



## **NEON Working Group**

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

**Tuesday 25 February 2020  
12.00 – 2.00pm**

**G.15, Ground Floor, Exchange Station, Tithebarn St, Liverpool (10 mins walk from Lime St Station).**

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

**Attendees:** Jamie Bytheway (GM Higher), George Kenyon (GM Higther), Justine Cooper (Sheffield Hallam University), Kelly Self (HEPP), Stephen Jones (Student Loans Company), Steve Lee (Manchester Met Uni), Jason Leeming (BPP Manchester & Leeds), Alison Bradshaw (Edge Hill), Ellie Pauley (Edge Hill), Anna Wooley (Edge Hill), Kevin Hornblower (Shaping Futures), Mo Onyett (University of York), Catherine Shillio (Liverpool John Moores), Shannen Dabson (Shaping Futures), Helen Cooper (University of Chester)

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

York: DSA not DSE- adjustments to previous minutes.

Actions from SFE (Kevin)- info provided on study abroad and DSA claims.

#### **3. Update from Student Finance (SJ)**

- 2020 Monday 17<sup>th</sup> Feb launch date- DSA applications online and main process, apply early.
- 96000 applications, 46000 completed. 17222 need completion.
- Neat assessment report 6.
- Daily updates practioners website.
- Temporary restrictions on new providers being added to the list.
- Needs assessment timescale unknown- *will ask if there is a timescale.*
- Happy to help at events to clarify information to students.
- Trailing digital upload- last year students signed their agreement online- allows students to send scanned copy in, and scan evidence and opposed to post, removes any manual mistakes. Starting in Wales March 2020.

**ACTION: SJ to forward information to the group ad confirm needs assessment timescale**

#### **4. Update on recent and planned Outreach activities for disabled learners and their key influencers**

##### **Uni of York**

- Started specific work regarding success and progression.
- Starting ASD work, having a residential, small scale, 20 students. Working with careers department to cover rights at work, disability friendly employers- calls for a further session to address any concerns about going into workplace.
- Other HEIs do work around Autism transition- 1 day event at MMU & Edge Hill (considering launching residential again).
- Producing claiming benefits and student loan (Full time students may also be able to access universal credit and PIP) information leaflet- aiming to start DSA process early. Responded to call from HSE call to evidence on accessibility.
- Jamie Bytheway suggests having future CPD session regarding benefit claims. As little knowledge within group.
- Continue to supply careers advice to alumni
- talk to disabled staff networks within local authority to support work.

##### **Liverpool John Moores University**

- Coming month Mental Health Awareness Week Mid-march, on campus activities, potential delivery in school.
- 2 in team undergoing understanding autism level 2, uptake of ASD students taking part in Post 16 residential. More ASD confidence in team more activities.
- A lot of young people mention anxiety on form.
- Summer months one day transition events for ASD and Asperger's students.

##### **Shaping futures**

- Increase in mental health activities, schools often increasing their funding for this as well.
- Consultation event across city region points- Outreach Hub needed for impartial element, pool resources of more than one uni, schools aware of uni support but issues regarding accessibility to support.
- DSA- lack of knowledge regarding the application process- need to speak to advisors before the process. SENCO's need to engage with parents.
- Change in funding for outreach networks- introduction of Hubs, money being given out to partners and away from central team.

##### **Edge Hill Outreach**

- Part of Shaping futures working group. Driven by SENCO results. Bid focused on creating SENCO event supporting CPD get students connected with staff from inclusion and support team- covering info such as DSA. Event will hopefully act as catalyst for SENCOS to create a network and share good practice. Delivery day before July, easiest and most effective. (Stephen Jones suggests that he could support this). May look to organise this event to fit into the needs of SENCO. SPLD may struggle with this as schools are failing to identify this due to cost, students not able to access this support, LA don't have funding to distribute the resources.
- Universities still require evidence for support- pre 16 acceptance varies between universities- important to get it touch and apply early.

### **Edge Hill Student Support**

- Currently implementing system changes- developed online resource hub for students. Disability and SPLD Pre-entry pack? Feedback from students who are finding it difficult to access the website. Wigan and Leigh- positive feedback from peer support
- Toolkit being put together for academics, use campus connectors 2<sup>nd</sup> or 3<sup>rd</sup> year students who support students integrate in university life- this role is progressing. Issues regarding accessing employment.

