

**2023/2024**

# **Annual Impact Report**

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Please note our quotes and case studies have been anonymised.



# Welcome from our CEO and Chair

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We are delighted to present you with Lead Scotland's Annual review for the period ending 31st March 2024. The past year brought disruption with rising energy costs, high inflation, the cost-of-living crisis, and a significant period of post school education and skills reform. Even with that challenging context, we have progressed well towards meeting our strategic objectives.

We are immensely grateful to all the funders, partners and supporters who have helped us sustain services and extend our learning services. In aggregate, our team delivered local and distance learning services in 31 local authority areas, up from 29 last year and we continued to deliver befriending projects in Fife. Stakeholder satisfaction remains extremely high, e.g., 99% of 117 survey responses would recommend our cyber training to others.

We were delighted to support 23% more disabled people and carers locally, one to one, and in small groups, thanks to six new Multiply funded projects and we have increased our core staff to support the larger staff team and increased contracts. Our brand-new numeracy skills learning service in East Lothian has been thriving, a new local authority area for us.

Our SQA Centre helped to close the education and skills gap with 69 adult learners gaining an SQA qualification, up from 20 last year, and we project more qualifications in 2024-25. We were delighted to receive a “high confidence” assessment across all categories and five counts of “good practice” by our SQA External Verifier in March 2024.

We supported our stakeholders to use their agency to engage in important consultations such as the Independent Community Learning & Development (CLD) review to advocate for accessible and inclusive post school learning opportunities and improved transitions. Some learners still have very few choices due to lack of provision and the right support.

We are incredibly grateful to our dedicated volunteers who added value to our learning and befriending services. Fewer people are volunteering in Scotland year on year and we are adapting our service models to ensure that we can still deliver our services.

We look forward to 2024-25 when Lead Scotland will celebrate its 45th birthday! We have a history of resilience, we are alive to risk and uncertainty, and we are determined to find opportunities to deliver high quality services and influence change as we look ahead with your support.

# Strategic Dashboard

## Objective

Increase the number of disabled people and carers progressing with learning and employability skills across Scotland.

Increase the take up of remote learning opportunities for disabled people, carers, staff, and volunteers which build confidence and skills.

Extend our befriending services beyond Fife.

Build our capacity to reach more people with our helpline and information services.

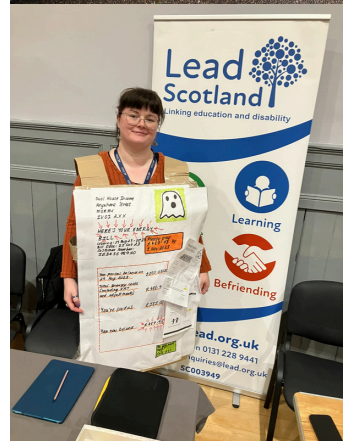
## Performance

We supported 585 learners: 365 learners on learning projects and 220 learners on employability projects. Up 23% since last year.

We supported 374 learners directly from 28 local authority areas. 117 people surveyed said they would cascade to a further 2,871 people. 97% people had increased confidence.

Our adult service is oversubscribed. We have committed increased manager hours to respond to challenges in volunteer recruitment.

We supported 133 helpline callers from 22 local authority areas, 89% of our target. A new needs assessment factsheet co-produced with four disabled students we paid.





# Learning

## Our Impact

585 learners

26% increase  
in numeracy  
and  
employability

245% increase  
in SQA units  
taken

Our Learning Services provide confidence building and attainment through a variety of learning opportunities across Scotland. Working primarily with disabled adults, people with disabilities, long term health conditions, and unpaid carers our services offer a range of learning including digital skills, numeracy and literacy, SQA qualifications, travel training, support to access higher and further education, and more. Our bespoke, person-centered approach means we can tailor learning to the interests and aspirations of each and every learner, breaking down any barriers to learning as we go.

This year we have seen our learning services thrive with our Perth & Kinross Tenants project, which provides devices, wifi and digital learning, go on to win the award in the Widening Engagement Category at the TPAS Awards (National Good Practice Awards 2024 - TPAS ([tpasscotland.org.uk](http://tpasscotland.org.uk))) Below is a quote from one of our Perth Tenants learners.

