

DESF Meeting Minutes

23.03.16 NDCS, Castle House, London

Attendees: Martin McLean, Nicki Harris, Andy Owen, Dan Sumners, James Fitzgerald

Apologies: Jane Barden, Jill Bussien, Simon Thompson, Jenny Summers

Matters Arising from Previous Minutes

The DESF Survey had been put on hold. It was agreed that this would be revisited at the next meeting (see later note)

Paul and Martin discussed their input on examinations to Ofqual. Rory Cobb from RNIB also attends. Positive response from Ofqual. There is a new issue regarding OLMs as the awarding bodies are hostile to this role and do not wish to make it common practice. Much relies on what is in the 'Book' – Martin explained that vocational courses are an issue and there is a need to raise awareness. Paul explained that Ofqual realise the inadequacies of the OLM situation as it stands but it is impossible to abolish it. Dan offered to work collaboratively as he sits on FAB.

AGENDA ITEMS

4. DESF Survey

Andy explained only one had been fully completed back in 2012. The data had been gathered for the second survey and is with Simon Thompson. Paul suggested he contact Simon and ask him for the data and the majority of the next meeting be devoted to looking at detail at the current findings and identifying any new issues to be captured. Martin commented that he was considering surveying the FE colleges to look at their support packages for deaf students. There was a general discussion on the CRIDE survey and the gaps of data due to unsupported students in colleges and therefore this information was not being captured. Paul commented that schools would also fall into this category if they all became academies. **ACTION: Paul to contact Simon**

5. BIS

There was a general discussion on events to date. James raised concerns regarding the MQ being named as the only qualification identified in place of the Language Tutor for Deaf Students: he explained that City Lit employ tutors who have a PGCE/Literacy qualification/deaf studies degree/BSL or a combination of these. It was voiced that there might be confusion about the purpose of the role – it was explained that the role had to be one that was due to the specialism and not the teaching aspect as BIS would not provide DSA for any element of teaching.

There was further discussion on the CSW role – James was concerned about the list of acceptable qualifications. He asked if an Interpreter with note-taking skills was not equally qualified as a CSW. It was discussed by all and it was felt, in general, that the role of a CSW was to facilitate access and had a different skill set than an Interpreter but it was agreed that it depended on the Interpreter themselves and the terms under which they were employed.

James also raised a concern about the NMH hourly rates being published as he felt this would lead to undercutting and the quality of the provider might be questionable.

The introduction of the two quote system supported the concern of the published hourly rates.

The registration fee of £100 was discussed together with the audit fee (yet to be announced and could be up to £7k). Dan explained that freelance interpreters had raised concerns about having to register and it was generally thought they would register with an agency that would cover the cost of registration.

James reported a successful event for DSA Assessor training on issues related to deaf students held at the City Lit.

Dan agreed to draft a letter to Elaine Underwood (cc Georgina Watts) expressing concern at the speed of implementation and asking for a meeting prior to 18th April deadline.

Action: Dan to contact Elaine Underwood

6. Apprenticeships and Maths/English Requirements

Martin outlined the case of a deaf apprentice who is excellent in practice but struggling with his English and therefore cannot progress. NDCS feel this is unfair and discriminatory but the Govt refuse to look at adjustments. Martin had requested that if the employer agrees to an exemption that would be acceptable but the Govt refused.

Dan had contacted Ofqual to see if BSL 2 (the students 1st language) could be viewed as an equivalent to Functional Skills Level 1 (his second language). Martin did not agree that it was an equivalent. Much discussion followed. Dan felt that this was parity but Martin felt

that fluency was the key. Martin explained that the Equality and Human Rights Commission were interested in the case. Dan suggested that this be used as a last resort.

7. Functional Skills Reform

The Govt want to reform Functional Skills. In May other stakeholders will be involved in this reform and it is the feeling that the Govt will want to increase the rigor of these qualifications. Paul pointed out that the original qualification was English and Communication and an Interpreter had been acceptable if required but the spoken communication element was no longer part of the assessment. Dan questioned the claim that functional skills were an equivalent to a GCSE – he said it was comparable but not an equivalent. He explained that the GCSE in BSL is still in the pipeline.

8. Notetaking Courses

There was concern that not many courses were available. Dan explained that the Signature level 2 course had been remapped against level 3 criteria. All agreed that a qualified Note-taker should be invited to join the group – **Action: Dan to follow up.**

9. Future of DESF

All agreed that the work of the DESF was on going.

10 AOB

- a) Deaf Day 9th July at City Lit. James asked if DESF would like to have a stall/share with Adept.
- b) Adept Conference in Derby 25th June 2016

Date of next meeting: 16th May 2 – 5pm at NDCS