 January 2006. Genna is based in the Bristol office.

Vera Tuncel, PA to the Director of Resources, retired at the end of January. In place of a leaving present, Vera asked that donations be made to Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital - nearly £400 was raised.

About WEA News

WEA NEWS is produced for WEA staff, tutors and voluntary members. Many thanks to all who contributed to this edition, including: Marilyn Lynch, Ann Walker, Linda Acquaye, Jeremy Brocherie, Paul Vogel, Esther Morris and Angela Clark.

If you have an item for inclusion or would like to comment on the newsletter please let us know.

It is not always possible to include all items submitted but every effort will be made to do so.

Correspondence should be addressed to:

WEA NEWS,
c/o WEA Corporate Services,
Quick House, 65 Clifton Street,
London, EC2A 4JE.

or emailed to news@wea.org.uk

Views expressed are not necessarily those of the WEA.

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development and training for WEA staff, tutors and volunteers

developing our people

Liz Cumberbatch and Chris Mollan welcome you to the second edition of Developing our People, which will be issued termly.

This newsletter is intended to keep you up to date with what's happening regarding development and training, and to share ideas and experiences across the Association.

If you have any ideas or experiences you would like to share, email them to traininginfo@wea.org.uk or call Chris on 020 7426 3491.

The WEA: promoting equality and diversity

On November 17th 2005 an important event was held at the St Mary's Centre in Sheffield to re-launch the WEA Equality and Diversity Strategy. It was attended by senior managers, Association and Regional Governance from every Region of the WEA and special guests from partner organisations in the Yorkshire and Humberside Region.

The event aimed to raise awareness throughout the WEA on the implementation and promotion of Equality and Diversity; to provide Senior Management and Governance with ideas, information and activities in order that they can provide leadership and know where to seek support and guidance for themselves, staff and volunteers; to highlight the specific Association focus on Disability for 05/06, and to promote our commitment and intent, internally and externally.

Richard Bolsin opened the day by stressing the commitment and the responsibility we have as an organisation to Promoting Equality and Diversity both for our learners in our curriculum, and for our staff and volunteers. He then welcomed keynote speaker Kevin Connell, Strategic Advisor for Post Compulsory Education from the RNIB. Kevin first informed us that he had been involved with the WEA in the past as a member and gave us an overview of how the RNIB have been implementing their Equality and Diversity strategy and plans entitled 'Learning to Include' - RNIB's Contribution to the Equality and Diversity Agenda.

For the rest of the morning the participants went into 4 workshops run by regional and Corporate Services staff:

David Heley and Richard Cupidi from Southern Region ran a workshop on the use of **Forum Theatre techniques**. Participants explored ways of using a technique which enables difficult and challenging behaviour to be tackled in a safe and constructive way. Participants were enthusiastic about these techniques and asked for further workshops to be run at Association level for full days. Consequently there is a day in Sheffield on the 24 March 2006. If you are interested in

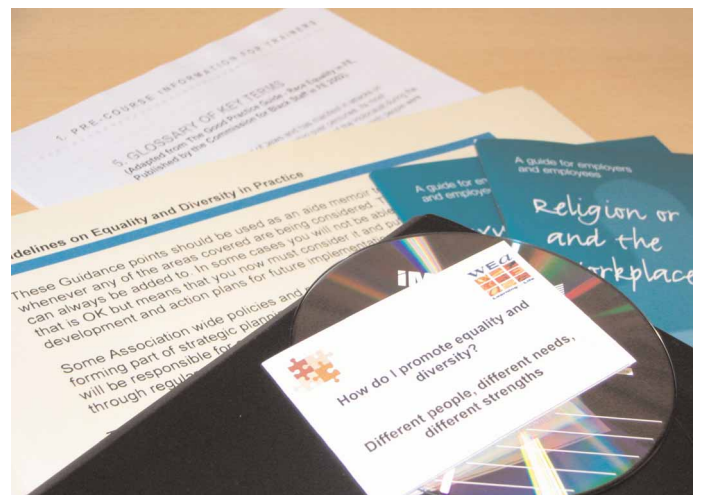
this but cannot attend that event please let Chris Mollan know and we can run a further event in the Summer.

Vanessa Glasgow and Elissa Hamilton from South West Region talked about the **Heritage Education for All project** they had been involved with in partnership with the National Trust in the west of England. The project involved disability awareness training for WEA and national trust staff, and then providing accessibility to National Trust sites and WEA courses for disabled learners.

Ruth Gould ran a seminar using the **Disability Rights Commission Talk DVD** to illustrate how society constructs inequality from difference; look at how everyone brings different abilities to any endeavor, and explore how we can begin to see things differently.

Mel Lenehan and Andria Birch from East Midlands Region discussed an **audit of Equality and Diversity** across the Region and the action plan which they monitor and review through their Equality and Diversity Group. Mel and Andria described the process and setting this up and discussed the issues faced as they progress their work.

