

**Minutes of the Disables Students Stakeholder Group Meeting (2008/02): Thursday 13th November 2008**  
**Europa Building, Glasgow 09:30 – 13:30**

**Attendees:**

Kathie Robertson, SG HELS (chair)	Lucy Foley, Aberdeen University
Victoria Beattie, SG HELS	Alison Cox, BRITE
Laura Worku, SG HELS	Suzanne Marshall, Equality Forward
Mick Doherty, SG HELS	Anne Simpson, University of Strathclyde
Alan Scott, SAAS	Sally McGreevy, RNIB
Lorna Caldwell, SAAS	Fiona Burns, SFC
Jeanette Gillies, Motherwell College Access Centre	Rowland Tye, SFC
Geraldine Ratcliffe, SFEU	Cathy Brannigan, Belfast Metropolitan College
Pat Geddes, University of Edinburgh	Morag Campbell, SFC
Steven Bell, SG SW	Stephen Edgar, Aberdeen College
Alison Crookston, Open University	Gail Edwards, NUS Scotland
Jane Gillham, Stevenson College Access Centre	Erin Elvin, NUS Scotland
Delia Henry, RNID	Shirley Hill, University of Dundee
Moira Shemilt, SFEU	

**Apologies**

Linda McLeod, Equalities Scotland  
Neil Cuthbert, ASC  
James Alexander, ASC  
Frank Hughes, Aberdeen College  
Marian Ewan, Jobcentre Plus

**Part 1**

**1. Welcome and apologies**

1.1 Kathie began the meeting by welcoming members, making apologies as above and introducing new members Delia Henry from RNID, Carolyn Fishman from HELS, Stephen Edgar from Aberdeen College and Jane Gillham from Stevenson College. She also welcomed Cathy Brannigan who was visiting from Belfast College.

**2. Minutes from previous meeting**

2.1 The Group reviewed the minutes from May's meeting. Everyone was happy with them.

**3. Action points of previous meeting**

3.1 Action points were completed except for Action Point 5 where NUS were not aware of any comments submitted.

#### **4. Linguistic Access Presentation**

4.1 Lynne Hawcroft gave a presentation on Linguistic Access. The presentation was well received by the group.

**Action point: the Chair agreed to send the link to the report referred to in the presentation to the group.**

#### **5. Equipment & Adaptation Presentation.**

5.1 Jane Arrol gave a presentation on Equipment & Adaptation Guidance.

5.2 Alison Cox noted that it was important to look at aids to accessing the curriculum as well as to aids for daily living and that there would be a lot of merit in discussion between BRITE and Jane's team on equipment and adaptations. The model described in the presentation was very transferrable and there are also many overlaps for example in augmentative communication devices which are vital for daily living and education.

5.3 The draft guidance will be going out for consultation between December and March and comments from the DSSG would be welcomed.

**Action point: the Chair agreed to send the consultation paper to the group.**

#### **6. Paper 1: Recommendations for DSSG from the "Assessment of students additional support needs: baseline study"**

6.1 Kathie discussed the recommendations for the DSSG arising from this report which has now been published on the SFC website. It was noted that the DSSG was already doing some of the actions specified in the recommendations.

6.2 It was agreed that the recommendations which were linked to the DSSG were appropriate for the group to consider and that the DSSG will discuss recommendations more clearly at a future meeting.

#### **7. Paper 2: Draft recommendations from subgroup on diagnosis & evidence.**

7.1 Pat Geddes outlined the deliberations of the subgroup and discussed the recommendations contained within the paper. Members were reminded that the context behind the paper was the comment by the equal opportunities committee that it is unacceptable that students pay for diagnosis. There were also issues with the cost of a diagnosis, the quality of evidence provided by a diagnosis, and who was able to provide a diagnosis.

7.2 Members were informed that the subgroup found it difficult to keep their discussions solely within the confines of the remit.

7.3 As part of the subgroup's discussions they considered various models as set out in the paper; funding issues ; and the impact on a students' learning experience.

7.4 The subgroup recognised that the DSA's current format perpetuates the medical model of disability by requiring a diagnosis for eligibility whereas the social model has widely been

adopted across the sector leading to needs led assessments. The medical model doesn't sit well with the equality agenda and students have to accept the label of disability in order to get the support and adjustments required, even though they may not feel disabled. They therefore wanted to propose an alternative model of broadening the mainstream

7.6 Pat Geddes recognised that presenting this paper was only a first step and that wider consultation is needed with FE, HE & students.

7.7 The Chair asked for confirmation that the DSSG agreed with the recommendations set out in the paper and reminded members that the paper required DDSG endorsement before it could be submitted to the Scottish Government for consideration.

7.8 As members did not have sufficient time to fully consider the subgroup's proposed recommendations the Chair agreed that a special meeting would be arranged to fully discuss the paper. If members are unable to attend this meeting they should provide comments on paper by 28 November.

**Action point: The Scottish Government to arrange and facilitate a discussion on the subgroup's recommendations paper.**

## **8. Presentation on complex needs mapping study.**

8.1 The Chair acknowledged that there was insufficient time to properly discuss the findings of the mapping study and that there would be an opportunity to fully consider the findings at next full DSSG meeting.

