

AccessHE
AccessHE Care Experienced and Estranged Students forum
held on
20 July 2017 (2-4pm)
at
Birkbeck, University of London

MEETING NOTES

Attendees:

Melanie	Aarons Royal	Lewisham Leaving Care Service
Jack	Abbotts	AccessHE
Josh	Du Sautoy	St Mary's University, Twickenham
Micheal	Griffiths	Kingston University London
Leeonnie	Hayles	University of East London
Rufus	Lacey	Become
Jamie	Mackay	AccessHE
Anne	McGrath	University of Westminster
Anna	Mepstead	University for the Creative Arts
Lesley	Mortimer	Brunel University London
Susan	Mueller	Stand Alone
Katie	Myhill	Greater London Authority
Tanya	Ollivierre	Greater London Authority
Neil	Parsons	London Metropolitan University
Isabel	Patrick	London Metropolitan University
Liz	Routhorn	London Metropolitan University
Beth	Taswell	City, University of London
Karen	Tucker	University of Sussex
Sam	Turner	AccessHE
Sarah	Young	Become
Amy	York	University College London

1. Welcome to the meeting and introductions from the Chair

Liz Routhorn (LR), the newly appointed Chair of the forum, introduced herself and invited others to do the same.

2. Apologies for absence

Chris Colson (University of Greenwich), Emily Hughes (Kingston University London), Jon Rainford (Conservatoire of Dance and Drama).

3. Notes of last meeting held on 9 May 2017

LR referred the group to the minutes of the previous meeting and noted that the first item of training will be delivered today by Become. Another action point discussed was that AccessHE agreed to produce a checklist for UASC learners: Sam Turner (ST) has compiled a draft document which he will circulate after the meeting for feedback from forum members. AccessHE will then present the document at the next meeting.

Next, the group reaffirmed their support for a list of key HEI contacts in this field. This item will be carried over to the next meeting for further discussion on ownership, development and upkeep (keen to avoid duplication of work).

It was noted that STAR, Article 26 and Refugee Support Network have been invited to present at the forum and this could take place at future meetings.

Finally, the rights and entitlements resource being developed through the University of Greenwich was addressed and it was explained that although the resource has now been completed there are questions over ownership of the document and whether it can be shared. The minutes were passed as accurate.

Actions:

- **Sam Turner to circulate [UASC learner checklist draft document](#) for colleagues to feedback on.**
- **AccessHE to present the finalised checklist of questions for UASC learners at the next meeting.**
- **AccessHE to approach and confirm STAR, Article 26 and Refugee Support Network to present at future meetings (possibly separately).**
- **AccessHE to close out situation with 'Rights and entitlements' document.**

4. [Become](#) and [Propel](#) website

Rufus Lacey (RL) gave the group a background of Become and explained that there has been a recent change of name from The Who Cares? Trust. The group heard that Become's current work includes a care advice line, a [coaching programme](#) for young people aged 16-25 and [Passport to Parliament](#), a project which aims to allow young people to be agents of change in their communities.

Sarah Young (SY) then introduced the Propel website (<http://propel.org.uk/UK/>) and it was explained that its roots were in a handbook that was previously available from Become and in research called 'Open Doors, Open Minds' which found that information on HE wasn't accessible for care leavers. SY then gave a brief overview of the website and demonstrated its functions and the information HEIs provide. It was explained that the website has just been updated and that Become now have good data on who is using it. Furthermore, there have been discussions about adding information for further education (FE) in England, Wales and Northern Ireland - already the case for Scottish institutions - but this would be a big task. Members were then asked for their feedback on the website which was as follows:

- General awareness of the site is good. Members have been contacted by social workers who have quoted Propel and young people are also aware of it.
- It has been used for activities with young people at HEIs.
- Information on FE and HE apprenticeships would be a useful addition.

