

**NEON Disabled Learner Working Group Meeting  
6th November 2018  
Manchester Metropolitan University**

**1. Welcome and Introductions**

Peter Riley- Man Met (Chair)  
Catherine Shillito - LJMU  
Alex - University of Manchester  
Jason Leeming - BPP  
Helen Smith- Higher York  
Lizzie McDowell- SLC  
Kevin McMullan - SLC  
Amy Hedges- SLC  
Steve Lee- Man Met  
Hannah Barton- University of Salford  
Michelle Jones- University of Bolton  
Fiona Garner -Lancaster University  
Alison Jones - University of Sheffield  
Jamie Bytheway- GM Higher

Apologies: Laura Cragg, Vicki Ball

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

Previous minutes not recorded

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

Update to be provided via email following meeting including graphs discussed in meeting. Key points are as follows:

- Key processing time for applications currently.
- More than half of all applications came in after deadline.
- 19-20 information not yet confirmed other than EU and tuition fees no changes, therefore resources not yet created/published.
- 18-19 massive increase in DSA applications at start of cycle due to introduction of online application form. Currently 35% increase but expect this to level off to similar levels to previous years.
- More DSA2s sent this academic year than previous years.
- DSA 1 eligibility letter inviting to needs assessment, DSA2 entitlement letter confirming support granted.
- 80% of applications received online.
- Bulk of applications to date missing medical evidence. SFE exploring project where evidence can be uploaded rather than sent in via post.
- Institutions get information on DSA2 if consent to share granted. No information shared before this.
- Change to supplier of non-medical help process been revised based on feedback, staff training delivered.

- Working on GDPR compliance.
- Removal of cheque and introduction of electronic invoices.
- Policy change regarding visual stress.
- DfE commissioned DSA evaluation project results due before Christmas. Focus on impact and value from perspective of students.
- Question- national trend for increase in mentoring via non-medical help? Not to date but further information will be available in next few weeks in relation to this.
- Kevin reported that 19/20 was likely to be the last year quick start guides would be produced as hard copies – but would be available electronically.

**Action: ALL to feedback to Kevin via email with any concerns over this decision**

**Action: Kevin to circulate presentation and link to data release on website.**

**Action: Amy to circulate DSA evaluation once published.**

#### **4. Office for Students/Access and Participation Plans**

PR gave an overview of what APPs are and that they include information about how institutions support disabled students. The APP consultation has just closed and results are expected to be published in December time for the next round of APPs (guidance expected march/April)

Highlighted introduction of transparency duty, which requires access (including applications, offers and accepts), success and retention data to be published across different target groups – the consultation proposed extending this to including students with disabilities. Suggest may raise profile of challenges/differential outcomes related to disabled learners and increase expectation to address these.

#### **5. Discussion – What challenges do members see in the year ahead in supporting disabled students?**

Consensus that growth in mental health is a key issue for all. The point was raised that most early referrals were not for mental health issues – so it is more difficult to put support in place before students start.

In Sheffield SMHS (Student Access to Mental Health Services) does a pre-assessment and refers as appropriate.

University of Sheffield considering outreach events focussed on mental health.

GM Higher- lots of feedback from schools that this is a barrier so trying some interventions but no concrete feedback from schools about what's wanted or any evidence of impact to date.

Higher York- CPD programme for teachers. 3 sessions focusing on self image, perfectionism and bullying. Tools provided for staff to use.

In Greater Manchester partnership is being developed between NHS and HEIs to support current students.

OfS Challenge Competition focussing in mental health support is out currently and which closes this week.

Issue of preparing students for life after university- reluctance to deliver presentations, sit exams, do group work.

Disclosures re. Mental health tend to come at key pressure points.

Challenges around staff having appropriate knowledge to support and signpost students, particularly academic staff.

Some institutions have specific pastoral staff, such as wellbeing officers to reduce caseload of counselling and wellbeing services and offer workshops and courses focussed.

Suggestion was made that we need to manage expectation of students pre-entry around support available

## **6. Updates from recent conferences and National issues (all)**

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

GM Higher activity brochure circulated including parents event and pre-16 events discussed. Discussion around targeting specific disability vs general disability. More information available here: [http://gmhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GMH120-Target-Learners-A5-Leaflet\\_AMENDED.pdf](http://gmhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/09/GMH120-Target-Learners-A5-Leaflet_AMENDED.pdf)

LJMU working with local NHS trust on work with autistic students, programme consists on work placements and careers fair.

University of Sheffield- currently planning looking at SpLD event and ASC event, ran in the past which has been successful. Parents events less successful.

Lancaster University- also have delivered general disability event that was successful. Also deliver pre-entry events for ASC learners which is always oversubscribed. Looking at transition from HE to employment events at faculty level.

Higher York- differences in CFE baseline survey around disabled learner aspirations therefore looking at creating a learner focused resource. Also introducing information to all events about disability. Disability rights uk resource also highlighted: <https://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/sites/default/files/pdf/IntoHE2018.pdf>

SFE online application changed to ask about certain conditions rather than general disability question.

Manchester Met host pre-entry events for students who have applied and declared a disability.

University of Bolton and University of Huddersfield host early enrolment events.

Discussion around provision of transition support for disabled students leaving university. Little in place across those attending but was highlighted as a need. Suggestion some of this support is remote and sits under university careers services.

## **8. Any other business**

Not discussed

## **9. Items for next meeting**

Suggestions included:

- Input from OfS
- Feedback on transition from HE to employment support
- International students

## **10. Date and location of next meeting**

26th February

**ACTION: LJMU to confirm if they can host.**