8.2 Alison Cox presented the Mapping Study and gave credit to Jill Hale who had been lead researcher on the project. She outlined the main findings of the study which are set out as key issues in the final report, available on the Scottish Government website.

8.3 Victoria Beattie updated the group on the ongoing meetings to discuss Complex Needs. The Scottish Government met with college principals and SFC on the 7<sup>th</sup> November, and will be meeting with COSLA and Directors of Education and Social Work shortly to discuss issues raised. It was also noted that HMIE are currently doing an aspect report on Complex Needs using the mapping study as a basis for their report.

**Action Point: to set up interim meeting before May to discuss complex needs.**

## **9. Paper 3: Public petition on Complex Needs (Draft Letter)**

9.1 The Chair outlined the process of responding to a public petition and asked for any comments on the draft letter presented to the group. The Chair thanked SKILL for their comments already received and asked for final comments by the end of the meeting.

## **10. Update from SAAS**

10.1 Alan Scott provided an update from SAAS. He informed the group that the second student survey of those in receipt of DSA has been completed.

10.2 The findings from the survey, which will be put on the SAAS website, showed that while there are still high satisfaction rates with DSA, the rate has dropped in comparison to the 2007 results. The main points from the survey were:

- Improvements in the role and advice given out by Disability Advisors at institutions
- Improvements in the number of students finding the SAAS website helpful.
- Issues with the time it takes to get appointment for assessments and to receive equipment.
- Students feel that there is insufficient information about the appeals process.

10.3 SAAS will be having a meeting with Disability Advisor's in mid February to raise the profile of what advice SAAS can offer them.

10.4 There was an issue with the design, format and length of the DSA application form. SAAS are moving towards an online DSA application form and will hold focus groups with students and stakeholders. They hope that the new online system will be implemented in 2010-11.

10.5 Leia Fitzgerald, who has just recently re-joined SAAS, will be taking forward the NMPH subgroup and will be contacting people who have expressed an interest in being part of the group. To note that there have been 4 notes of interest.

10.6 The DSA fraud team are to publish a paper. There are no early indications of what the outcome of the fraud team's review will be.

## **11. Update from SFC**

11.1 Roland Tye gave an update on the Needs Led Pilot project. SFC have received positive feedback from colleges regarding the pilot. Colleges felt that the approach was more student centred, it reduced stigma and normalised the process of seeking support. College staff who provided the feedback on the pilot had already consulted with their students about the pilot, so student feedback is encapsulated within the entire feedback.

11.2 Next steps will involve:

- the SFC meeting with colleges that were involved with the project in December;
- a circular regarding the project will be sent out in January; and
- there will be an event in February hosted by the SFC.

**Action Point: Members of the DSSG to provide the SFC with workshop topic suggestions**

11.5 Susie Rice mentioned that an Access & Inclusion committee had been established and at one of their meetings they had discussed the findings of the complex needs report. The next meeting of the Committee will be in December.

11.6 SFC continue to work with the Government and colleges on complex needs and want to encourage stakeholders to contribute their views. They will also be putting forward a response to the public petition mentioned in 9.1.

11.7 SFC will take forward recommendations from the Equality Forward report in the new year.

11.8 SFC recently met with the Equality Challenge unit and Equality Forward to discuss areas for collaboration.

## **12. Partnership Matters**

12.1 Carolyn Fishman updated the group on Partnership Matters. Having fully considered the issue and following several discussions with a number of institutions the Scottish Government are considering extending PM to cover the university sector. As Members were provided with an updated version on PM which also included new legislation, updates on roles and responsibilities of various agencies and organisations, new case studies and links to new reports.

12.2 Members of the DSSG are requested to provide comments on Partnership Matters by 28<sup>th</sup> Nov, after which it will be submitted to Ministers with the recommendation to extend it to universities.

12.3 Victoria Beattie mentioned that publication of Partnership Matters would tie in with publication of the Equipment & Adaptation Guidance Review if dates were suitable.

**Action Point: Members of the DSSG to provide the SG with comments on Partnership Matters by 28<sup>th</sup> November.**

## **13. Update from Equality Forward**

13.1 The Chair previously noted apologies from Linda McLeod who was due to update on Equality Forward and will forward an email report from her.

## **14. Update on validation applications & evaluation of pilot**

14.1 Kathie Robertson updated the group on the validation process. There were some extremely good applications recently which will be used as good practice guidance.

14.2 It was mentioned that a review of the toolkit is being carried out by Vit Novotny and the report of the review should be available early next year.

## **15. A.O.B**

**A.P. To circulate presentation from Lesley Carcary to DSSG.**

**Action Point: Dates for the next DSSG meeting in May will be circulated.**

## **ACTIONS**

**To be listed.**

**Action point: the Chair agreed to send the link to the report referred to in the presentation to the group**

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**Action point: The Scottish Government to arrange and facilitate a discussion on the subgroup's recommendations paper.**

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