



General Statement

Learning for the Fourth Age (L4A) is a not for profit company, which is limited by guarantee. Our year has been an exciting and challenging one with improvements, consolidation, and a renewed focus on our work in Leicester and Leicestershire. Despite many successes, we made the tough decision to end our work in Sheffield and Leeds towards the end of the year.

We are proud to still be offering personalised learning opportunities to many of the first homes that we originally started delivering our service to, as well as to have spread into new territory, particularly in more rural parts of Leicestershire. Another successful experiment has been to start work in some sheltered housing units with optional care provision. We were also really proud to have celebrated our fourth birthday this year (May 7th) and to have consolidated our work over the year.

Our four directors - Toni Fazaeli, Rob Hunter, Melissa March and Nick Meyer – were joined by Alan Tuckett as a fifth, bringing additional financial leadership and adult learning expertise.

We are strongly established in Leicester, with a track record of providing high quality, personalised learning opportunities to older people in care settings. We also have room to grow and we plan to be able to achieve this goal in the coming year, offering more benefits to more older people across the city and the county.

The economic environment and significant reductions in public sector budgets make the climate for care homes very challenging, and in turn, for Learning for the Fourth Age as a not – for – profit social enterprise. We are pleased that care homes see the value and how cost effective it is to purchase Learning for the Fourth Age services to make a real and lasting difference to the quality of life for older people in care settings.

Key Achievements in 2011/12

Our key achievements include:

- Working across three separate locations: Leicestershire, Sheffield and Leeds
- Working for the benefit of over 350 older people in care settings
- Partnering with over 35 different care settings
- Recruiting and training over 200 interested volunteers
- Evaluation findings continue to show over 90% satisfaction rates from residents, care home managers and volunteers
- Receiving funding and support from a range of local and national organisations to complement the payments from care homes, thereby giving extra value
- Delivery of a range of weekly group sessions, including arts and crafts, opera and poetry, and using a range of new technologies, such as iPads.



Accommodation

L4A's registered office remains in Leicester and this supports our operations throughout the city and county. We have also been very kindly granted space at the University of Leicester, Sheffield Hallam University and the University of Sheffield for training sessions, CRBs and other events for our volunteers.

Policies and Procedures

L4A produced new training on Dementia Awareness, Age Awareness and Social Care Staff training in the past year. These training sessions are regularly offered to our volunteer base and to managers for members of their staff.

Range of Subjects and Interests L4A offered to Older People

The range of subjects and interests given this year, included:

- History
- Life stories
- French and France
- Computing
- Piano
- Poetry
- Art
- Crafts
- Sport
- and lots, lots more!



Staff

Jason Briggs celebrated his first full year working as a Development Coordinator in Sheffield. He has worked in an exciting and creative way to deliver high quality, personalised learning services to older people in care settings across the city. In addition to this, he is always thinking of new and exciting ways to improve the core offering of L4A both to volunteers and to older people. Recently, Jason has been involved in developing an impressive set of dementia training for our volunteers and has been looking to diversify our income streams. This has proved extremely difficult.

Denis Tanfa has continued to provide high quality IT support and tuition to our learners throughout the year. There have been some great successes, from the Skype day to the film making, which would not have been possible without his time, thought and energy. He is constantly thinking up ways that we can improve the quality of life for older people and is thoroughly committed to the work that we are doing at L4A.

Samantha Bryan joined the team in Sheffield as a Development Facilitator, adding an invaluable supportive and creative dimension to our team up there and enabling L4A to have greater flexibility in terms of providing high quality learning to older people in care settings. As a qualified Occupational Therapist, Samantha also brought a new skill set and a different academic perspective on our work too, particularly with a view to bringing groups of practising volunteers together as a mutual support.

Melissa March has led the team across Leeds and Sheffield and has managed the learning services directly in Leicester and Leicestershire.

Professional Training

Our Executive Director, Melissa March, is now a fully qualified teacher after successfully completing a two year PGCE in Post-Compulsory Education, which started in September 2010.

