

Lead Scotland case studies

About Lead Scotland

Lead (Linking Education and Disability) aims to widen access to post-16 learning for disabled people across Scotland. We do this by working directly with our learners in various community settings, helping them to develop the skills and self-confidence they need to take part in our learning opportunities as well as moving on to further learning. We offer flexible, person-centred learning programmes, which aim to set clear and achievable goals for our learners.

Linda (Lead learner, Dundee)

Linda is a 42 year old learner from Dundee. She was referred to us by the Dundee Partnership Literacy Outreach programme. She has mild learning difficulties and low self-confidence which has prevented her from taking part in formal education or employment since leaving school.

All Lead learners meet with our Learning Coordinators who discuss their individual needs and help the learner plan their own learning journey. They are then matched with a Lead volunteer who support the learner throughout the programme and help them achieve their learning goals.

When Linda first came to us, she wouldn't speak to our staff as she was very nervous and didn't know how to communicate with people she hadn't met before. *"I was scared and unsure. I didn't speak to Steve (a Lead volunteer). I would call him Mr Man because I didn't know what to say to him"*.

After meeting with Linda informally a few more times, our LC used a 'Catching Confidence' tool (a NIACE tool for capturing changes in learners' confidence schools) to discuss how Linda was feeling and what she would like to learn. They discussed the things she liked and disliked, and what learning style would be best for her. Linda decided that she would like to try the ECDL Equal Skills computing course.

She was then introduced to Steve again, who worked with Linda on a one-to-one basis for the next few months. When asked how she felt about learning with Steve now she told us *"It's great, very enjoyable. He is very kind and patient and we have a good laugh as well as working. He got me through my computer course, but I'm still waiting for the certificate!"*

Linda is currently working with Lead to find a volunteer placement with a local charity (something she admits she would never have had the confidence to do before learning with Lead). In the longer term, she is hoping to find a supported employment opportunity.

Ricky (Lead learner, Fife)

Ricky is a 26 year old learner from Kirkcaldy. He attended college for a brief period after leaving school, but various health problems made it difficult for him to commit to formal education. He has very low self-confidence and a poor experience at college made him worried about reapplying.

When we first met Ricky, he was keen to return to learning to allow him to pursue his ambition of working in IT. *“I was really low and had low self-confidence but I was determined to do something. I was bored with doing nothing, and wanted to do something worthwhile”*.

When asked why he chose to come to Lead rather than going straight back to college, he told us *“I like that I could do things at my own pace. It did things differently and was not so demanding”*.

After meeting with a Lead Learning Coordinator, Ricky decided that he wanted to work with a Lead volunteer to take the ECDL Equal Skills computer course. The volunteer worked with Ricky on a one-to-one basis, provided him with an adapted computer and trained him in how to use the specialist software he needed.

When asked how he felt when he passed the course, he said *“I was brimming. It made me want to get more certificates, I wanted to aim for 3 or 4”*.

Ricky then worked with Lead staff to apply for the next level of the ECDL course at his local college for a couple of days a week. The Lead Learning Coordinator liaised with the college support staff to discuss and put in place the support Ricky needed on his course.

Ricky has recently moved into his first flat, and is well on his way to completing the full ECDL programme.

Laura (Independent travel project, West Lothian)

Laura is attending an Adult Basic Education class at the local Ability Centre and wanted to learn how to travel independently there instead of *“relying on a run from my mum”*. As she could already make one journey independently, Lead staff identified the skills she was already using to build upon. Laura's main concerns were getting on the wrong bus, talking to strangers and panicking.

Anne, a Lead volunteer, supported Laura for 4 months for around 2 hours per week. They compiled a folder of resources which Laura could keep to support the practical aspects of the specific journey, e.g. photographs of the journey (including road junctions, crossings, landmarks), the order of the journey, worksheets about road safety, what to take on the journey, timetables etc. Anne also worked with Laura on recording her observations about her growing confidence and competence, ticking off achievements as they occurred.

Laura is now able to make the journey to the Ability Centre independently. When asked how she copes with panicking, she told us *“everytime I'm going to panic I think about the steps with Anne and I relax a bit”*. This is a major outcome for Laura, who had identified panicking as a major hurdle for self-travel.

Laura is currently arranging a work placement, and is keen to work with Anne again to plan her next journey.