

MINUTES OF THE DISABLED STUDENTS STAKEHOLDER GROUP MEETING (2005/04): TUESDAY 11th OCTOBER 2005

Attendees:

Kathie Robertson, SE FFL (Chair)
Laura Johnson, SE FFL
Carolynne Watson, SE FFL
Lorraine Geraghty, SE FFL
Alan Scott, SAAS
Morag Campbell, Funding Council
Carina Macritchie, Funding Council
Lesley Berry, Funding Council
Moira Shemilt, SFEU
Geraldine Ratcliffe, SFEU

Margaret Hay, RNIB
Ronnie Young, RNIB
Alison Cox, BRITE
Jeanette Gillies, Motherwell College
Kevin Morris, NUS
Lucy Foley, Aberdeen University
Pat Geddes, Aberdeen College
Shirley Hill, Dundee University
Cyril Hellier, PSPS

Apologies:

Lorna Caldwell, SAAS
Claire Keggie, SE FAED
Pamela Kellock-Shetty, SE FAED
Mary Goodman, Funding Council

Fiona Burns, Funding Council
Gillian McKirdy, Funding Council
Una Bartley, US

1. Welcome & Apologies

1.1 Kathie welcomed everyone to the meeting, and confirmed that Mhairi Snowden has left the group, following her departure from Skill Scotland. Kathie also noted the group's appreciation of Mhairi's contribution.

2. Minutes of Previous Meeting & Action Points

2.1 The minutes were agreed as an accurate record of the last meeting.

2.2 Kathie confirmed that the action points noted in the minutes of the last meeting (Paper 04/01) have been completed, and that updates on these have been tabled on the meeting agenda.

3. Update: Non Medical Personal Help allowance

3.1 Laura explained that FFL have published a guidance booklet, *Employing Support Workers in Higher Education*. The booklet is also available as a pdf document on the FFL website.

3.2 The closing date for institutions' responses on the NMPH survey has now passed, and Laura confirmed that FFL have received 32 responses. The next step will be to analyse the information received, and to produce a report documenting the findings. FFL intend to complete this before the next meeting of the group, and it is expected that a sub-group will be formed in order to determine how best to take the issues of NMPH forward.

4. Update: Review of Provision for Students with Disabilities project

4.1 Laura updated the group on the progress of this project (Paper 04/03). A paper summarising the findings of the institutional case study visits and a second paper, on the current funding provision available to students with disabilities are both close to completion. In addition, a paper on the support of students with disabilities in other countries is currently being drafted. These papers will be issued to the group for comments shortly, and will also be posted on the FFL website.

4.2 Laura asked the group for suggestions on how the project could tap into the student perspective. A questionnaire has been issued to students in the FE sector, and a second questionnaire for HE students will shortly be sent out. Pat and Jeanette proposed to circulate the questionnaires to students who have used the Access Centre facilities at their institutions in order to gather student feedback on the present systems of support.

4.3 A further discussion of the project and it's progress will take place at the next meeting, following the completion and circulation of the project papers to the group.

5. AbilityNet

5.1 Jeanette opened the discussion by introducing Paper 04/04, an email from AbilityNet which indicates that they offer a DSA assessment service. The group outlined their concerns on the AbilityNet service; firstly, that AbilityNet are not validated as assessors by SAAS, and secondly, because they are an equipment supplier, and are therefore in a position to give potentially biased assessments.

5.2 The group agreed that it would be inappropriate to comment directly on the information received from AbilityNet, but felt there was a need to offer institutions some clarification on the institutions and bodies from whom SAAS will accept assessment reports. FFL will draft a statement on this, to be cleared by the Access Centre Managers on the group. The statement will be distributed to institutions by SAAS. The group also felt that this issue could be picked up within the development of the monitoring and evaluation process of the Toolkit of Quality Indicators for Needs Assessments.

6. Any Other Business

Update: Developing a Needs-Led Assessment Model for students with Additional Learning Needs in FE

6.1 Lesley updated the group on the progress of the group set up by the Funding Council to look into this issue. To date, the group has met twice, with the aim of revising the definitions of ELS and DPG 18 to take account of the variations in individual student needs. The Funding Council will host the final meeting of the group shortly, and intend to pull together the information gathered through the group meetings to form the basis of a public consultation by the end of the year.

6.2 Carina confirmed that the Widening Participation Review report, *Learning for All*, has been published on the Council website, and advised that the report contains a section on a recommended programme of action, which includes suggested refinement of Funding Council premiums.

6.3 The group expressed their hope that the Funding Council will develop an amended method of DSP allocation shortly, and expressed their concern that is a significant issue which has remained unaddressed for some time. The group felt that institutional staff are becoming increasingly frustrated with the fact that the current method of allocation rewards those institutions who do least to promote inclusiveness from within.

6.4 Carina explained that the Funding Council intend to establish a working group in the future to take the issue of allocation forward, however Morag confirmed that this issue is unlikely to be addressed for the 2006-07 funding round, as a result of the recent Council changeover. Kathie suggested that the Funding Council could feed into the next meeting with their perspective on the current method of allocation and the possible time-frame for reviewing this.

Duplicate Assessment Fees

6.5 Alan explained that SAAS are receiving an increasing number of claims for duplicate assessment fees as the Toolkit beds in. Alan proposed that SAAS write to all institutions to emphasise that it would be beneficial to send DSA forms and assessment reports to SAAS together, wherever possible. SAAS will ask that DSA forms be annotated to indicate that the assessment report will follow in cases where it is not possible for all the paperwork relating to a student's claim to be sent at once.

7. Action Points & Date of Next Meeting

- FFL to produce a report on the findings on the NMPH survey, and to circulate this to the group before the next meeting.
- FFL to issue the papers on the Review of Provision for Students with Disabilities project to the group for comment before the next meeting.
- FFL to draft a statement to institutions, clarifying which institutions and bodies are validated to carry out assessments.
- Funding Council to feed in their perspective on DSP allocations and the future of this issue at the next meeting.

7.1 The next meeting will take place on Thursday 23rd February. FFL to confirm exact times and venue.

Funding for Learners
18th October 2005