One learner commented “This has changed my life. I feel as if I’m achieving something. I’ve learned how to do online shopping and be more independent. I search for and learn about things that interest me. It’s opened a new way of life for me. I love learning. I wish I had had the opportunity when I was younger. It’s sad as I always thought I couldn’t achieve anything. I have struggled with some health concerns but I really try and keep going with my learning. If I didn’t then I would have nothing to look forward to.”

We are grateful at Lead to have some fantastic volunteers supporting our adult learning projects, our volunteers bring a wealth of knowledge and experience to their role which enhances the learning experience for our learners. Below is a case study from a Fife learner who has been working towards their goals with a volunteer.

One learner, Greg, who has a learning disability, came to the project to work on reading and writing skills. He previously attended Adult Basic Education classes but didn’t feel adequately supported in the group setting. He wanted to be able to read letters and bus timetables and fill out forms. 3 months ago, Greg was paired with a volunteer, Daisy (name changed), who has experience supporting learners with literacy and previously was a primary school teacher for 30 years. Greg and Daisy have been working together on reading, phonic skills, writing patterns, and spelling. They have been doing this using a variety of worksheets, games, reading materials on topics of interest to Greg, bus timetables, and mock forms. With Daisy’s support, Greg has been progressing very well, both in skill and confidence. He really enjoys his 1:1 sessions and feels pleased with the progress he is making. He is always punctual and engaged in sessions.

Greg: “I’m getting more confident, aye. These worksheets used to be really hard for me but I’m getting much better at it and I’m able to do it more quickly.”

“My pals put my name down to do karaoke at the pub. I usually don’t like that ‘cause of the reading, but I could read I could the words now! That was good.”

Daisy: “I can see a difference in him in his phonic skills and reading but especially his confidence. He always gives himself praise about how he is coming on and we were doing some form filling which he says will help a lot with his tasks at home. He’s benefitted from a Support person to check his PIP application but if this is something he’ll need to do on his own he’ll be better prepared for it. He’s always cheery and upbeat.”

Greg is steadily working towards his objectives and is also building confidence. Greg is already more confident and capable at reading bus timetables and filling out forms and is progressing well in general literacy skills.

Daisy: “We’re making good progress at his level and he is gaining enjoyment and confidence with what we are doing. He’s beginning to link the phonic skills with reading so that shows he is getting there.”



# Employability

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Our Employability Projects provide dedicated support to disabled people, carers, and individuals facing multiple barriers to employment, aged 16-67. We assist them in enhancing their readiness for the workforce, education, volunteering, or skills development through progression along the Employability Pipeline.

The Employability Pipeline, a national framework comprising 5 key stages, assesses individual needs, identifies existing soft and employability skills, and determines areas requiring development. Our projects cover stages from pre-Stage 1 to Stage 2, supporting learners to achieve readiness for employment.

Stage 1: Referral and Engagement focuses on initiating contact, fostering regular participation in activities, establishing positive routines, and promoting social connections.

Stage 2: Barrier Removal involves assessing individual needs and



planning activities to overcome obstacles to employment or training.

Aligned with these stages, our projects support learners in developing core skills and enhancing their qualification profiles. Activities include:

- Building confidence
- Enhancing core skills such as literacy, numeracy, CV writing, and interview preparation
- Developing digital literacy
- Improving independent living skills
- Providing transportation skills training, such as travel training
- Attaining formal qualifications (e.g., SQA or Adult Achievement Awards – SCQF Level 2-6)
- Facilitating supported volunteering and work placements
- Assisting in the transition to paid work, volunteering, college, or university

**“I have found learning with Lead to be good and I have secured a job with your help, thank you so much”**

**“I love tests! This is my favourite bit!”**

**“I enjoyed the work experience at the enterprise hub and all the parts to it. I felt as I was working in a team.”**

**“I have had opportunities and new experiences with Lead what I would never had before if I was still at school.”**

Area currently supported by Employability Projects is Aberdeenshire.



# Multiply

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Our Multiply Projects, part of the UKSPF Levelling Up initiative, are dedicated to supporting adults aged 16 and above to develop numeracy skills through one to one and small group sessions. Our goal is to boost their confidence and help them achieve valuable numeracy skills for life, often leading to recognized accreditation.

