

AccessHE
Looked After Children Forum Meeting
held on
Tuesday 13 October 2015 (2:00pm-4:00pm)
at
Senate House, University of London

MEETING NOTES

Attendees:

Melanie	Aarons Royal	LBL Leaving Care Service
Michael	Bennett	City University London
Becca	Bland	Stand Alone
Sophie	Cloutterbuck	London Metropolitan University
Guy	Cowen-Hutton	AccessHE
Chrissie	Farley	Kingston University London
Jane	Hargreaves	Kingston University London
Lauren	Hedges	AccessHE
Jade	Ibeguna	London South Bank University
Lesley	Mortimer	Brunel University London
Camilla	Mount	HE in London
Isabel	Patrick	London Metropolitan University
Tracey	Phillipson	AccessHE
Jenny	Shaw	Unite Foundation
Karen	Tucker	University of Sussex
Joe	Wilkinson	Barnet's Virtual School

1. Apologies for absence

Kay Bridger (Loughborough University), Emily Collins (Royal Holloway, University of London), Chris Colson (University of Greenwich), Elita Eliades-Ahmed (Middlesex University), Alison Forbes (UCL), Hannah Knapp (University for the Creative Arts), Rupa Lakhani (City University London), Vicki Russell (University of Hull), Tamanna Sidika (University of Bedfordshire).

2. Welcome to the meeting and introductions from the chair

In the absence of the regular Chair, who had sent her apologies, Lauren Hedges (LH) stepped in to chair the meeting. LH welcomed all attendees and invited the group to introduce themselves.

3. Notes of last meeting held on 23 July 2015

A member of the group asked whether paper 1, in item 4, had been updated and circulated. LH responded that the paper had not been circulated but would ensure it was immediately. The status of paper 2, in item 5, was also called into question. LH clarified for the group that

this paper had also been updated but not yet circulated and would action this immediately. The group would receive an update on this item later in meeting, under item 6.

Action:

- **AccessHE to circulate papers 1 and 2 from the meeting on 23 July 2015.**

4. Topical Discussion – Unite Foundation and Stand Alone – ‘New Starts’ report

Jenny Shaw from Unite Foundation and Becca Bland (BB) from Stand Alone gave a presentation on the New Starts report, which was produced by their respective organisations. The report can be accessed using the following link:
http://standalone.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/08/StandAloneUnite.Final_.pdf.

They highlighted the issues surrounding ‘estranged’ students. To begin with the group were invited to discuss what is meant by the term ‘estranged’ and how that sits with other terms in the field such as ‘care leaver’ or ‘care experienced’, as well as to discuss what the problems for such students are. Of particular note is that the majority of estranged students live in London and that such students are less likely to be at Russell Group universities.

During the discussion, attendees from all Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) commented that they have experience with estranged students. London Metropolitan University explained that they see a lot of students with these issues and that they have systems in place to help them, particularly in a financial capacity. The group expressed interest in this as a model for best practice and London Metropolitan University stated they would be happy to share their practices.

BB asked the group whether it would be useful for Stand Alone to produce a best practice guide for HEIs. The group responded that this would be very helpful.

BB also stated that Stand Alone produce a list of contacts at universities, displayed on their website, who can assist with student finance applications for estranged students. This a particularly challenging area for estranged students. BB encouraged attendees from HEIs to get in touch with Stand Alone to ensure the right contact information for their institution is on the list. This contact information can be found at:
<http://standalone.org.uk/students/supportatyouruniversity/>.

Actions:

- **Stand Alone/Unite Foundation to share their presentation and AccessHE to circulate this**
- **AccessHE to follow up with the Unite Foundation and Stand Alone with a view to setting up a best practice guide for HEIs in supporting estranged students**
- **London Metropolitan University to share their support model for working with estranged students. AccessHE to then circulate this to forum members**
- **AccessHE member HEIs to ensure their contact information is correct on the stand alone website. Link provided above.**

5. 2015/16 projects and next steps

LH stated that the importance of the forum being an action forum and having outputs. She invited attendees to look at Papers 2 and 3 from the meeting on 23 July 2015 and to discuss potential outputs for the forum in 2015/16.

Isabel Patrick (IP), from London Metropolitan University, made attendees aware that her institution have been looking in to creating a consent to share form for care experienced young people and their social workers. The idea is that the form could be used across HEIs to avoid young, care experienced people having to sign multiple forms in order to inform institutions of their background. The forum agreed that this is a good idea that should be looked at as a means of best practice going forward.

Concern was raised that if the forum were to run a practitioners' conference, via AccessHE in 2015/16 for those who work with looked after children and care leavers, this could be a repeat of similar events which are already taking place, such as the NNECL conference in December 2015. In light of this the group decided that it would be best to shelve plans for any AccessHE practitioners' conference in 2015/16.