Our two Development staff in Sheffield undertook accredited management training and a series of conferences, workshops and developmental activities. On top of this, they continued to learn within L4A, for example about relevant research, about teaching techniques and about fundraising skills.

There is ongoing training for L4A's team of learning mentors and volunteers, including specially designed resources to support them.



Resources

Building on our successful partnership with Apple, L4A now shares 12 iMacs with our partner care settings, 13 iPads and three Apple laptops.

Other technologies that we are using, include three other brands of laptop, SimpliClTy computer systems, Bamboo writing and drawing tools and the new Xoom tablets by Motorola.

We also have three digital cameras and 6 flip cameras, which residents are using to make their own films, tell their life stories and to learn about different ways of communicating with other people.

During 2011/12 L4A has improved a dementia training pack and a training manual for care staff. These are readily available and used with our volunteers. They are designed to bolster and support a range of people to better carry out their roles as providers of informal adult learning to older people in care settings.

In terms of written resources, L4A has built up a library of suitable resources for volunteers all around teaching, lifelong learning, dementia, the benefits of learning, care home learning, reminiscence, mentoring and so on.

As part of our commitment to supporting care staff, we have been disseminating information amongst the activities providers, social care facilitators and managers of care settings to continue the learning of their service users after L4A have finished the one-to-one sessions each week. These include a weekly guide for different activities and a dementia activities resource guide.

Volunteering Bureaux

L4A has continued our strong links with Contact and the Student Development Zone and the University of Leicester. We thank them for their ongoing support. As well as advertising our opportunities to a wider audience, they have also booked out space for L4A to induct, train and CRB check volunteers.

Reach, Vinspired, Do-it.org, DMU Square Mile, TimeBank, University of Sheffield, Sheffield Hallam University, University of Leeds, Leeds Metropolitan University, Regent College, De Montfort University, Gumtree and Vivastreet all advertise our volunteering positions as well. We thank them for supporting our work in this way.



Financial Report

Over the course of the year, L4A achieved a balanced financial position as we tried to reach a point of sustainability. This position was achieved in spite of the very challenging economic climate, which saw, for example, the collapse of Southern Cross as well as significant local authority cuts to adult social care.

Underlying financial challenges have been confronted during the course of the year: this includes developing better processes for identifying and chasing debts as well as changing our pricing structure and systems.

Whilst we were proud of the real achievements made by L4A in Sheffield and Leeds, sadly it became clear that despite much hard work, our position in both of these cities was not financially viable, given the external climate. As a result, the L4A Board agreed to plan to concentrate work in Leicester and Leicestershire.

Partners

Our partnerships are vitally important to L4A and we thank all those organisations who share our passion for older people learning and having mental stimulus in care settings. Our partners include:

- Abbeyfield – piloting service delivery in their sheltered housing units
- Ability Net – worked to get the most suitable hardware and software for our learners AgeUK – delivered a project for their Reach for IT programme
- Apple – our learners continue to benefit from use of their products
- Alzheimer's Society, Sheffield – passed on contacts in the care sector and also relatives' enquiries about our services in various care homes. They also allowed our volunteers access to their library and training events.
- Community Learning Champions Project – our staff and volunteers were part of this project
- The Cooke E-Learning Foundation – worked together to widen digital participation in Leicestershire