Activities within Lead's Multiply Projects have included:

- Budgeting skills
- Time management
- Travel training
- Community interactive events like maths bingo
- Cooking and crafting sessions
- Pursuit of Numeracy SQA awards (SCQF Level 2-6)

## **Learner Quotes:**

**“I feel happy that I was able to complete level 2 qualification, I wouldn't have been able to do this without Ellie coming to me and doing 1-2-1 has helped greatly with that as I have passed all my units, I didn't think I was going to.”**

**“Jade really listened to my problem and these gauges really help me. My heating was on for too long, and I was wasting energy. I am able to keep the temperature between the “just right” section now without worrying.”**

**“I can't thank you enough for all the support, advice, encouragement and confidence you've given me to make the crucial decisions that I've made over the last month. I would also like to say a massive thank you for the materials and work sessions you kindly gave me. They have been so helpful and useful.”**

In 2023-24 areas supported by Multiply projects were Aberdeenshire, Dundee, East Lothian, Fife, Highland and Moray.



# Befriending

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Our befriending services, located in Fife, encompass dedicated programs designed to support both adults and young carers. The primary objective of these services is to address and alleviate the pervasive issues of isolation and loneliness within these communities. To achieve this, we facilitate regular weekly activities and conversations, tailored to meet the unique needs and preferences of our befriendees.

Our team, comprising coordinators and volunteers, works diligently to ensure consistent and meaningful engagement. This commitment is evident in the diverse range of communication methods we employ, including telephone calls, online platforms, and email correspondence. These varied approaches enable us to reach a wider audience and provide flexible, accessible support to those in need.

By fostering connections and creating supportive environments, our befriending services play a crucial role in enhancing the well-being and quality of life for individuals facing social isolation. The dedication and hard work of our team are pivotal in maintaining the effectiveness and continuity of these services, ensuring that every befriender feels valued and supported.

## **Kate's Story**

Kate was referred to Lead Scotland during the pandemic to help support and reduce social isolation. Kate has mental health problems and chronic pain which had impacted her ability and confidence to participate in activities outside of her home. Kate had hoped to receive support to assist her out in the community but due to a deterioration in physical health, agreed to remote support.

Kate had many interests including music, documentaries, forensics and psychology. She was matched with Kerry and discovered they had many shared interests such as art, spirituality, and healing crystals. This common ground made a big difference to Kate - *"I'm in a good place right now, well in the best place I've been in for a while and a good place for me. You need to hang on to that girl, she's amazing, she really is brilliant, even just listening to her voice is soothing, she is so lovely. I'll cry when it comes to an end."*

Volunteer, Kerry also recognised a difference - *"I think it was just good for her to talk to another person, and it was a regular thing, nothing sporadic or infrequent, it was effortless."* Throughout Kate's time on the project, she began to make some changes too - *"Throughout our phone calls, Kate had managed to overcome some of her anxiety about leaving her flat, and in part due to her desire to support a friend, she began walking her friend's dog on occasion."*

Kate fully engaged with the support and benefitted from regular calls that she looked forward to each fortnight, which developed into weekly. When reflecting on her experience with Lead Scotland, Kate said *"She has inspired me. Kerry helped me figure out what I wanted to do, how to illustrate my journey. I will never forget about her; I can't rate Kerry enough."*



# Volunteers

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## Our Impact

83 Volunteers

21% of  
volunteers  
identified as  
disabled

Lead Scotland is dedicated to supporting disabled people and carers to become empowered by providing tailored learning, befriending, and employability services. The volunteers at Lead Scotland play a crucial role in fulfilling the organisation's mission by offering their time, skills, and dedication to support individuals in gaining confidence, skills, and independence.

Volunteers at Lead Scotland come from diverse backgrounds, bringing a wealth of experience and perspectives that enrich the services provided. These volunteers engage in a variety of roles, including tutoring, mentoring, and providing befriending services. Tutors work closely with learners, offering one-on-one support tailored to individual learning goals. This personalized approach ensures that learners can progress at their own pace, overcoming barriers to education and personal development.

