



## **NEON Working Group**

### **Access and outreach for disabled learners**

**Wednesday 15 February 2017 12 - 2.30pm**

**Room GM325 (3rd floor) Geoffrey Manton Building  
Manchester Metropolitan University**

#### **Attendees**

Peter Riley	Manchester Metropolitan University (Chair)
Victoria Ball	Wigan & Leigh College
Helen Cooper	University of Chester
Laura Cragg	University of Manchester
Alison Jones	University of Sheffield
Steve Lee	Manchester Metropolitan University
Kevin McMullan	Student Finance England
Michael Mohebbi	University of Liverpool
Dawn Parrington	Salford University
Grace Simpson	HEFCE
Kathryn Smith	University of Sheffield
Elli Vowles	Lancaster University
Martin Webster	NEON
Matthew Williams	Manchester Metropolitan University
Edit Zsibrita	GM Higher Administrator

Apologies: Fiona Valentine, Stephanie Lee, Rachel Hodgson, Nahida Shabbir

#### **1. Welcome and Introductions**

Peter Riley welcomed everybody to the group and asked attendees to introduce themselves. After the introduction, he provided a brief history of the group for those attending for the first time.

#### **2. Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising**

No comments have been added to the last meeting.

### 3. Update on changes to DSA / Student Finance

Kevin McMullan from Student Finance provided an update.

**Action:** The update will be emailed to the members to read after the meeting.

The estimated launch for new applications is late February - early March (note: this subsequently went live on 22 February)

NHS DAS applications: 2000 application forms have been received and the mention of these forms led to a question about the percentage of approved applications.

**Action:** Kevin will report back with the figures.

Kevin referred to a recent presentation at the Stand Alone conference which outlined Service Enhancements to Estranged Students that, under certain circumstances can (a) continuing students can self-declare evidence and (b) telephone / case-worker approach to assessing estranged student applicants.

**Action:** Slides from the presentation to be circulated with the minutes

*DSA 2 letter:* Some concerns about data protection arose because the letters are sent out by email which raises privacy issues. Decision on this matter is likely to be made at the DSA Group meeting next month.

**Action:** Kevin will circulate the minutes after the DSA Group meeting.

Graham Tranter, DSA Stakeholder Consultant, has asked for feedback from members as to any feedback they had on Band 1 and 2 NMH support. Members were asked to feed back in the meeting or afterwards.

**Action:** Attendees asked to feed back their opinions (query to be circulated with minutes)

### 4. National Updates

Peter Riley provided an update about Access Agreements and TEF.

The effects of changes in funding for DSA have been mentioned and the main concern with regard to impacts relates to the issue of fear of decline in DSA student achievement. Grace Simpson from HEFCE also has spoke about the changes in funding, however the details of the new funding model are still unclear, it is likely to be officially announced in March.

**Action:** Grace Simpson will be able to provide the details in this area at a future meeting.

### 5. Discussion on NEON National Summit

Martin Webster explained that there is a limited amount of information on targeted outreach for disabled learners. It was felt it would be useful to have an event to examine successful interventions and how learners were being targeted for such events. A summit on Widening Access for Disabled Students will be held in July that aims to address these questions and speakers are sought to give examples of good practice. Martin has emphasised the need for outreach and disability support to join up in order to tackle these challenges.

## **NEON Awards**

Martin Webster has drawn attention to the annual NEON Awards which will be held in May 2017 and the deadline to make a nomination is 7th April 2017.

<http://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/neon-events/neon-awards>

## **NEON Summer Symposium**

A two day event that will be held at the Leeds Beckett University on June 8th and 9th and they seek research papers and best practice examples to be presented that focus on understanding the nature of widening access practice.

<http://www.educationopportunities.co.uk/neon-events/neon-summer-symposium/>

### **6. Updates from recent conferences**

No updates from recent conferences have been given.

Laura Cragg has made mention of a National Teacher Conference that will take place soon and where she will have a session on disabled learners.

### **7. Update on recent activities from members**

Michael Mohebbly from Liverpool University gave an update on their work. He has emphasised that the core element of the support they provide is to tailor it to the specific needs and they focus on making feedback based changes.

Laura Cragg gave an update on the two Higher Education Awareness Days where deaf learners could acquire information needed regarding their prospective university experiences.

### **8. Any other business**

Attention was drawn to some useful case studies and resources developed by the HEPP partnership in Sheffield as part of their 'HEre for you' project. Videos can be found at:

<http://www.hepphub.org.uk/case-studies/here-for-you-alans-story?topic=here-for-you>

**Date of next meeting:** 14 June 2017 (venue TBC)