

Learning from lived experience

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Approach

Two studies carried out in tandem- one focussed on disabled students and one focussed on care-experienced students.

The aims of the studies were to:

- Assess the effectiveness and impact of current initiatives led by GMH
- Understand what we may be missing as practitioners in terms of how we design and deliver our projects
- Understand the learners pathway into HE, what worked for them and what could be improved

Study conducted with current students across UoS, UoM, UoB and MMU.

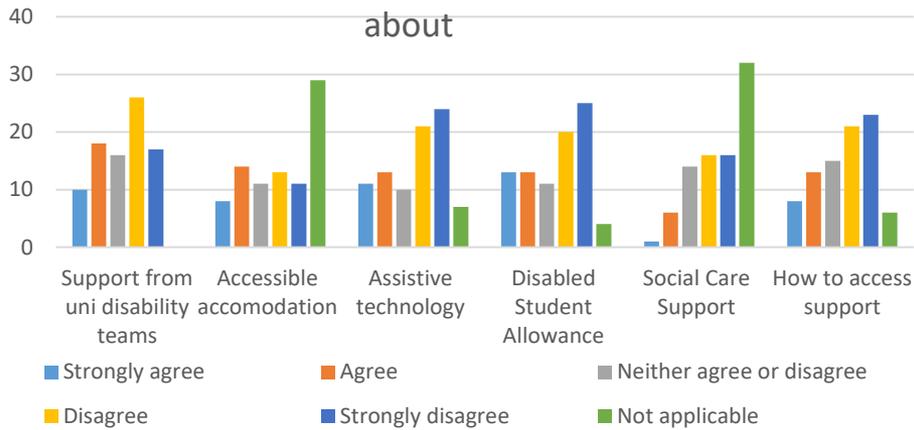
Participants were given the opportunity to share their thoughts and ideas about their experiences.

Initial plan to undertake focus groups scrapped due to Covid.

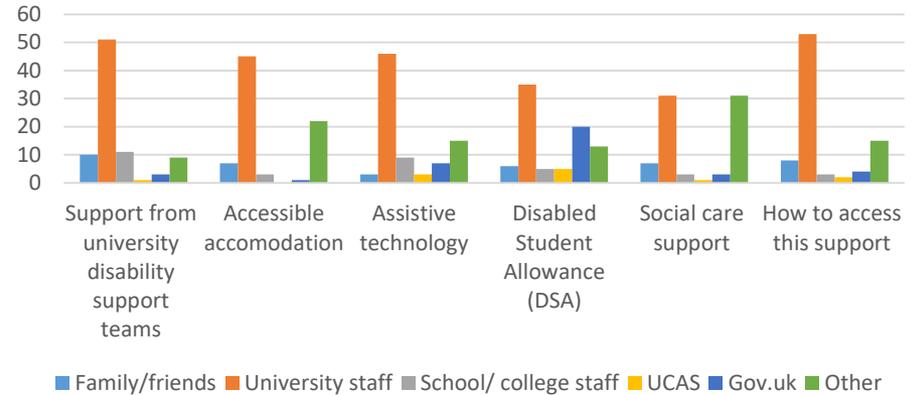
Care - experienced Consultation	Disabled Learner Consultation
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 20 participants, 14 open questions• 1 interview and activity review	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• 87 participants, mixture of multiple choice and open questions

Disabled Learner Consultation Findings

Before attending university I knew enough about



How did you find out about the following support?



What information is most important to receive when attending pre-entry events?

Support	Weighted average
General university information	6.99
Insight into well-being support	6.97
Talking 1 to 1 about situation	6.9
Insight into disability support teams	6.8
Information about DSA	6.39
Hearing from students with similar experiences	6.3
Tour of university campus	5.83
Insight into assistive technology	5.76
Information about social care support	4.5
Insight into accessible accommodation	4.25

Disabled Learner Consultation Findings

Motivation to go to HE...

'I had been contemplating for 10 years, my wife and daughters encouraged me.'

'Postgraduate- my boyfriend and previous work colleagues'

The benefit of pre-entry disability events...

'It was an opportunity to speak with someone to find out what I needed to do to get my support sorted out'

What information is most important to receive....

'I feel college staff should have University students visit their colleges, to share their experiences, talk through the application process, and perhaps even mentor these students'

What should pre-entry disability events cover...

'I didn't attend because I wasn't aware I had a disability at that point, but I suppose general information such as how to access support and success stories from current students at the university.'

Disabled Learner Consultation Recommendations

1. Well-being Events & SpLD events

'The close correlation between mental health condition and SpLD suggests that events such as well-being days and SpLD days would provide additional benefit to attendees if each event incorporated elements of the other.

2. Trust in an 'official voice'

The responses to question 6, demonstrates the trust that the respondents place on universities and 'official' sources. Emphasis should be placed on input from official sources such as Student Loans Company.

3. Teacher & college CPD

The lack of responses identifying school & college staff as the main source of information for support suggest that they may not have the knowledge or confidence to inform students of this support. CPD for teachers and college staff is important, in addition signposting teachers to the Targeted Learners newsletter and the GM Higher targeted Learners webpage.

4. Disability 'champion'

The importance of hearing from people with similar experiences, talking to someone about their situation and coping mechanisms, demonstrates that GM Higher pre-entry events must continue the use of face-to-face interactions from guest speakers and student ambassadors.

5. Clear promotion of events

Promotion of events to supporters of learners with disabilities needs to be widespread. The high number of respondents who were motivated by family and work to take up higher education also demonstrates that these events should also be targeted at mature learners.

6. Information on flexible studies

Pre-entry events provide a significant focus on alternative study options available to students including part-time study distance online learning.

Next Steps

1. Findings to be disseminated and discussed with GM Higher operational staff to inform planning of activity and practically how recommendations can be implemented.
2. Findings to be disseminated more widely via existing networks, such as NEON Disabled Learner working group, GM CEEN, Northclass, NNECL to inform practice in other areas and also to influence other organisations outside of HE.

Finalised reports can be shared on request- please email gmhigher@mmu.ac.uk