

## **NEON Disabled learners working group**

**06/11/2020- 10am-12pm**

**Online- ZOOM**

**Peter Riley (MMU)**- Thank you to all for attending. As there are so many we won't do introductions, but if you could introduce yourself when speaking.

**Kevin McMullen (SLC)** - Work for the Student Loans Company and use these meeting to keep colleagues up to date.

Impact of COVID- normally September is the time we would travel the country attending face-to-face sessions.

DSA specific engagements 2019- 12 sessions, 2020- 15, online delivery has allowed us to attend events we would previously had been unable to attend.

80,614 applications increase from same point last year, regional split as expected by population. Early peak around April/May time, steady flow of applications since.

Issued more 5.5% DSA2 letters to 20/21 students. 1065 more students have come through the end-to-end journey compared to this time last year.

Colleagues have been doing more application analysis around when students apply, and break down curves via region and institution. If you want a more in depth look, please speak to my colleagues or myself.

Regional breakdown trends of applications- for more information please contact my colleagues or myself.

Changes From 21/22- maximum DSA allowance available to new and continuing eligible students will be a maximum single allowance for each year of their course.

- One single regulated overall capped maximum allowance for all eligible UG and PG students
- Maximum amount of DSA available for 21/22 in £25,000
- If student is assessed as entitled to specialist equipment, there will continue to be £200 contribution payable if they purchase a computer.
- Introducing the exception to the maximum allowance for travel costs for both UG and PG DSA recipients.

Thanks to volunteers who put their name forward for a review of the DSA As-Is Process. The team running the scheme will be contacting you shortly. Idea is to involve as many volunteers from as many stakeholders as possible.

If you have any questions feel free to drop me an email.

**Jamie Bytheway (GM Higher)** - When looking at the regional chart hoping the one out of place wasn't the North West as we have done a lot of work on this.

**Kevin McMullen**- It is not North West, but the East Midland, will have a look at institutional resources to see how we can support them. It is nothing to worry about.

**Caroline Finnan (University of Sunderland)** - Observation in relation to single source of funding, seems a positive step forward, interest in looking at institutional level. Mentioned getting in touch to learn more about the institutional level.

**Kevin McMullen**- Please get in contact and we can help you to explore this.

**Peter Riley (MMU)** - Because of students doing more remote learning, has this affected the support that they are getting?

**Kevin McMullen (SFE)** - No considerable changes.

### **Jamie Bytheway & George Kenyon (GM Higher) - Learning from Lived Experience**

**George Kenyon**- Over the summer led a disabled learner consultation survey to assess the impacts of our current projects and inform our planning for the current academic year.

87 participants, online surveys with a mixture of multiple choice and open questions.

Mental health condition was the most specified disability. Many respondents identified as having multiple disabilities.

Many respondents identified family and work motivation to enter HE- suggesting that many of the respondents were mature learners.

Respondents identified that it was important for them to chat 1 to 1 with someone about their disability and needs, and that having a disability champion is a positive motivation.

The recommendations from the report include;

- Blending our well-being and SPLD events:
- Make use of our contacts at the Student Loans Company
- Increase our teachers and college CPD
- Make us of disability champions at events
- Clear promotion of events
- Provide information about flexible studies

**Jamie Bytheway**- We have a plan in place from the recommendations, and part of that is getting Kevin and his team to continue the vents and many of the recommendations consolidated what we knew. Struggle is getting the plan around this; one of the things that we are doing is looking at the promotion and getting the word out.

**Kelly Self (HEPP)**- Thanks Jamie and George. Great reading. We have recently held a CPD event at Hepp and 35 staff members from schools attended from Sheffield City Region. Not huge but a lot better than previously the take up was. Originally, we were planning just SENDCos but decided actually we need to get all school staff to attend, as students will bond with different people so we need to inform everyone.

**Melanie (Kingston University)** - STAART Ambassadors- team created the role as they realised that they were not being very inclusive.

To be a STAART ambassador need to have disability, mental health, specific disability and long term health condition, use positive action as part of the equality act. 32 STAART ambassador and less than 150 are active.

Often the first paid job for many of the ambassadors, brilliant for their confidence and self-esteem.

This July 4 STAART ambassador graduated and all with first class honour degrees, all are now doing postgraduate studies including a PHD.

There are no down sides to having these ambassadors, and shows to the outside world how well they are valued.

During lockdown doing weekly calls and drop in's, have also done a virtual graduation on a Saturday evening, the vice chancellor also joined the call to congratulate the ambassadors in person.

**Peter Riley-** Our vice-chancellor is also committed to our first generation students, and it is great to see the impact that this has on the pupil's motivation.

**Danielle Mannion (University of Bolton)-** Are students always happy to be identified, I know many students are happy and proud to identify themselves but can also think of some students who may be less comfortable to share their experience.

**Melanie Thorley-** It is self-selected, so they choose to do it. We work towards the affirmative model of disability; it is about taking control of it, there is nothing to be ashamed of. We do not view it as a deficit. We tell them to do a year as a standard ambassador, and in a year if they feel more confident then become a START ambassador.

**Victoria (Wigan & Leigh College) -** Getting IAG to students at an earlier age. It should not get to the first year of higher education before they have access to the assistive software, this should be available beforehand.

**Melanie Thorley-**We work with students who do not have access to medical records or evidence so they do not have access to DSA. We also do not call it assistive technology but learning technology.

**Victoria-** Study has had to become more accessible. As a bi-product of COVID, lectures are recorded, so the changes have been driven by default and not by a disability driven mechanism that somebody has had to identify as being that cohort.

#### **Breakout groups:**

**Peter Riley-** Good resources that have been developed that we could signpost to

**Jamie Bytheway-** We have one, George did a massive project so we have pre-entry brochures for variety of groups including one for disabled learners that I will include in the draft.

<https://gmhigher.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/GMH-Disabled-Learners.pdf>

<https://gmhigher.ac.uk/targeted-learners/>

**Kelly Self-** We have lots of video clips and resources on our website <https://www.hepp.ac.uk/who-are-you/disabled-learners/>

**Anna-Maria-** Will collate these and share them with the recording

**Laura-** We had a discussion about thinking how we used to run events and campus and cram quite a lot in one day, and how moving online can make that more intense for attendees. We have an opportunity now to be quite creative; can it be a better attendee experience?

**Danielle Mannion-** Something that has made me think especially in the wake of BLM, and that is race and disability and how that might affect experience. Especially diagnosis of ADHD, and student

missing diagnosis perhaps by cultural barriers, fears of their diagnosis getting out in their community.

**Peter Riley-** Intersectionality is interesting, OfS has a mental health bid out for funding and also looking at intersectionality, it's about recognising that the more you break things down the more impacts that you can see.

Thank you to all for sharing, we will get together in 3-4 months.