

AccessHE
Looked After Children Forum Meeting
held on
Thursday 14 January 2016 (2:00pm-4:00pm)
at
Birkbeck, University of London

MEETING NOTES

Attendees:

Melanie	Aarons Royal	London Borough of Lewisham Leaving Care Service
Kay	Bridger	Loughborough University
Lucia	Byrne	St Mary's University, Twickenham
Guy	Cowen-Hutton	AccessHE
Chrissie	Farley	Kingston University London
Jane	Hargreaves	Kingston University London
Lauren	Hedges	AccessHE
Lesley	Mortimer	Brunel University London
Neil	Parsons	London Metropolitan University
Isabel	Patrick	London Metropolitan University
Tracey	Phillipson	AccessHE
Karen	Tucker	University of Sussex

1. Apologies for absence

Christine Colson (University of Greenwich), Rosie Tattersall (London School of Economics).

2. Welcome to the meeting and introductions from the chair

In the absence of a chair, Lauren Hedges (LH), AccessHE, welcomed attendees to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves. LH informed the group that, following a recruitment process, the forum will be chaired by Lucia Byrne from St. Mary's University, Twickenham. This will take effect from the next meeting on 19 April 2016.

3. Notes of last meeting held on 13 October 2015

LH stated that, since the last meeting, she has met with Stand Alone and that they are keen to work with AccessHE and the forum in the future. One piece of work which the two parties could collaborate is to produce a guideline document on working with estranged students.

It was noted that AccessHE is yet to circulate London Metropolitan University's (LMU) support model for working with estranged students as outlined on page 2 of the notes. LH responded that AccessHE has not received this from LMU to date and would follow up on this following the meeting and circulate it with the minutes.

The notes of the last meeting were passed as accurate.

Actions:

- ***AccessHE to follow up with LMU on sharing their support model for working with estranged students.***

4. Life after university event – Paper 1

Tracey Phillipson (TP) recently attended a meeting of the AccessHE Student Advisory Group to ask students, some of whom are care experienced, what they would find most useful at an event about life after university. The results can be summarised as follows:

- It was felt useful to hear from more general employment agencies, as well as specific employers, to give students a more rounded idea of the employment opportunities available after university.
- It is important to be aware of students who may have caring responsibilities and/or financial constraints. This should be reflected in the timing of any event, for example by starting later and not finishing too late
- The event should be held at a time when students are available to attend. Summer is perhaps the least opportune time of year.

A member of the group suggested that it may perhaps be a good idea to invite back care experienced recent graduates to a care leavers' event as well as those who have already begun their final year of higher education (HE), in addition to the second and third year students for whom this event was originally envisioned. It was suggested that the best timing for such an event would be mid-end of November.

With regards to the content of the event, the group felt that having an event which is solely careers focussed is counterproductive as there are already many events aimed at informing all groups of students about careers post HE. It was suggested that the unique selling point of this event is the fact that it is aimed at care leavers and, as such, could be aimed at educating care leavers about more general aspects of life for them post-HE. These aspects of life could include their rights and entitlements, and support available for them from local authorities in the way of finance and accommodation. LH suggested that a document on the rights and entitlements of care leavers after university could be created and be launched at the event. Attendees felt that this would be a good idea.

In summary, the forum agreed to an event with the following structure:

- Launch of a document on the rights and entitlements of care leavers on leaving HE
- Workshops focussed on the three key areas of employment, postgraduate study and leaving care e.g. accommodation, financial support
- Any employers in attendance needed to be well advertised on the flyer for the event to attract attendees
- A panel Q & A session involving a panel of care leavers, employers and inspirational people: Adele Tilly was mentioned
- Workshops on more general life skills such as dealing with potential employers, interview skills, use of social media, body language and networking.

It was agreed that a suitable time to hold the event would be on a Wednesday from 10am-3pm and London South Bank University (LSBU) has agreed to host it. HEIs in attendance agreed to fund the travel costs of those attending from their HEI. LH also agreed to look into whether AccessHE could fund the travel costs of non-member HEI attendees.