- The Courtyard Theatre, Arts & Older People project – we are doing similar work and sharing our findings
- CSV at BBC Radio Leicester – supporting L4A to recruit volunteers through their network, including airways
- First Taste – doing similar work and sharing our findings
- Leeds Metropolitan Students Union Volunteer Service – recruiting volunteers to L4A
- Leeds University Union – recruiting volunteers to L4A
- Leicestershire County Council Dignity in Care project – L4A delivered training for this project
- Leicester Integrated Living Service – delivered training to L4A
- Market Harborough District Council – delivered learning sessions for people in the community together
- MHA (Methodist Homes for the Aged) – working with a range of their care settings with support from HQ
- NIACE – supporting and sharing our work as adult educators in care settings
- Opportunity Sheffield (run by Sheffield Council) – gave L4A support in areas of development through free professional advice and training
- Pearl Care – working with a range of their care settings and with support from HQ
- Simply Unite – L4A provided volunteers that would help older people learn to use their computer systems
- Sheffield City Council – Recognised Provider List
- Sheffield City Council – Sheffield Help Yourself
- Sheffield Hallam University Careers Service – recruiting volunteers to L4A
- Storying Sheffield – A project run by the University of Sheffield that aimed to document lives and stories in the Sheffield community, including those living and volunteering in care settings
- UK Online Centres – Community Capacity Builders project
- The University of Leicester – CONTACT Student Volunteers
- The University of Leicester – Institute for Lifelong Learning
- The University of Sheffield – Sheffield Volunteering
- The University of Sheffield – Sheffield University Careers Service
- Vinspired – recruiting volunteers to L4A
- Voluntary Action LeicesterShire – recruiting volunteers to L4A
- Voluntary Action Sheffield – recruiting volunteers to L4A
- Voluntary Action Leeds – recruiting volunteers to L4A



Future Prospects

The directors at L4A are positive about the future of the organisation. Having celebrated our fourth birthday in May this year, we are looking forward to a period of consolidation, possible expansion into new areas, despite a very challenging funding environment for the public and social care sector.

Tightened financial times are inevitably having an impact on all areas of society, including the social enterprise sector, even when the need for services is just as great, if not greater. There is also less funding available from trusts and grant funders and the competition is fierce. However, L4A still aims to run self sustaining core services and to concentrate on growing our income streams in order to develop over the next five years. This continued focus of L4A on being a self funding organisation means that we should not be reliant on government money. Our income has decreased somewhat and regrettably this has led to L4A moving away from Sheffield and Leeds in order to concentrate and consolidate our work in very positive ways in Leicester and Leicestershire. Grants that we have received have focused on research and development, materials, resources and technologies, and these have complemented the fees at a modest level for L4A to add extra dimensions to learning opportunities for older people, for example, new technology and well trained and supported volunteers.

Case Studies – Older Learners

L4A has lots of powerful case studies of individual learners' achievements throughout the year. Here are just three.

Jack

Jack is a very charismatic resident who used to be a Doctor. He has an abundance of anecdotes that captivate all the volunteers that meet him. Jack has a strong educational background and his room is filled with items indicative of an interest in classical subjects, such as history, poetry and art.

The Learning Mentors who see Jack have taken their time to show him the new technologies that are available and on many occasions have shown Jack how to use the iPad. which he finds fascinating. When he was younger he travelled to Tibet and has said that he believes all the answers to life's questions are in a library there! Consequently, Jack has been learning about Tibetan history with his Learning Mentor through the internet and DVDs. Since Jack is currently very ill and bed bound, he enjoys the ease of people coming to him for this precious one-to-one time.

Time and time again Jack thanks the volunteers from his heart for giving him the opportunity to share his life with them. He said, "I feel privileged that you have decided to come and see me, I really do! It makes such a change."



Win

Win is a 97 year old woman bound to her room on the top floor by an oxygen machine. She decided that she would like to learn French! A language she had never had the opportunity to learn but had always wanted to. Her Learning Mentor got her an interactive BBC DVD that teaches the language. The surprising thing, however, is that her Learning Mentor does not know French so they are learning from scratch together, which they find most rewarding and fun. They each practise a small amount during the week and meet again to do the next sessions with the DVD. Her Learning Mentor always comments on how good Win is at French.

This is one of the benefits of Learning for the Fourth Age. Win, because she is on an oxygen machine, finds it a great effort to take part in activities that are held in other rooms or downstairs. However, her Learning Mentor comes directly to see her and they learn together in the comfort of her own room. It gives Win something to do in her spare time during the week and a focus that she would not otherwise have if she did not have weekly sessions where they learn together.