[continued on page 3]



Some of the materials in the Equality and Diversity packs launched at the Sheffield event and discussed on page 3

New Member of the Development and Training Team



As reported in the last edition of this newsletter the context for employment as a teacher within the Lifelong Learning sector is changing and requirements are being brought into place from September 2007. All staff employed as tutors, teachers and trainers in the learning and skills sector will have to be trained to a standard that allows

them to achieve Qualified Teacher Learning and Skills (QTLS) and be licensed to practice by the IfL. The baseline for this is the Initial Award for Teaching, formally termed 'passport' and then achievement of full QTLS within five years which it may be possible to achieve through Continuing Professional Development (CPD). CPD will also be required for all teachers in order to maintain their license to practice.

The vision of the WEA is to have a highly motivated and appropriately qualified teaching staff who are committed to providing a high quality learning experience for adults within the mission and values of the WEA. We will set our own standards for the qualification levels of our staff taking into account the needs of the WEA and also the National Occupational Standards for the Lifelong Learning sector and the DFES teaching qualifications framework and are developing a strategy to support and further develop our teaching staff. As well as developing

CPD in order to ensure tutors can maintain their licence as a qualified teacher we will also explore the possibilities to enable staff to further develop their professional qualifications beyond those they already hold.

In order to take this strategy forward Phil Coward (pictured) has been appointed as Co-ordinator for Initial Teacher Training and CPD and will be in post full time from 1 April 2006. He will be a member of the Development and Training Team in the Resources Directorate working closely with the Education Strategy Team and Regions. Phil started working for the Association, as a tutor, in 1999 and for more than 5 years has been an organiser developing ICT and Humanities courses in both community and branch programme areas. He has been a member of the national curriculum groups for ICT and Humanities and a Curriculum Area Leader for the East Midlands Region and has developed the pilot project with City and Guilds to modularise the 7407 teacher training programme as CPD for the WEA.

Phil says, "I look forward to working with everyone in providing routes to ensure all our staff have the opportunities to update and improve their skills and gain any qualifications required to help personal development and make certain we have a suitably qualified workforce to meet our objectives."

We look forward to some exciting developments in Professional Development for our teaching staff as Phil settles into his new role.

Byte-Size Chunks! New User Training On The Way

Ben Audsley, Senior Support Analyst, at Corporate Services Luke Street, has been working on a 'new user' training programme on CD and on a website helpdesk area.

Ben recently gave a short presentation to the Development and Training Group, which is largely made up of Regional representatives, and received a very favourable response.

The training allows you to choose which area you want to look at - for example - First Class or Windows - and pick the bits you want to learn or revise. The training is currently being piloted in Southern Region and we hope will be rolled out to Regions and Corporate Services very soon.

You can either read through the areas you are interested in, print them or even click on a video option and watch, listen and learn!

New members of staff will have an opportunity to get to grips with the likes of First Class as soon as they arrive, and to subsequently review different areas of First Class as and when they need it. As will those of us not so new!

There will also be the facility on a Helpdesk system to log your own IT helpdesk calls, check on their progress and monitor what is happening with your call.

We will let you know when it's fully up and running and what's available, and hope you find it as helpful and user-friendly as we do.

[Sheffield event, continued from page 1]

After lunch, consultant Pam Henry described the process and outcomes of the Impact Assessment she had just finished on the WEA with reference to our policies and practice regarding disabled learners, staff and volunteers. The report - 'In Their Own Words - the impact of policies and practice on disabled people in the WEA' will be available after Easter 2006; it will be disseminated across the Association together with guidance and actions to be taken to make improvements.

Participants then worked in groups on a series of case studies addressing equality and diversity issues, and used the packs which had been produced with guidance and information included. These packs are now in every Regional Office and the contents can also be found in First Class>Desk Top> Development and Training> Training Materials > Managing Diversity or from Chris Mollan on 020 7426 3491 who can send it all on CD Rom.

One important feature of this pack was the new 'Credit Card' - a folded card which can be slipped into your pocket or bag to act as a reminder that it is all our responsibility to promote Equality and Diversity and where we can get help and support to do this. Every WEA staff member and volunteer should have one of these. If you don't have one yet - ask for one - they can be printed off on thin card or thick paper whichever works best for you.

Kevin Connell and Pam Henry were then joined by Andrew Harvey, until recently the education officer of the General Federation of Trade Unions and now representing the Coalition on Aids and HIV and Lenford White, Development Officer from NIACE. They formed a panel who then took questions from the participants which were drawn from their case study discussions and the experiences from the morning workshops.

Making written material accessible

Chris Mollan and Liz Cumberbatch attended a NIACE training day called Dyslexia: Training for Employers run on 28 February 2006. The materials from that training day provided lots of resources and tips to make written and printed materials easier to read for those with dyslexia and those without.

