



## **NEON Working Group**

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

**Wednesday 7 February 2018 1–3 pm**

**Seminar Room 215, Jessop Building  
Department of Music, The University of Sheffield**

#### **Attendees**

Laura Cragg	University of Manchester (Chair)
Alison Jones	University of Sheffield
Kevin McMullan	Student Loans Company
Charlotte Beaumont-Oates	Oxford Brooks University
Matt Williams	Manchester Metropolitan University
Justine Cooper	Sheffield Hallam University
Gail McKay	University of Sheffield
Bryan Colman	University of Sheffield
Emma Smith	University of Sheffield

Apologies: Peter Riley, Steve Lee , Catherine Shillito, Dawn Parrington, Helen Cooper, Nahida Shabbir, Kathryn Smith,

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

Laura Cragg welcomed everybody and apologies were accepted.

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

Accepted as a true record of the meeting.

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

Kevin McMullan provided key updates to the changes to the Student Finance and DSA application process. Please see separate attached document.

Kevin said that there had been 80,500 applications for DSA in 16/17, and so far there has been 70,000 for 17/18, so on track for the same numbers. The online application process for DSA went live prior to the last NEON working group meeting. So far, feedback for the online system has been good. The system works by allowing the student to apply for DSA, and then submit evidence afterwards.

In terms of applications that are pending, at this time last year there were 1,600, however currently there are 16,000. KM explained that the reason for this may be because students previously waited until all evidence was gathered and ready to submit before applying, however in the new online system, students can apply and leave their application pending to gather evidence and submit later.

**Action:** KM to send screenshot of the new application process to group

KM confirmed that there are no specific changes to DSA policy for 18/19. There could be minimal changes to bursaries for NHS courses for example, but not specific to DSA.

KM discussed events coming up;

- Facebook Live event around DSA – w/c 12<sup>th</sup> February – run by managers of the DSA office
- Student Support seminar – 21<sup>st</sup>-23<sup>rd</sup> March, Liverpool

**Action:** KM to send details of events to group

KM informed the group that DSA Stakeholder consultant Graham Tranter was retiring; if members of the group would like Graham to answer any questions or to take part in any events, he is retiring in March.

BC asked what the student sees on the system if their application is pending.

**Action:** KM to check and send round what the student sees, and the next steps once the application is at that stage

BC asked if the application stays live, and if there is a time limit, e.g. before the student starts University?

**Action:** KM will check if students still have 9 months from the start of their course

**Action:** KM to check and send round what the process will look like for 18/19, and what happens when a student partially applies.

BC discussed there being lots of activity through Clearing and Adjustment, and asked whether this had an impact on DSA. KM confirmed that there was not much impact on DSA from what he had heard. KM noted that applications can be made, and then changes to course, university etc., are made online.

KM confirmed that SFE applications should open on 12<sup>th</sup> February.

#### **4. An overview of Student Access to Mental Health Support' or SAMHS (University of Sheffield)**

SAMHS is the first point of contact for students to explore a broad range of psychological support needs in a single triage appointment. It is a new service and has been running since October 2017. Students are asked to register online to access the service, after registering, they receive an email (within 2 working days) asking them to call and book a triage appointment with a trained clinician. Whilst waiting, students complete a short form on an iPad about how they are feeling. The questionnaire results go to the clinician prior to the triage appointment, where the student can talk about their situation. The appointment may be sufficient in itself but if they need further support we help identify what is available from our range of mental health services. SAMHS also includes a Clinical Liaison Role – a point of contact for all university staff with questions or concerns about students with mental health issues. For further info please see this link: <https://www.sheffield.ac.uk/mental-wellbeing/about-samhs>

BC gave an introduction to SAMHS which was newly developed last year, running from September 2017. Previously, this provision was managed by Disability and Mental Health services. This is one of two full health services within HE, Bristol being the other.

After a recent newspaper article, criticising Counselling services at University for failing students, there has been large scrutiny on University counselling teams.

Disclosure rates have been going up and there has been increased pressure on the service.

Stakeholders across all services met to discuss how to address the increased demand, and service provided. It was identified that there was a huge demand for triage services.

The idea was to have a triage service staffed by qualified staff that students could be referred to, with a signposting strategy embedded within university support. The planning and recruitment for the project took place between Easter and September 2017.

SAMHS figures so far reveal that in semester 1 the year before SAMHS started, there were 914 enquiries to counselling services. This year, since SAMHS has been in place, in semester 1 there has been 1418. This has been attributed that the message of 'send them to SAMHS' is now embedded amongst staff, to signpost students to SAMHS, and that the online platform makes it easier for this to happen.

The online platform allows students to access the service 24 hours a day, and within a couple of working days, receive a response to ask the student to call the service or drop in for the triage service. The aim of the service is to see students within 15 working days, which has been achieved so far.

There are currently 4 main staff including Emma, who work all day on screening assessments; mental health, substance abuse etc. Students are asked to do a full mental health assessment, and then do a Triage Outcome Plan (TOP), which gives students something to go away with and is e-mailed to students. For high risk students, they are referred to social services.

Anyone can phone in, or on behalf of somebody else. The majority of calls come from academics worried about students.

The Big White Wall is an online platform with therapeutic guided courses and a social media platform. Students from Sheffield can access this as they have a license at the University.

BC discussed how SAMHS is not aimed at applicants, only for current students, but students can register to access SAMHS on their first day.

LC asked how SAMHS was promoted. BC stated that the Union was key, and the Welfare Officer. Other communications include the all staff e-mail and a network of Diversity Liaison Officers.

**Action:** BC to send link to service, and update on numbers

## 5. National Updates

- NEON Summit: Enabling access to higher education for disabled learners: How can HE do more?

The NEON Summit will take place 15<sup>th</sup> March. LC discussed line up for NEON Summit including LC and MW presenting on Greater Manchester Higher and Summer Schools.

## 6. Updates from recent conferences (all)

LC discussed the recent HELOA conference and feedback about an app called Brain in Hand.

**Action:** LC to send round more information

AJ said that Brain in Hand had been in contact, and also discussed Mind Mapping software.

KM discussed some funding through the Northern Powerhouse Partnerships for disadvantaged students.

**Action:** KM to share

## 7. Update on recent activities from members

LC discussed GMH HE Information Evening at UoM on 15<sup>th</sup> February for prospective students who would access support at University, as well as Parents/Carers.

There was lots of discussion around the difficulties of recruiting for events.

AJ discussed the Y9/10 event for ASD learners at University of Sheffield. It will be a Campus Visit, but due to possible UCU strikes, date TBC.

**Action:** AJ to update on event

MW discussed MMU's ASD Residential Summer School and the plans for this year. MW also discussed the GMH Pre-16 ASD and Wellbeing Events at MMU and how demand has been high. There was a discussion around how these were targeted, and MW discussed how it was advertised to teachers as being for pupils that teachers felt would benefit from hearing about the support available, rather than diagnosis. MW agreed to share the targeting e-mails.

**Action:** MW to send round recruitment e-mails, and timetables for these events.

MW discussed MMU's accessible Fresher's Fair; for students who benefit from having early access and how this has been successful and will be carrying on.

**Action:** MW to send out information for the Accessible Fresher's Fair

CB had attended a Mental Health Matters Conference, and the Southern NEON group

**Action:** CB to share notes, and minutes.

CB also mentioned that her colleague Trudy runs an ASD Summer School, and Mentoring for Y12/13.

## **8. Any other business**

None

## **9. Date of next meeting**

LC confirmed next meeting will be in June in Manchester, date TBC.