Dorothy

Dorothy has a booming personality and lives on an EMI floor. She has a very close friend called Edna and they always walk around together. Dorothy could feel very depressed and lonely at times. As we introduced the Learning Mentor, she became increasingly fond of them and said many times how much she looked forward to our visits as they were the only thing she had to look forward to each week. Dorothy revealed one day that she is kept up at night thinking about words, more specifically; words that sound the same but don't mean the same! In the middle of the night she will get up and write lists of these words with anything and on anything she can find. We asked for this list and after convincing her we didn't feel she was 'crazy' she excitedly ran to her room to show us the list. Over the weeks we added to this list with her, which made her feel incredibly accepted. The current list is called Dorothy's Words:

Bread, Bred
Flower, Flour
Meet, Meat
Tail, Tale
Stake, Steak
Know, no
Might, might
Sea, See
Sun, Son
Thyme, Time
Boar, Bore
Pen, Pen
Whether, Weather
Scene, Seen
Pain, Pane



Leak, Leek
Wait, Weight
Pour, Poor, Pore
Soar, Sore
Lie, Lye
Will, will
Eye, I, aye
Mole, Mole
Queue, Cue
Staple, Staple

The Learning Mentors had no idea what to do with this list until Dorothy declared, 'with this list, I want to make a children's book!' She wanted the story to be about a boy who travels through various scenarios and comes across these words and the boy learns how to differentiate these words. Dorothy has commented on how nice it has been to learn how to make a story and how helpful it has been for her mental health to 'get these thoughts out'!

Case Studies – volunteers

L4A helped countless volunteers to gain the skills and experience needed to further their career or join courses of study at all levels, here are some examples:

Elizabeth McCaw volunteered at Leahurst care home and thanks to a reference from L4A now works in the Psychology Department at Royal Hallamshire Hospital, Sheffield.

Jennifer Richards volunteered at Moorend Place and thanks to her work with dementia residents she now works as a Support Officer with Mind.

Lauren Powell volunteered at Alexander Court and is now a Research Assistant for research into Living Well for the Elderly with Sheffield University.

David Shaw helped L4A as a volunteer Development Facilitator and successfully applied for funding on our behalf. He also volunteered at Fulwood Lodge care home. He is now a Project Support Officer at Manchester City Council.

Kezia Ford worked closely with many residents at Kingfield Holt and was offered a job at the care home; however, she decided to take a job as a Speech and Language Therapist in London.

Khadijeh Alghasi (or Shala) volunteered via a specialist scheme known as the New Beginnings Project. This aimed to provide refugees and asylum seekers with experience needed to gain a job in the UK and allow them to acclimatise to our culture. Shala was previously an experienced nurse in Iran.



Thanks to volunteering with L4A for well over a year Shala was able to gain a place on a nursing course at Sheffield Hallam University so she can gain qualifications to work as a nurse in this country.

For each of these positions L4A completed a reference that was essential to the success of their applications.

The directors also want to say a special thanks to all the members of our advisory group who have given support and ideas to help L4A develop.

Want to know more about L4A or get involved?

See www.l4a.org.uk or email us at: info@l4a.org.uk

There are plenty of opportunities to volunteer, to let us know of care homes that might benefit from L4A's services, to make a donation, or to let us know about care home residents or their relatives who may be interested in L4A's services. Currently, L4A is focusing on the Leicester and Leicestershire areas but still aims ultimately to become a national service.

Personnel

Directors

Toni Fazaeli – Chair and Secretary

Rob Hunter

Melissa March

Nick Meyer

Alan Tuckett

Staff

Jason Briggs - Development Coordinator (Sheffield)

Samantha Bryan – Development Facilitator (Sheffield)

Melissa March – Executive Director

Denis Tanfa – IT Lead

Accounts

Michelle Reynolds, Collaborative Business Support

CRB checks

All volunteers and staff working with vulnerable adults have enhanced CRB checks with POVAs with thanks to Roy and Helen Harvey at Helping Hands, who carry out the processing of these for L4A.

Learning for the Fourth Age provides personalised learning services to older people who live in social care settings.

