

Notes of a meeting of the DESF held on Friday 31st January, 2014 at Action on Hearing Loss at 3pm

Present: Maria Bailey, Andrew Burgess, Jill Bussien, Ann Crocker-Smith, Ralph Hartley, Martin McLean, Andy Owen (chair for this meeting), Paul Simpson (secretary for this meeting),

1. Apologies Jane Barden, Nicki Harris, Simon Thompson

2. Notes from last meeting (23rd September 2013) These were accepted as a correct record of the last meeting.

3. Actions and matters arising from notes of the last meeting

- Since the last meeting the **I-Sign project now allows self-funding** individuals to apply - this was not possible before
- Paul contacted Melanie Thorley to seek an **ANP** representative for DESF
- PAS and AO will put **links on the BATOD and ACSW** websites

Action: PAS AO

- AO explained how the **Weebly DESF website** works; the website is free to run - a gmail account has been set up (desfemail@gmail.com) which all can join and then everyone will receive any contact emails from visitors to the website.
- Maria secured Kimberley Curry as the **new Signature rep** for DESF. Paul has been sending her information but has not heard from her.
- Paul will contact Emily about having a room for the next meeting.

Action: PAS

4. I Sign update

Martin gave the meeting an update; the following emerged from the update and ensuing discussion

Good progress is being made - there is a month left

A fund of **£25000** has been provided for the up-skilling of CSWs to higher levels of BSL; so far £20/21k has been allocated

29 CSWs have been supported with three applications recently agreed taking the number to **32**; the DfE target was 20 which has been passed

Some CSWs have been **supported** to go from levels 2 to 3, some from 3 to 6; a small number from 1 to 2

30% of the total number are **self-funded** where the school or college did not pay the other 50% of the costs

Funding needs to be allocated before the end of February, as the project ends in February 2015.

If the **evaluation** shows good impact the DfE could recommend continuation in some form but this would not be permanently sustainable - long term thinking and reforms are needed

Martin is keen to look for examples where **support has been outsourced**

In the future **personal budgets** may be used to purchase CSW support

The **Family Sign Language project** has finished its training of 80 professionals to deliver courses to families; a grant scheme is up and running some LAs are running classes for families. In Year 2 of the project a further 80 professionals will be trained in FSL and the grants scheme will also continue.

A FoI request was used **to find out how LAs are supporting families**: 58% do provide some support to families to learn BSL; a report will be published in March; there will also be a publication for parents about support from LAs; this should inform discussions about the Local Offer - questions raised if there is no provision would have to be published and responded to by the LA

the **new CSW qualification** will be piloted at ERADE and UCLAN in two ways: UCLAN will be using the Signature qualification in 6 modules; Exeter will be using modules from an existing level 3 diploma for TAs + 4 Signature modules - this course will be mostly ERADE TAs; **mentoring** is provided by MB - initially this was optional but is now mandatory - reflection on training is essential; she is currently mentoring 14 CSWs who are in receipt of the bursary. Of these, only three hold a CSW qualification..... there is no mandatory qualification for this role

a great difficulty is to ensure that CSWs have **appropriate subject-based vocabulary**

there is much **overlap between the roles of CSWs and TAs**

Leeds University is carrying out **research into support of deaf children** - Ruth Swanwick and Jackie Salter will be talking about this at the Amsterdam conference in March and a BATOD magazine article will be forthcoming

5. Simon was not present so the **Survey** item was deferred

6. After AO raised concerns about access arrangements provided by Cambridge International Examinations in relation to BSL, an Ofqual Compliance and Monitoring team investigated; Andy has been assured that the situation will improve - we will need to wait until next year to see whether their documentation changes. Group to feedback any issues arising.

There was a discussion about the granting of 25% of **extra time**; this is not automatic but has to reflect what goes on in the classroom and the individual student's needs; **SENCOs** need explicit guidance about this and other arrangements

OLMs are an access arrangement which is very risky and disliked by JCQ and the awarding organisations because it is hard to control and could lead to a change in the objectives of the question (same could apply to BSL interpretation)

There is a move to request that candidates could **answer exam questions in BSL** as well as receive the question in it, although it will need careful consideration because of the marks allocated for written communication and Spelling, Punctuation and Grammar and the practicalities - videoing, transcripts etc. NDCS will support this as it is currently discriminatory and inconsistent - it is allowed in Scotland. There is much discussion about this as many feel that the exams should be undertaken in English as this is the language of life after exams.

Ann had drawn attention to a **mandatory DSA handbook for Non-Medical Helpers** in relation to what is allowed and what should be charged for the support - it includes entirely unrealistic bands for costing different types of support apparently taking into account on-costs and VAT; the research was carried out several years ago and the costs are significantly behind what they should be to ensure proper qualified support; also there are omissions eg teachers of VI; the danger is (as with Access to Work) that this could lead to under-qualified support; there was no public consultation on the document.

There was **unanimous condemnation of the document** by the meeting. It was agreed that DESF should both respond collectively and also as individual organisations. Ann would draw something up to use and adapt - an email address for comments had been supplied **Action: AC**

7. Ralph said that there was currently no reliable information about the **effects of cuts** in FE although NDCS is trying to find out. FoI requests had been sent to LAs to determine what is happening to HI budgets and information will appear on the NDCS website cuts map; the proposed DSA changes are like a cut; there is concern in colleges about cuts to funding for 18 years old i.e. those students needing a third year for their; no Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on this change

8. The **remaining items** were deferred until the next meeting.

9. **Date and place of next meeting:** Friday 16th May at 1pm. ***Note earlier time.***
Venue to be confirmed but we hope AoHL.