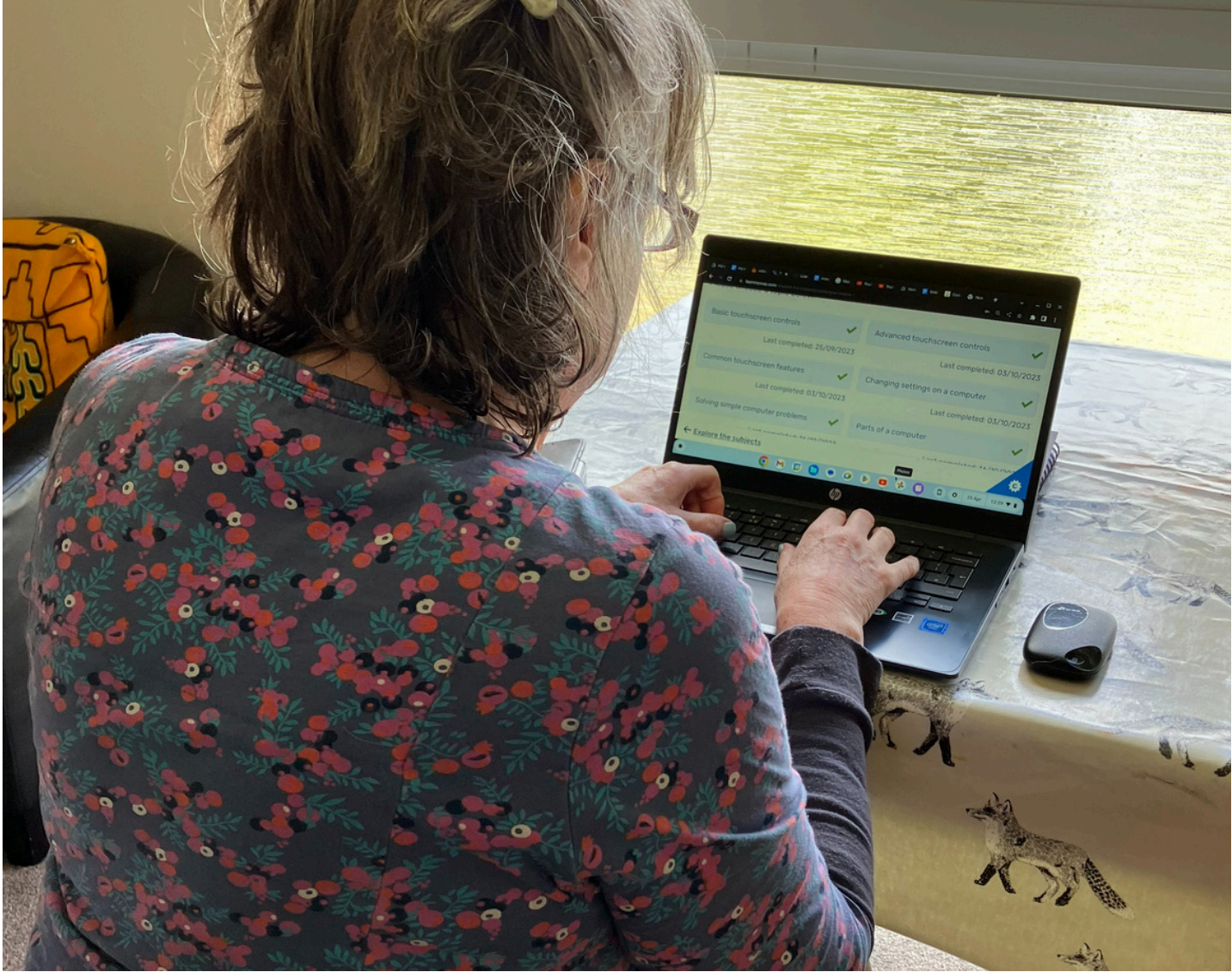
Befrienders, on the other hand, focus on social interaction, combating loneliness and isolation among disabled adults and young carers. By building meaningful connections, befrienders enhance the well-being and social inclusion of those they support.

**Befriending volunteer comment: "It's been very enlightening as to the challenges faced by a befriender and how small things can make a big difference in peoples lives".**

**Learning volunteer: "Being involved and playing a part in the progress made by learners, it's very rewarding".**

Training and support are integral components of the volunteer experience at Lead Scotland. The organisation provides comprehensive training programs to equip volunteers with the knowledge and skills needed for their roles. Ongoing support and supervision ensure that volunteers feel confident and competent in their positions. This investment in volunteer development reflects Lead Scotland's commitment to providing high-quality services and fostering a positive, inclusive volunteer environment.

The impact of volunteers at Lead Scotland is profound as they help to create a more inclusive society where disabled people can thrive. Their contributions enable learners to achieve educational success, gain employment, and build social connections. Volunteers not only change the lives of those they support but also experience personal growth and fulfilment through their involvement. Lead Scotland's volunteer program exemplifies the power of community and the positive difference that dedicated individuals can make in the lives of others.