### **BPP**

- Growing number declaring mental health. Organisation rolling out mental health training to staff.
- Relaxing requirements for evidence for SPLDs especially for apprenticeships and reduces costs for educational psychologist. Removes drawn out diagnostic process and more straightforward.

### **MMU**

- Evidence remains intact for SPLD. Educational psychologists can also test for ADHD and autism.
- Pre-entry day event every year for students, specialist study coaches.
- Increasing links with careers service focus on destinations.
- Grey areas during placements- who takes responsibility? (issue of blind student on PGCE placement). Need a co-ordinated approach with careers services, counselling and disability services.
- Issues regarding reasonable adjustments- extensions increases procrastination, how does this prepare students for the workplace.

### **Bolton**

- Lots of staff changes, 2 out of 4 team started in August.
- Mental Health awareness event working closely with life lounge service
- pre-entry: Bolton struggle to do residential, organise quiet enrolment days
- 20% students disclosing disability or mental health.
- Working on encouraging mature students to disclose disabilities.
- Need to increase link between services and outreach.
- Bolton opening a nursing school.
- Question- is disability and SPLD treated separately at universities- Edge Hill is separate but getting closer, MMU includes SPLD.
- Looking at how they can market disability support.

### **Wigan and Leigh College**

- GM increase in mental health support. Association of College and GMCA providing funding for training.
- 2021 CAMHS is going to change. Looking at ways to help build resilience.
- Moving to create more joined up holistic approach to disabilities between staff, students & academics.
- Vicky is on college extenuated circumstances panel, discussion about need to develop resilience in students.

### **Higher Education Progression Partnership**

- Working on website, 5 films about students experiences alongside case studies.
- Creating a brochure of support available.
- Running a CPD session, sent out to SENCO's now being sent out to governors, students involved in the sessions, matching this event to the GATSBY benchmarks which may encourage teachers to attend.

### **Sheffield Hallam**

- Study ready events for students who disclose a disability.
- Study skills department within learning centres, do not need the medical evidence.
- Information day for autistic students including info on peer mentoring. Pre entry practical support- right track for DSS, DSA Support, I.T support, work with students union. Last year 18 students signed up for the event.
- Looking into placement support as all students need 120 hours placements on all courses, practical support e.g. where to go for lunch and travel to and from.

### **Chester**

- Success with LAC 1 to 1 bespoke visits rolling this out for students with disabilities. Trying to make the transition from pre enrolment to studies smoother.
- Pre-entry: have been asked for wellbeing support but don't feel fully equipped regarding this. Requests from specialist schools, some for students with autism.
- Put together a checklist for inclusivity, for schools moved this into application forms for residential.
- Issues about school messages regarding mental health. Looking at teach meet, chance to share best practice and then provide useful information.

### **GM Higher**

- Number of outreach events planned, including event for parents and supporters
- Redeveloping website to provide more info to targeted students
- Planning student consultation to inform this area of work next year.

## **5. Update on targeted activity within Uni-connect Programme (formerly NCOP)**

Jamie Bytheway and Kevin Hornblower provided info on Uni Connect (formerly NCOP) and its broadening approach to outreach and increased targeted learner groups for phase 2.

See: <https://www.officeforstudents.org.uk/advice-and-guidance/promoting-equal-opportunities/uni-connect/>

## **6. Supporting disabled learners in HE – what's going well and what are the major challenges**

Discussed within updates, key challenges included:

- Transition to employment and where responsibilities lie
- Increasing mental health disclosures and responses to these
- Working with academics to support students
- Reasonable adjustments, extenuating circumstances and the need to develop resilience

- team structures

Key successes included:

- Support for transition from FE
- Staff training
- Pre-entry comms
- Student consultation to inform outreach

## **7. Any other business**

None discussed

## **8. Topics for next meeting**

- Outreach topics: residentials and staff support/training, learner SENCO consultation by Shaping Futures
- Support topics: transition into HE, employment, pre-entry comms, academic toolkits, peer support, developing resilience.
- CPD session from Mo at York about benefit claims for disabled students.

## **9. Date of next meeting – Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> June 2020, 12-2 (venue tbc)**

**ACTION: volunteer to host to contact Peter or Jamie**