A member of the group suggested that the group could run events for looked after children at different HEIs. Whilst a popular idea, it was felt that this may be difficult as many schools are reluctant to release children during term time, the idea is similar to that of the HELOA event taking place in October 2015 and a multi-HEI event/project is similar to that of the London Access Target Project, also operated by AccessHE. On the back of this discussion, however, it was felt that an event for existing students from a care experienced background may be a good idea and fill a gap in the sector.

It was proposed that such an event could be targeted at students nearing the end of their second year and have the theme of preparing them for life after university when, in many cases, care experienced young people receive little or no support. Attendees agreed that this would be a good idea and gave suggestions for workshops around the theme. Suggestions included involving businesses focussing on employment, HEIs focussing on postgraduate study, careers advisers providing advice and guidance, leaving care teams focussing on accommodation and local authority support and mental health and confidence building workshops.

Actions:

- ***AccessHE to liaise with London Metropolitan University and further discuss a consent to share agreement for care experienced young people***
- ***Forum members to reflect on a consent to share agreement for care experienced young people and think about ways to introduce it in practice***
- ***AccessHE to draft a programme and blurb for a 'life after university' themed event for current care experienced HE students***
- ***HEIs to share with AccessHE ideas for workshops and contacts to support the 'life after university' event***
- ***HEIs who would like to volunteer to host such an event should contact AccessHE. In the absence of this, AccessHE will search for a venue in central London.***

6. Foster carers finance event

Following on from the discussion at the previous forum meeting in July 2015, IP provided colleagues with an update on paper 2 which was presented at the meeting and has since been updated. London Metropolitan University will deliver an event in the second week of December to focus on higher education finance information for foster carers. This is a pilot event which, if successful, will be rolled out across London.

Actions:

- ***London Metropolitan University will take this event forward and AccessHE will support it***
- ***London Metropolitan University and AccessHE will make a record of the planning and delivery stages of the event, including how to contact and work with local authorities. This will be made available to the forum to assist with future events.***

7. Whole student lifecycle approach – sharing best practice

There was no time for this item and it was proposed that it be discussed at the next Looked After Children Forum meeting. This motion was accepted.

8. Date and time of next meeting

14 January 2016 from 2-4pm.

9. Any other business

LH made attendees aware of an upcoming event HE Awareness Day for Looked After Children and Care Leavers event run by HELOA on 28 October 2015. LH encouraged attendees to share the event with their networks and stated that AccessHE will circulate details via email and the AccessHE e-bulletins. For more information please visit:

<http://www.eventbrite.com/e/he-awareness-day-for-looked-after-children-care-leavers-tickets-18001478908>.

For practitioners, the National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) is delivering a conference on 4 December 2015 and will be hosted by London Metropolitan University. AccessHE will circulate information on this event via its e-bulletins. For more information please visit:

http://www.nnecl.org/activities/nnecl-conference?utm_source=NNECL&utm_campaign=eed3c2094-Newsletter_9_18_13_2013&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_0aa047fc30-eed3c2094-56274805.

NNECL colleagues are also looking for AccessHE member HEIs to support the event by asking their care leaver graduates to contribute to a panel discussion on the day. Further information on this opportunity will be circulated.

LH informed the group of the recently launched Propel website by The Who Cares? Trust - <http://www.propel.org.uk/>. This website is a relaunch of a previous handbook aimed at looked after children with an interest in progressing to HE. LH encouraged attendees to share the website within their networks.

LH informed the forum that the Chair, Alison Forbes from UCL, is standing down and AccessHE would like to appoint a new chair, in time for the next forum meeting in the New Year. AccessHE will circulate further information regarding this exciting professional development opportunity and asks anyone with an interest in becoming Chair to express an interest to LH.

A member of the group explained to colleagues that the Lord Laming review, which was established by the Prison Reform Trust, entitled *Keeping Children in Care out of Trouble: An Independent Review* is still taking consultations, even though the deadline has passed. The review focuses on why looked after children are more likely than other children in England and Wales to get involved with the criminal justice system. Attendees are encouraged to visit www.prisonreformtrust.org.uk/ProjectsResearch/CareReview to submit views and evidence.

Actions:

- ***AccessHE to circulate details of the HELOA event***
- ***AccessHE to include details of the NNECL event in its e-bulletins***
- ***AccessHE to circulate details of the NNECL request for care leaver graduates***
- ***AccessHE to circulate details of the position of chair for the forum and colleagues to express an interest by contacting LH.***

The meeting closed at 4.01pm

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