My first contact with LEAD was through a course offered at Station House Media Unit, where I volunteer for their radio strand, shmuFM, as a presenter. If I’m honest I can’t remember the reason for taking the course, but at the first session we were asked to identify what our goals were. My answer? The ability to say no, something I’ve still to master, but I’m getting better at it, and it has helped in my battle for better mental health.

Shortly after finishing that course, during the lockdowns, LEAD supported me in gaining a TEFL qualification remotely over the internet. One of the biggest challenges of lockdown was keeping shmuFM on air, which we managed by recording shows for broadcast at home, sending the subsequent recording to the station.

To achieve this, I set up my computer and tablet on my dining table, which worked until Millie, my cat, decided that this would be her new bed. To save my laptop from an incursion of discarded hair, with the help of a neighbour I converted the former coal bunker in my flat into a radio studio, originally to record my regular radio shows.

As the lockdowns dragged on, I developed the studio, adding my phone so that I could host and interview people remotely via the internet. This came in handy when the group devising the accessible guide to participating in Community Based Adult Learning, were asked to provide personal audio statements as part of the project. These were recorded over the internet, giving me a chance to get to know the other participants outside of our regular group meetings.

I devised a set of standard questions which simplified the process, editing out the questioner’s voice in the audio file to create each individual audio statement. These are included in the audio version of the guide, also recorded in my home studio, and can be heard on the LEAD Scotland website. This technique has since been adopted at shmu for audio and video interviews.

My learning journey with LEAD started in a place dear to my heart, I doubt I would have volunteered there for seventeen years if it wasn’t, and continued in my home over the internet and I recently continued my learning journey. I’m currently in the middle of a course with Northeast Scotland College, expanding my audio production knowledge, and further developing my studio to also include music production. I would like to take this opportunity to thank LEAD Scotland for giving me the confidence to take this further step.