

AccessHE
Looked After Children Forum Meeting
held on
Tuesday 21 July 2016 (2:00pm-4:00pm)
at
Birkbeck, University of London

MEETING NOTES

Attendees:

Melanie	Aarons-Royal	London Borough of Lewisham Leaving Care Service
Lucia	Byrne	St Mary's University, Twickenham
Guy	Cowen-Hutton	AccessHE
Josh	Du Sautoy	St Mary's University, Twickenham
Lauren	Hedges	AccessHE
Rupa	Lakhani	City University London
Lesley	Mortimer	Brunel University London
Isabel	Patrick	London Metropolitan University
Liz	Routhorn	London Metropolitan University
Olivia	Saunders	AccessHE
Lisa	Schappert	University College London
Jenny	Tait	University of West London
Karen	Tucker	University of Sussex

1. Apologies for absence

Kay Bridger (Loughborough University), Sarah-Louis Collins (NNECL), Chris Colson (University of Greenwich), Emily Hughes (Kingston University London).

2. Welcome to the meeting and introductions from the chair

The chair Lucia Byrne (LB) welcomed attendees to the meeting and invited them to introduce themselves.

3. Notes of last meeting held on 19 April 2016

The updated consent to share document had not been circulated and so this was requested.

Lauren Hedges (LH) clarified that the NNECL conference date has been confirmed as the 29th November. This means that the forum's 'Life after university' event can still be held on 16th November as previously agreed.

Actions:

- **AccessHE to circulate the consent to share document**

4. Life after university event – Paper 1

The group looked at Paper 1, which concerns the 'Life after university' event to be held in November 2016.

The group discussed potential keynote speakers for the event and the following suggestions were made:

- Wes Streeting MP for Ilford North and former NUS president
- Earl of Listowel
- Edward Timpson MP and Minister of State for Children and Families at the Department for Education
- Carrie Wilson - Care Leavers Association
- Lemn Sissay – noted writer who has written and spoken about his experience of being in care extensively.

It was agreed all suggestions should be considered and that AccessHE will approach them. LH and LB felt that the keynote speaker should be some who would appeal to the students. Colleagues with further suggestions should contact AccessHE.

Lesley Mortimer updated the group that she has approached the deputy head of counselling at Brunel University London, Peter Eldrie, who has agreed to deliver a mental health and wellbeing workshop.

The group discussed who should sit on the panel at the event. LB has contacted Hackney Ways into Work who have agreed in principle to sit on a panel. It was discussed whether it would be useful to include a care experienced alumnus of an AccessHE member HEI on the panel. It was agreed that this would be a good idea whilst noting that their experiences of support during and post higher education may not always be positive. HEIs will contact people who they feel may be suitable. Attendees agreed to approach the Drive Forward Foundation who may be able to provide employers to sit on the panel.

LH informed the forum that recruitment agency Working Chance are keen to support the event and that she has a meeting with them coming up to discuss their involvement.

With regards to promoting and marketing the event, the group agreed to develop these over the summer so that they can be sent out as soon as term begins. It was also agreed that recently graduated alumni and care experienced postgraduate students should be invited as this will be relevant for them too. The group expressed a desire to maximise the number of attendees by whatever means possible and appropriate, which includes opening up the target audience for the event and sending invites to local authorities and virtual schools who may be able to pass it on.

Booking will likely take place via the AccessHE website. There was some discussion over whether HEIs should be able to know which of their students have booked on to attend. While HEIs felt that this would be useful, it was pointed out that this may breach data protection regulations. It was agreed to amend the terms and conditions for booking to include the caveat that data shared upon booking may be shared with relevant people at the corresponding HEI.

Actions:

- **AccessHE to invite potential keynote speakers as discussed**
- **AccessHE to produce marketing material for the event including blurb and to distribute it to HEIs who will send it out to students**
- **AccessHE to send information on the event to local authorities and virtual schools.**

5. Working with estranged students

The group discussed the potential for the forum to work with estranged students in the future. This could build on the workshop previously delivered by Stand Alone with some forum members which looked at defining estranged students in terms of student finance and what financial support could be provided based on this.

It was felt that estranged students are a similar group to care leavers, albeit with some notable differences, and that they are an often overlooked group who need support into and during higher education. There is much overlap between the work done to support care leavers which is either being done or could be done to support estranged students. HEIs highlighted the challenge of identifying and defining estranged students.

The group expressed an interest in hearing from the organisation Stand Alone, who work to support estranged students. Stand Alone are keen to focus on student finance, accommodation and mental health issues for estranged students in HE and there could be scope for AccessHE to work in partnership with them. Colleagues were keen to explore whether Stand Alone could run a training session for the forum or attend a future forum meeting, giving a presentation.

Actions:

- **AccessHE to meet with Stand Alone to discuss the potential for the forum to work with them in future.**

6. Refugee Support Network training

LH gave an overview of the training run for the forum by the Refugee Support Network (RSN) in May. She then asked for feedback from those who had attended.