# Cyber

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## Our Impact

374 learners  
over 28 local  
authorities

118 new  
users for My  
Lead

12 new  
courses on  
My Lead

Our Cyber Project is a national project, funded by the Scottish Government, which aims to create a more cyber secure and cyber resilient Scotland. Our cyber project has two key goals: to empower people by increasing confidence and knowledge in how to stay safe online, and to ensure that disabled people's concerns are included and represented at the highest levels of industry.

Our cyber project works over five key areas:

### **Creating accessible resources**

We know that it can be difficult for disabled people to access expert advice on staying safe online. This can be because there is a link between disability and digital exclusion in a wide sense, and also specifically with resources and information not being available in accessible formats. We have taken expert advice from trusted sources, such as the National Cyber Security Centre, Police Scotland, Take Five to Stop Fraud, the Cyber Scotland Partnership, and Which?,



and converted these into different formats that can be used by disabled people. We currently have 19 guides in Easy Read, which is an accessible format that uses images and simple language to help convey the key messages. We also have resources in BSL for Deaf people. Alongside this, we have commissioned translating key messages into six community languages. These resources have been fantastic at helping to bring accessible cyber security to marginalised people, including people working with refugees, and with people working to end violence against women and girls.

### **Delivering training sessions**

Since 2020, we have delivered over 80 sessions with the aim of boosting knowledge, skills, and confidence surrounding staying safe online.

In our sessions, we take attendees on an accessible, informative dive into the big questions they have. We have covered setting up devices safely, staying cyber-safe in public places, and romance scams, alongside loads more. We use these sessions to help answer attendees' questions about their own interests and circumstances in our Q&A element, meaning everyone can get a personalised take-home message about how to apply each topic to their own lives.

Our sessions are primarily delivered to the public, but we have also been delivering bespoke sessions to organisations that work with or support disabled people. Doing this has meant that we can help disabled people by upskilling the people supporting them.

These sessions have always been incredibly popular, with learners building their skills and confidence. Last year, 97% of learners learnt something new, 97% felt more confident, and 99% would recommend the session to others.

**“Trainer was clear in his communication, very informative, well paced training course.”**

**“Training was at a good pace, trainer used little / no jargon and what little he did use was well explained.”**

### **Creating accessible digital learning resources**

In 2022-23, we worked with JP Morgan Chase's Force For Good team to create an accessible online learning platform – My.Lead. Our learning platform is a different way to reach people looking to boost their skills, confidence and knowledge in cyber, where learners can self-study at their own pace, completing short e-learning modules on a range of cyber topics, such as how to stay safe on social media, how to safely shop online, and how to manage your digital footprint.

My.Lead has accessibility at its core, helping it play a crucial role in giving disabled people a way to learn about cyber security, while removing the barriers they might encounter elsewhere. Currently, we have 19 courses available on My.Lead, with more being added in the future.

### **Delivering formal qualifications**

We run a level 4 joint award in Cyber Security Fundamentals and Internet Safety, which is a fantastic formal qualification for anyone who wants to demonstrate that they have the knowledge and skills to stay safe online. This 13 week taught course has been delivered to 55 people so far, and has proved to be incredibly popular. It has also let learners develop skills and confidence in other areas – one learner finished this qualification and used the confidence she had developed to get her dream job in local government.

### **Strategic engagement and advocacy**

Much of our work on making cyber accessible focuses on helping disabled people overcome the barriers that exist in tech. However, the final part of our cyber project inverts this, focusing instead on getting industry to think about how to create cyber products and processes that don't create barriers in the first place.



# Policy Work

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We have continued our information, policy and influencing work this year, working to reflect the issues we hear about on Scotland's only national disabled students' helpline.

As a member of the research advisory group for the Scottish Government's Student Finance and Wellbeing Survey, we advocated for more inclusive language, asked for the survey to be accessible, influenced the inclusion of questions specific to disabled students and we shared the draft survey with 10 disabled students, asking them to trial the survey and send feedback about its relevance and accessibility.