- Outlining progression pathways e.g. HE in college and related top-ups at universities (e.g. Articulation agreements in Scotland).
- Members found the hardcopies of information useful but they are no longer available. Become are looking at ways to integrate them into Propel.
- The online factsheets on subjects such as employment and money are useful.
- It works well on mobile phones.
- It could include a calendar of events aimed at care leavers, similar to the NNECL website (<http://www.nnecl.org>).
- It would be good to have a facility to compare courses/HEIs. For example selecting a top 5 choices and comparing the support offered.

The group then enquired as to which age group(s) the resource is/are aimed at: It was suggested that if the website is extended to provide information on FE it should perhaps include some more aspirational content for younger audiences. As for the current target audience, it was explained that most young people will be directed to the resource by an adult so the target audience falls somewhere between the two groups. SY explained that when conducting research into the audience of the website, many professionals responded to the survey but not many young people did. User experience (UX) suites (e.g. [Solent University Usability lab](#) and [NUA UX Lab](#)) were then suggested as a way to measure the websites effectiveness, as the time users take to complete certain processes and the pathways they use are recorded.

5. Life After University event update

ST informed the group that a venue (University of Westminster Regent Street campus) and date (Tuesday 27 February 2018) have been confirmed for the Life After University event in the next academic year. Concerns were raised as Tuesday is a heavy lecture day for some HEIs, however it was explained that this is the only date that could be secured for the venue for that week. The group agreed that although the programme for the last event was strong (and would likely inform the programme for 2018), better promotion would have improved attendance. The group were then asked for ideas as to how the event could be improved. The following ideas were put forward:

- Incentives could be offered in the form of vouchers, careers advice or leaving with a CV template. Any incentives should link to 'life after university'.
- The event could be linked to pathway plans, targets and objectives.
- Allowing children to attend could increase attendance as a significant number of care leavers are parents. Anne McGrath (AM, University of Westminster) agreed to check the University policy on this.
- A full day event is a big commitment. Condensing the event to half a day may make it more attractive to students.
- The start time could be moved later as peak time travel for those travelling from outside London is very costly.
- Students could have the option to initially 'express an interest' rather than committing to the event: This would make following up more efficient.

- There could also be a questionnaire linked to this on what students would find most useful at the event. Those who expressed an interest but did not attend could also receive a digital delegate pack.
- More parallel sessions could be included so students can choose which sessions to attend.
- An Eventbrite page and booking form could be created.
- Information on the event would be sent to Local Authorities to disseminate.
- Video the upcoming event to help with promotion the year after.
- It was offered that Peter Eldridge from Brunel is willing to come back and present again at the next event.

Finally, it was suggested that a working group could be established in order to advance progress on the event between forum meetings. It was agreed this is a good idea and the following colleagues agreed to form the group, which AccessHE would chair:

- Beth Taswell – City, University of London
- Amy York – UCL
- Anne McGrath – University of Westminster
- Karen Western – Brunel University
- Michael Griffiths – Kingston University
- Liz Routhorn – London Metropolitan University
- Neil Parsons – London Metropolitan University

Actions:

- **Anne McGrath to check on University policy for having children on site.**
- **AccessHE to establish and chair event working group (above) that will focus on:**
 - **marketing and promotion**
 - **programme content (perhaps a shortened version?)**
 - **student expressions of interest and registration**
 - **delivery**
 - **feedback and evaluation**

6. News from our partners

Susan Mueller (SM, Project Director) introduced herself and the work of [Stand Alone](#); an organisation working to support people estranged from their families. It was explained that this work includes the [Stand Alone Pledge](#) which has been taken by [thirty HEIs across England, Scotland and Wales](#) - including ten in London. SM gave figures from the Student Loans Company on the number of estranged students who study at HEIs but acknowledged that whilst these figures give a good estimate they are likely to be lower than the true amount due to (e.g.) non-disclosure. The group also heard that many referrals of estranged students come from Stand Alone but there are many more from student referral teams in HEIs.

The group then gave their feedback to the Pledge and it was felt that in some cases university bureaucracy is preventing institutions from adopting the pledge as readily as

they would like. Although it was suggested that, as Vice Chancellor's need to sign a letter in order to take on the pledge, this has sparked interest at that level and furthermore SM explained that Stand Alone had made a well-received presentation to the London Higher board of Vice Chancellor's. SM offered to visit institutions to speak with their senior management about implementing the pledge and pointed to some useful Student Loans Company contact details for estranged students - estranged@slc.co.uk and **0300 100 0034**.