You can find a comprehensive summary on the information and resources acquired on this training day on the First Class Development and Training site, and there will be Dyslexia Awareness training in the near future - but listed below are some things to consider:

- ! Black print on pastel coloured paper like pale blue or pale cream reduces an overly strong contrast.
- ! Some people might find it easier to read a document that is printed in typical black print on white paper through a coloured plastic folder. Keep some available.
- ! Don't have line spacing too close together or too far apart.
- ! A font size of 12 or 14 is usually recommended.
- ! For printed material, try Arial font, as the shapes of the letters are clear and uncluttered.
- ! Use a mixture of upper and lower case letters. These give words a distinctive "shape" which can aid recognition. Block capitals make every word a rectangle shape. To highlight a piece of text, try bold or a box. Italics or underlining can interfere with the

appearance of a word and make it difficult to recognise.

- ! Think about whether you can offer dyslexic people the reading material in advance of a session, so that they can use their preferred strategies or technology to deal with the task.
- ! Does information have to be provided in a written form? What about video?
- ! Think about background colour for IT presentations and OHTs, for example.
- ! If you use ICT as part of a training session, could you show trainees how to change the background colour on their PC?
- ! Some people find that reading in lower light can be less stressful. Can you do anything about that in offices or training rooms?

Dyslexia is included within the Disability Discrimination Act. We should be creating opportunities for new or prospective staff to disclose this at recruitment/ interview or if appointed at induction stages and offer reasonable adjustments. We should also be creating opportunities during performance management and Staff Review for existing staff who may not have discussed this to feel able to do so and make adjustments to their work at any point as necessary.

Forthcoming training events for WEA staff

If you are interested in attending one of the following events, and haven't yet contacted us, we would recommend you do so as soon as you can. You can contact the Development and Training department by either calling Chris Mollan on 020 7426 3491, email her at cmollan@wea.org.uk, or complete and send in an application form to her at Quick House, 65 Clifton Street, London EC2A 4JE.



Dealing with Difficult Situations Using Storytelling & Drama

24 March - Sheffield - still not too late get your forms in or ring Chris Mollan



Selection & Recruitment Including Equal Opportunities

4 April - London



Finance for non-finance staff - Pilot Programme

20/21 June - Birmingham

Liz Cumberbatch, WEA Development and Diversity Manager, interviews WEA General Secretary Richard Bolsin

This is the second edition of 'Developing our People' a newsletter focusing particularly on development and training for staff, volunteers and governance across the Association. What are your views on the importance of development and training in your vision for the WEA for 2010?

All the WEA does is through its people - staff, tutors, members and volunteers. Well over two-thirds of its costs are on staff (including tutors), so people are absolutely vital to all we do. Over the next five years the WEA will need to maintain the rate of improvement we have shown over the last three years in all aspects of our performance. We want to be up with the best in terms of the quality of our teaching and learning, and to improve our financial position at a time of serious budget pressure on the sector. We will also need to accommodate the inevitable changes which new technology will bring both to management and to teaching and learning. We have already made great strides in modernising the WEA, but to succeed over the next 5 years will require further commitment from all of us to manage, live with and enjoy change. The best way of doing that is by investing in our people - staff, tutors, members and volunteers alike - to give them the confidence and skills to adapt and lead the way. After all, that is no less than we offer and expect of our students. Why should we treat our own people any differently?

In November 2005 an event was held in Sheffield to re-launch the WEA Equality and Diversity Strategy which is reported on in this issue. What were your impressions of the event and what do you want to see as the possible outcomes.

The event was a great success, bringing together a wide range of people from within the WEA to an event which celebrated and shared best practice, both by the WEA and perhaps even more importantly, from outside as well. So participants were able to gain insights in workshops to what a disabled learner might experience in a WEA class (there's certainly great scope for improvement there!), and then in other sessions, to hear experts from organisations like the RNIB or NIACE constructively comment and challenge aspects of our own policy, commitment and provision to equality and diversity.

I was struck by how little the largely WEA participants reflected the much greater diversity of our student body, whether across the spectrum of staff, members or volunteers; and by our general lack of awareness institutionally and in the way we plan our provision of equality and diversity, particularly from this event of the needs and incidence of disabled learners. We do therefore need to ensure that in recruiting new staff, volunteers and members we are not just paying lip service to that aspect of our Equality and Diversity Strategy.

Since the event, an Equality and Diversity Advisory Group has been formed, including a Trustee, a Regional Secretary, the Development and Diversity Manager and the member of the Education Strategy Team with lead responsibility for equality and diversity. I chair that group, and it will be making recommendations to Trustees on how the WEA can and must raise awareness and improve its performance in this area, if we are to be "up with the best".