People agreed that it was a useful session but stated that working to support refugees and asylum seekers into and during HE is a minefield of legal issues and ever changing information. However they did feel that it is good to raise awareness of the situation for those in the refugee/unaccompanied asylum seeker children (UASC) category. It was decided that AccessHE should follow up with the RSN to learn more about the work being undertaken and signposting support to refugees and UASC in education and HE. The RSN could be invited to a future meeting to talk about the barriers these students are facing and the political landscape.

The group then briefly discussed whether to take forward any work regarding this target group and their progression to HE. It was agreed that this would be challenging however the forum ultimately decided to wait for more information from the RSN before deciding whether they are best placed to take forward any work in this area.

Action:

- **AccessHE to follow up with the RSN.**

7. National Network for the Education of Care Leavers (NNECL) – update

NNECL sent their apologies for the meeting however they did provide an update on their work.

- Continues to welcome partners to submit (targeted) activities to upload to NNECL site (bespoke and upon request)
- NNECL Conference – 29th November, University of West of England. Programme to be confirmed, currently accepting paper proposals (N.B AccessHE has been asked to submit a paper of the ‘Life after university’ event). You can register your interest on the www.nnecl.org activity page
- Consultation – NNECL recently closed an online survey consultation that sought the voice of practitioners working to support the educational progression of LAC and care leavers across the country to inform the future strategic direction of the network. The consultation team are currently analysing the data but we are very happy with our response rate to the survey over 290 people responded of which a third identified themselves not to have previously engaged with NNECL. Almost half of the respondents came from an HE setting, whilst 13% came from FE, 26% from the local authority/virtual schools and 8% from charities or the third sector. NNECL will be reviewing the findings and planning ahead at the end of the month.
- NNCO funded activities – previously unallocated funding has been allocated to the following activities including webinars, commissioning national research, and a YouTube filming project to demonstrate the impact of outreach activities targeted at CiC/CLs
- NNECL has completed 3 days of filming on the south coast as part of the NNCO funded filming project to highlight the impact of targeted outreach and good practice in working with Local Authorities and Virtual Schools. We will be looking to complete filming across the country, including in London over the summer months. If you feel this is something you would like to support or get involved in please contact either Priya Clarke (regional rep) or the NNECL manager, Sarah Collins.
- Last month NNECL ran a webinar on ‘Supporting care leavers in higher education’. The webinar will soon be available on the www.nnecl.org resources page.

8. 2016/17 focus and activities

The forum discussed its activities for the 2016/17 academic year. Currently it will run an event on life after university for care experienced students and it will investigate working with estranged students and refugees and UASC.

The group also discussed the potential for working with foster carers and students who have been in foster care specifically. London Metropolitan University recently ran an event for foster carers and the group felt that this avenue could be looked at, with the possibility to replicating a similar event with foster carers elsewhere in London. There was a feeling that this may also contribute to the compulsory training a foster carer has to go through. It was decided that AccessHE will broker a conversation with The Fostering Network to explore this further.

Further suggestions included looking at working with designated teachers, developing a resource of questions for care experienced young people to ask HEIs at open days and looking at working with students who are carers too.

Actions:

- **AccessHE to follow up on a conversation with The Fostering Network**
- **AccessHE to collate suggestions for future work and develop an agenda for the 2016/17 academic year.**

9. Date and time of the next meeting

The date and time of the next meeting is still to be determined but will be circulated to forum members as soon as possible.

Action:

- **AccessHE to organise a date and time for the next meeting of the forum and circulate to members.**

10. Any other business

It was asked whether HEIs still use the term 'Foyer Federation' on their bursaries for care leavers. Many HEIs have amended this terminology as there are so few students coming through this avenue any more, and the bursaries have been renamed as 'the Care Leavers Bursary'.

It was noted that the level of funding available to care leavers progressing to HE can vary so much between each local authority. Virtual schools are getting a lot stronger, with Hillingdon virtual schools being recognised and having a strong presence. The pupil premium grant now goes directly to virtual heads for the individual students.

With many virtual schools now supporting individuals up to the age of 18, this was still felt to be an early cut off and that the support should be extended to the end of the academic year, not the individual's birthday.

Melanie Aarons-Royal (MAR) encouraged HEIs to work with a local authority to support a young care leaver in progressing to HE earlier in the academic year, and the earlier the better. HEIs could also be involved with a young person's Pathway Education Plan (PEP) to ensure the intentions of progression are recorded and that the support available has been determined and documented.

The group discussed the charity Turn2us and whether any attendees had experience of them, many of whom had heard of them. Turn2us is a national charity that helps people in financial hardship gain access to welfare benefits, charitable grants and support services. They also runs regional workshops across the UK to help front-line workers and volunteers ('intermediaries') to use Turn2us' tools and services to support people in financial need - www.turn2us.org.uk

Isabel Patrick (IP) also mentioned the directory of social change, who has an office on Holloway Road - www.dsc.org.uk – who she has directed students to.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm

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