

**NEON Disabled Learner Working Group Meeting
26th February 2019
Liverpool John Moores University**

1. Welcome and introductions

Jamie Bytheway- GM Higher (chair)
Hannah Barton- University of Salford
Dawn Parrington- University of Salford
Julia Lumb- University of Salford
Amy Hedges- SFE
Alison Jones- University of Sheffield
Katie Foy- University of Manchester Students' Union
Sarah Riding- Lancaster University
Victoria Ball- Wigan and Leigh College
Jason Leeming- BPP
Steve Lee- Manchester Metropolitan University
Catherine Shillito- LJMU

Apologies: Peter Riley (MMU), Laura Cragg (UoM), Kevin Buchanan (SFE), Helen Smith (Higher York)

2. Minutes from the last meeting and matters arising

Minutes accepted as accurate record.

REPEAT ACTION- all to feedback to Kevin re. Decision to stop printing quick start guides after 19-20 if this will be an issue.

3. Update on changes to DSA/Student finance

AH talked through update.

ACTION- AH to circulate slides following meeting

Key points are as follows:

- 92,000 DSA applications to date this year
- Increase on DSA2 by 14% compared to this time last year
- SpLD biggest group
- Increase in mental health and multiple categories compared to previous years
- Link to DfE evaluation of DSA:
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/evaluation-of-disabled-students-allowances-dsas>
- Key points from research include students lack awareness of DSA prior to starting process and that the majority found it improved their university experience

- Now take student calls re. DSA, volume was surprising initially but has calmed down due to time of year. 61,000 in less than 12 months.
- Decrease in stakeholder calls.
- Planning stakeholder consultation about service provided to them.
- Applications for 19-20 opened on 25th February. 550 applications to date.
- DSA Allowances for UG have increased by 3.2% and PG to £20,000
- Key policy change- changes to SpLD assessment, criteria remains the same only change is that educational psychologist report does not need to be done after 16.
- Changes of terminology used to describe terms and cancelled sessions
- Plans are for evidence submitted to stay online so students can access this after submitted.
- Evaluation and student feedback found that students are still unsure about medical evidence required and have concerns about costs of this. SFE planning on working with GMC to improve process and also provide clearer guidance about what needs to be provided.
- Supply of assistive technology and training- will be running a tender process for this.

Discussion about changes to assessment regarding use of adult and child tests, as this has caused challenges at institutional level and more widely.

ACTION- AH to feedback to SFE/DfE about adult and child testing concerns and to ask for clear guidance to be communicated about this from DfE.

Query about cancelled sessions- SFE will not pay for cancelled sessions. Some HE providers putting this cost back onto individual departments.

4. Discussion- transition from HE to employment support

- SL introduced topic as something that MMU are looking at in order to improve service to students.
- LJMU working with local NHS trusts on empower programme for autistic students. Sits with careers team. See: <https://www.nhsemployers.org/blog/2018/10/supporting-people-on-the-autism-spectrum--the-empower-programme>
- Challenges identified around ensuring adequate support is in place as if placement is paid then this comes through access to work but if unpaid falls to university/DSA but there are not clear guidelines about this.
- Other HEIs also looking at making improvements to this and finding the same barriers.
- A further challenge is that different departments within the same university have different processes around placements.
- Suggestion around looking at targeted events for students with certain conditions to find out more about placements/work experiences opportunities which addresses their specific concerns.
- Wigan council funded a post to look at working with local employers to source placements for disabled students, however this has now come to an end.

- University of Salford did a piece of work with faculty staff around challenging bias, standardising information that goes out about disability and are working with careers service more closely to look at signposting.
- Some examples were shared of students who had been successful in undertaking placements and study abroad.
- Differential practice across universities about careers services having specific advisors focussed on supporting disabled students
- Idea about collaborative carers fair for disabled students across HEIs

ACTION- CS to query how support is provided to these students with colleagues

ACTION- those involved in looking at this in their institution to discuss via email following meeting to share learner

ACTION- AH to follow up on guidelines from SFE about supporting work placements and study abroad

ACTION- SL to provide an update at next meeting

ACTION- JB to investigate NHS careers hubs work in GM and see if can provide other contacts nationally

5. Discussion- international students

- EU and International students funded by institutions as cannot access DSA, institutional funding very limited for this.
- University of Salford worked with international team on this.
- Numbers tend to be low.
- May be impacted by home country

6. Updates on recent activities/conferences

GM Higher- events for pre-16 learners re, ASC and wellbeing, post-16 wellbeing rebranded as 'transition' and parent/carer event this evening. Have found numbers have decreased compared to previous years. Have trialled local network but poorly attended.

Higher York and HEPP NCOPs have produced a guide for disabled learners, will be circulated with minutes.

ACTION: JB to circulate NCOP guide with minutes:

<https://gmhigher.glasscubes.com/share/s/9nm9hpimpvgbudqc4bovb4o0f>

LJMU- SEN sixth form event on campus, delivered through previous contacts. Day really well received however teacher feedback that most students wouldn't progress to HE.

Wigan and Leigh College- Been predominantly focussing on access arrangements. Working with careers and transition team at college and local authority. Issue arose that lots of

schools blanket assess everyone which has resulted in an increasing number of pupils needing access arrangements. Challenges with managing parental expectations about support available.

Lancaster University- all-inclusive project on 27th March and in April. Working with teaching schools alliance in order to develop further links.

University of Manchester- most work with current students.

University of Sheffield- tried to deliver a number of pre-entry activities but low take-up.

University of Salford- 1-2-1s at open days. Challenges around room requirements for exams relooking at this. Project looking at how to improve transition and service with staff member funded to deliver this. Increase in complaints. Delivered 1-2-1 visit.

BPP- trying to increase culture of inclusion across the college and focus on mental health.

SFE- 3 day annual seminar in Windsor and sessions available on DSA

7. AOB

None discussed

8. Items for next meeting

- Engagement with outreach activities (including specialist schools)- what events have we ran, what went well and how have we approached recruitment.
- Revisit transition from HE to employment support and how this work has progressed.

9. Date and location of next meeting

Suggest in June to be hosted at Salford.