In order to estimate the potential reach of the event, colleagues felt it would be a useful exercise for AccessHE to collect figures on the number of care leavers in its member HEIs.

The event is to be marketed through flyers distributed throughout both the AccessHE higher education institution (HEI) network and advocates network.

Actions:

- ***AccessHE to revise the programme for the event as agreed and contact people who could present or be involved on a panel***
- ***AccessHE to liaise with LSBU to set a date***
- ***AccessHE to draft a flyer marketing the event and present it at the next meeting of the forum***
- ***AccessHE to contact member HEIs to request information on the number of care leavers attending their institution.***

5. Foster carers finance event

LH asked representatives from LMU about their progress on putting together a foster carer's finance event. Isabel Patrick (IP) informed the group that LMU is in the process of setting a date and putting the event together. LH explained the information on finance available appears to be specific to local areas, and that LMU are trialling this event to see whether it would be possible to roll it out into other London boroughs. It was suggested that this event is something that the forum should keep tabs on. AccessHE will be supporting LMU with their event.

6. Data sharing agreement

LH presented the idea of creating a generic data sharing agreement for HEIs, local authorities and other third parties who have a vested interest in supporting the wellbeing of care leaver students and where such an agreement may aid communication. Any agreement would need to be signed by the student in question, having fully understood what it represents. Current agreements are felt to be useful for authorities to monitor progress of care leavers in HE. The agreements are more commonly known as consent to share agreements.

There was a consensus among the group that a template for a consent to share agreement could prove useful and that AccessHE should look further into this. LH proposed that those HEIs who wish to share their existing agreements with AccessHE. These will form the basis of a generic template for HEIs which will then be put to the forum for comment and sign off.

Kay Bridger (KB), Loughborough University, suggested that AccessHE could create a document with guidelines on how to draft consent to share agreements. This FAQ style document can then be shared with other networks of practitioners, such as the National

Network for the Education of Care Leavers. KB felt that there is a need and an appetite for such a piece of work.

Actions:

- **HEIs to share data sharing/consent to share agreements for care leavers with AccessHE**
- **AccessHE to draft both a generic template for a consent to share agreement and a guidelines document to support this.**

7. Whole student lifecycle approach – sharing best practice

Outreach, transition support, on course support, graduation and post-graduation support

LH gave a presentation on supporting care experienced students throughout the student lifecycle from pre-entry to post-progression, focusing on the transition stages. The main points of the presentation and the subsequent discussion can be summarised as follows:

- Practitioners should seek to create an open dialogue with other student support services within their HEIs, such as with those who work in the finance and accommodation departments. Often there can be contradictory messages coming from the different student support services and, as such it is important to ensure that all are on the same page
- Reorientation and reintroduction of students is especially important following a break in the academic calendar as circumstances can change quickly. Practitioners should seek regular meetings with students for whom they are responsible in order to check in with them
- Such check in meetings do not have to be confined to dates within the academic year. It may be as important to meet a student or young person informally, during a holiday period, in order to ensure they are coping. Some HEI representatives present gave examples of their own practices, such as inviting care experienced students to a Christmas lunch.

LH's presentation was also given at the NNECL conference in December and can be found at <http://www.nnecl.org/resources/nnecl-conference-2015>.

8. Date and time of next meeting

The next meeting of the forum will be held on 19 April 2016 from 2-4pm.

9. Any other business

LH gave a brief review of the NNECL conference and stated that it had been a positive event to be part of and had proved very useful.

LH informed the group of a recent event she had attended hosted by the Greater London Authority. The message of this event was that young people should be at the heart of everything being done in the way of access work for looked after children and care leavers and that this message should not be forgotten by practitioners. It is important to talk to young people and to make them feel valued.

AccessHE is a Division of London Higher