We responded to a number of policy consultations, including the 'Statement of Intent for the Transitions Strategy'. This consultation was asking people if we agreed with the purpose of the strategy, who it was for and what it should do. In our response we suggested raising the age of who the strategy would cover as it only went up to age 25, however we reflected on helpline calls we receive

about people beyond this age who still required transition support due to the non-linear nature of their transition and learning journey. We also took the opportunity to again raise the fact there are a lack of appropriate options after school, so this needs to be considered for the strategy to fulfil its intentions.

Another consultation we responded to was related to the Human Rights Bill, which was looking at incorporating multiple equality and human rights treaties into law in Scotland for the first time. We provided examples from our helpline as to why we believe it's important to allow dignity to be considered by the courts in interpreting the rights of the bill, reflecting on situations where disabled students were discriminated against and had their dignity taken away from them in trying to access buildings and learning materials. We also reflected that disabled stakeholders have told us they believe the amalgamation of discrimination legislation into the Equality Act had the opposite effect than intended, weakening rather than strengthening the protections they were afforded under the Disability Discrimination Act. We also submitted a response to the CLD review, with our role specifically reflecting the issues helpline callers have in knowing how and where to access CLD and barriers to access. We attended a follow up focus group with Scottish Government and provided some examples of issues callers were having with finding the right opportunities and suggested ideas around what might make access easier.

This year we also worked on a project to produce a new toolkit and guide on behalf of the The Curve/Third Sector Lab to support training providers with creating and delivering accessible online webinars and presentations. We continued our work with Universities Scotland this year on their upcoming Principles of Fair Access – a set of principles to encourage fairer access to universities for disabled people. We also met with UCAS to raise concerns about the process of providing contextual information and we were invited to contribute to a review they were working on around the Personal Statement. We have also agreed for our DSA and needs assessment factsheets to be embedded into the UCAS disability webpages to ensure there is Scottish specific information.

We revisited our work with Contact to update the Talking about Tomorrow website, focussing on the education pages and various funds and programmes that had changed. This will ensure families have the most up to date information when planning the transitions of a disabled young person moving on from school.



# Helpline

## Our Impact

133 callers  
from 22  
local  
authorities

85% of  
those who  
returned our  
tracking  
survey  
reported  
positive  
impacts.

We run a specialist freephone helpline and information service, ensuring disabled people and their families/carers understand their rights, funding, and support entitlements in post school education. We are the only organisation in Scotland providing advice for disabled students to understand the complex benefit system and how it interacts with student funding. This impartial service enables students to feel confident in making a timely and effective complaint or discrimination claim without fear of repercussions from their institution.

We have spent some time updating a number of our existing guides to streamline them and make them more accessible, before having them translated into alternative formats. This year we updated Supporting you at college, the DSA factsheet and Post school learning choices in Scotland.

**“I work for a university and was looking for advice on accessibility information that we should share with prospective learners on our short courses. The information I received was very helpful”.**

**"The feedback and help from LEAD Scotland was excellent. We managed to surmount the road blocks in Scottish education concerning disabled learners. The road blocks are systemic."**



# Looking to the future

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Find out more about our strategic vision on the About Us section of our website. We performed well this year and next year with your support we are aiming higher.

## Our look to the future:

- At the start of 2024-25 almost all repeat contracts were secured as part of our incremental growth plan.
- We seek expansion in current local areas to offer a full range of learning opportunities.
- Build upon the success of our adult befriending project.
- Explore funding streams which would allow us to set up learning projects with adult befriending elements in areas where we have learning services.
- Seek opportunities to extend the helpline, advice and information.
- Celebrate our 45th Birthday: hold a parliamentary reception to celebrate our birthday and use the opportunity to create a call to action related to our work.
- Diversify our funding sources: we offer our services free at point of delivery because the disabled people and carers we seek to serve are more likely to experience poverty. Free services are made possible by third party funding.
- Generate more unrestricted income: Most of our funding is restricted, Scottish Government and local authority income. We will seek other sources of restricted and unrestricted income to diversify our funding.
- Build new partnerships: Review our strategic work and forums inline with our strategic ambition to add value to new partnerships and collaborations.



# Thank You to our Supporters

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We gratefully received income from:

- Scottish Government
- Aberdeenshire Council
- Highlife Highland
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Fife Council
- Perth Council
- Highland Council
- Moray Council
- East Lothian Council
- Dundee Council
- Tesco
- Alexander Moncur Trust
- Hugh and Mary Miller Bequest
- Individual donations





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