SM also informed the group of an upcoming campaign in partnership with the NUS, called the *Estranged Students Solidarity Campaign*, designed to raise awareness of estrangement amongst the student body and to encourage Students' Unions to facilitate wider discussion on family dynamics. It was explained that these week-long campaigns will be run at HEIs in the autumn term with no single week specified. Members should contact essc@standalone.org.uk to find out more.

Next, Katie Myhill (KM, Senior Project Officer, GLA, Katie.Myhill@london.gov.uk) introduced herself and explained that the GLA are hosting a roundtable discussion, chaired by Joanne McCartney AM, the [Deputy Mayor for Education and Childcare](#), looking at challenges for care leavers in London. It was explained that the scope of the discussion will be broad and although a consultation process will be taking place over the summer to get input from key stakeholders, it would be useful to have a representative from higher education on the round table. The group were asked whether they would like to put forward a nominee from this group and it was suggested that Beth Taswell (BT) would be best placed to attend as she represents both AccessHE and is also the [NNECL](#) representative for London. KM warned that no additional funding is in place but that the Mayor will use his position to lobby and champion certain issues in light of the discussions. It was agreed that AccessHE will circulate KM's contact details and that members will contact her if they want to put anyone forward for the consultation over the summer.

Next, BT gave a brief update on the ongoing work of [NNECL](#). The group heard that they have taken on a part-time administrator at University of Winchester to support coordination of their work. It was also explained that the next [NNECL conference](#) will be held on 7 December at the University of York and that if anyone is interested in presenting a workshop that they should contact Melissa Page (mpage@dmu.ac.uk). It was explained that a research project conducted with University of the West of England will be presented at the conference. Finally, BT informed the group that NNECL are working with a consultant to see how regions can more effectively link up with the national organisation.

Actions:

- **AccessHE to circulate the [slides from SM's presentation](#).**
- **AccessHE to circulate Katie Myhill's contact details: Katie.Myhill@london.gov.uk / 020 7983 5749.**

- **Members to contact Melissa Page at mpage@dmu.ac.uk if they want to present a workshop at the NNECL conference.**

7. The forum in 2017-18

As is the case for all AccessHE forums, LR reminded colleagues that there need to be measurable outputs for this forum. LR presented members with several questions to go away and have a think about:

- What do you want to get from the forum in terms of training, knowledge and networks?
- Is there anything from your personal expertise you can offer the forum?
- How can the forum help deliver specific targets (e.g. Access Agreement, Strategic and/or Operational Plans)?

It was agreed that ST will circulate these questions and will collate responses in time to be included as a priority item at the next meeting to inform planning for the forum.

Action:

- **ST to circulate questions to the group and to collate responses.**

8. Any other business

ST referred the group to a report by Article 26 which it was agreed will be circulated with the minutes of the meeting. Finally, ST explained the '[London Works](#)' social media campaign run by The Student Room in partnership with London Higher. It seeks to showcase studying in London and highlight personal stories of student experiences. The new Instagram page can be found [here](#). Members were asked to contact Vanessa Baptista if they wish to put forward a story.

Actions:

- **AccessHE to circulate the Article 26 report: [Implementing HE Scholarships for Forced Migrants: Eligibility and Selection – A summary of findings and best practice from the seminar held in Feb 2017.](#)**
- **Members to contact Vanessa Baptista at Vanessa.baptista@londonhigher.ac.uk if they wish to put forward a student story or staff view for the London works campaign.**

9. Date and time of next meeting.

It was explained that AccessHE will be in touch about the date of the next meeting. Lewisham Local Authority have kindly offered to host.

Action:

- **AccessHE to liaise with Melanie Aarons Royal regarding the hosting arrangements for the next meeting.**

Meeting closed at 4.05pm.

AccessHE is a Division of London Higher