



## **NEON Working Group**

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

**Monday 9 October 2017 12 - 2.30pm**

**Room 1.003, Roscoe Building,  
Brunswick Street, The University of Manchester**

#### **Attendees**

Peter Riley	Manchester Metropolitan University (Chair)
Laura Cragg	University of Manchester
Nahida Shabbir	Manchester Metropolitan University
Kathryn Smith	University of Sheffield
Helen Cooper	University of Chester
Alison Jones	University of Sheffield
Dawn Parrington	University of Salford

Apologies: Kevin McMullan, Steve Lee, Charlotte Beaumont, Catherine Shillito

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

Peter Riley 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 was unfortunately unable to attend and sent his apologies. He had agreed to provide an update to circulate after the meeting and invited members to email him with any queries and would

**Action:** Notes to be circulated with the agenda

#### **4. Update on NEON National Summit**

The summit (due to take place on 1 November in Manchester) has now been postponed. Details of the new date and location would be provided when agreed.

#### **5. Discussion – DSA changes and their impact in the last 12 months**

There was a general discussion on how institutions had found the changes in the last year. Generally there was a feeling that the sector was coping well with the changes, but a key change was that now each institution deals with disabled students differently, making it important that outreach staff don't try to explain the support provided, but instead say support is available and to speak to individual institutions on what form this support takes.

It was commented that DSA applications are still being approved, in some cases to a greater extent than was initially expected. There had been a greater expectation that more DSA requests would be pushed back onto the institutions to pick up, however this may happen more over time.

DP reported that HEFCE had produced 2 reports on supporting disabled learners, one on SPLD <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2015/spld/> and Mental Health <http://www.hefce.ac.uk/pubs/rereports/year/2015/mh/>, and University of Salford had been visited as part of this research.

AJ said that in Sheffield there was a feeling that Inclusive Learning wasn't necessarily an adequate replacement for bands 1 and 2 funding. Lecture capture had been introduced, with an 'opt out' for staff. The University also pay the £200 lap top contribution for all students. Salford also pay for all students but are looking to promote more to get a better take up. Man Met pay the £200 for those on lower incomes.

The feeling was expressed that quotes for non-medical help had become a 'race to the bottom' with companies undercutting each other by pennies to get contracts. There was a discussion on providing rooms for external suppliers and how the different institutions were responding to the challenge.

There was also a discussion on how institutions were supporting international students and those on higher level apprenticeships, and the diversification of students was requiring additional flexibility of provision.

#### **6. National Updates**

PR mentioned the forthcoming OFFA/HEFCE monitoring return, the guidance for which is due early November for submission in January. This reports on WP expenditure, including the support of disabled students.

#### **7. Updates from recent conferences**

None

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

LC informed the group that she had run a September transition day for students with ASD who were due to start at the University of Manchester. She was looking at doing something (possibly residential) in July next year. PR said Manchester Met had done a residential event this July which had been well received.

Greater Manchester Higher also had a range of collaborative activities planned for next year including an event for Prospective Students and their Parent/Carers (Y10-12), a Pre-16 Visit for Learners on the Autistic Spectrum, Pre-16 and Post-16 Wellbeing Days. The University of Salford was hosting a Post-16 Visit for Deaf Learners, whilst University of Bolton would run a 'Breaking Barriers' event for staff. In addition there were generic talks delivered in schools which included several key messages including: get in contact as soon as possible to discuss support (Feb/March before entry was felt to be a good time for prospective students to make contact); tick the box on the UCAS form; early engagement is always welcome – and encourage learners to look for staff at Open Days/ UCAS Fairs.

HC talked about what she had been involved in at Chester, including an event for pupils, parents and teachers (although attendance had been low despite promotion of the event).

KS mentioned that at the University of Sheffield, a series of videos had been produced including disability champions, and there were sessions around mental health. A pre-16 event was being planned for students on the Autistic spectrum. The University also provide support through SAMHS (Student Access to Mental Health Support), the first point of contact for students to explore a broad range of mental health support needs in a single triage appointment. The service is staffed by experienced mental health professionals who will assess student mental health needs and direct them to the most appropriate form of support.

There was also a discussion on the benefits of delivering presentations at Open Days versus offering on-to-one appointments.

## **9. Any other business**

None

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

It was agreed the next meeting would be in Sheffield, and someone would be invited to provide more information on SAMHS. The meeting would be in February/March – dates to be circulated.