

Cross-Party Group on Disability

Wednesday 7 June 2023 - CR 3 and Teams

Minute

Present

MSPs

Jeremy Balfour MSP (Convener)

Pam Duncan-Glancy MSP (Deputy Convener)

Invited guests

UCAS – Ben Jordan

UCAS – Nicola Turner

UCAS – Emily Bennett-Cox

UCAS – Georgina Marks

UCAS – Catherine Hepple

Non-MSP Group Members

In Person:-

Maggie Ellis

Stan Flett

Paul Fisher Cockburn

Bill Scott

Susan Webster

Seonaid Cooke

Maureen Curten

On Line:-

Mike Harrison

Julie King

Sophie Lawson

Terry Robinson

Linda Bamford

Lynne Glen

Anna Tully

Lyn Pornaro

Maureen Morrison

Courtney Wood

Carol Burt

Susan Tait

Miriam Nnadi

Derek Kelter
Alison Skillin
Denis R Shovlin
Marg
Claire Bannister
Catherine Hepple
Mike Harrison
Rebecca Scarlett
Stephanie Fraser
Sophie Lawson
Catherine Purves
Morag Innes

Apologies

Alexander Stewart MSP
Jackie Baillie MSP
Gillian Mackay MSP

Ben Hall
David M Nicholson
Patricia Hewitt
Robin Wickes

Agenda item 1

It transpired that those online could not hear at the beginning of the meeting, so the AGM did not take place and will be rescheduled.

Agenda item 2

UCAS made a presentation to the group with Slides – (to be circulated with the minutes to Members.)

UCAS application process data research findings were presented to the group, on their report 'Where Next: What is the experience of disabled students in education?' To provide further clarification on the application process for those with a disability, learning disability, visual or physical impairment.

Every year, over 60,000 students with a physical and/or mental health condition apply through UCAS to study at a university of college in the UK.

Nicole Turner and Emily Bennett-Cox shared that disabled applicants were more likely to study creative arts and design courses and less likely to study subjects like business management courses. Disabled applicants are less likely to be placed at higher tariff institutions and they're more likely to travel further to study.

UCAS has updated their language to align with the social model of disability and they encourage people to get in touch with them to feedback on anything to do with their services.

Benn Hall updated the CPG regarding UCAS' "journey to a million" campaign ahead of a projected 1 million applications by 2030 and there is a batch of essays being released, the last of which will occur in June 2023.

UCAS's report recommended that:

- The DWP extend their Access to Work Adjustment Passport scheme to ease the transition of students into higher education.
- The progression journey for disabled students needs to start earlier.
- There needs to be greater transparency and detail about support in higher education for disabled students.
- There needs to be equity of access for all pupils, regardless of background and school type.

Question and Answers following the presentation by UCAS:-

Stan Flett – registered blind. For him life began at 14years when he attended the Royal Blind School. Teachers did not have a clue how to teach the visually impaired beforehand. He is encouraged that Education is now more inclusive for those who are visually impaired. He is aware that the RNIB work with teachers, to help them with teaching those with a visual disability. Stan made a comment about a Specialist who failed to diagnose his visual impairment saying 'your bluffing'.

Maggie Ellis – Stan has highlighted an issue that Education training for teachers, - it is only focused on disability for 1hour. Maggie has medical training which is important when it comes to the perspective of training those in Education. The population is rising and those born with a disability and surviving birth is rising dramatically.

Maggie Ellis – wished to raise the point with UCAS that the use of the word 'share' is not medical terminology used in the profession.

Maggie Ellis – thirdly wished to rise 'sensory awareness' for adults and children and the need to improve opportunities for all people. Those in the medical world do not seem to get proper training in 'sensory issues'. Maggie has had training in sensory processing

Bill Scott – Mature children reveal disability – the proportion in the population of those with a disability related to aging is 90% in School, 20% whilst working and then higher at retirement age. It grows worse as life progresses. Mental health issues is the fastest rising cause of disability in the UK. Of the slides shared it was good to look at transitions to adulthood and should include Education.

Alison Skillin – Dog Assistance support – there is discrimination, and little is done for those in Education. Interested to know what statistics relate to assistance dogs in Education sector.

UCAS, Ben Jordan : There is a growing population of disabled people and talks will continue on best support. In relation to the terminology ‘share’ – UCAS applications use the work ‘share’ to input information – for example - ...’ has chosen to ‘share’ this information about them. Regarding sensory training – medical schools council have a close relation to this and happy to have a conversation outside of the meeting.

UCAS, Nicola Turner – Terminology moved from the words ‘disclosed’ to ‘declare’ – to ‘share’. It was found to be the best way to get students to share information about themselves. Experts thought it was the best use of the word and using the most up to date terminology. Happy to receive further feedback on use of terminology.

Lynne Glenn, Scottish Disability Sport – Sport in Scotland – would like to ask UCAS if the statistic is 1 in 6 with a disability or 1 in 7 with a disability.

UCAS – confirmed it was 1 in 6.

Lyn Portman, Chief Executive of Disability Equality Scotland (DES) – Some are not confident in declaring an impairment. During school years limited in support provided. Diagnostic is not always there. It needs to start at Primary school. Do UCAS take into consideration applications where you share your disability and would results be taken into account? Those who are more than capable but need support of BSL or a scribe – would this be taken into account in the end result?

Stephanie Fraser, Chief Executive of Cerebral Palsy Scotland – Some with disabilities such as learning disability, mental health disability and physical disability achieve higher grades but - lower grade institutions. For some of those with Cerebral palsy would prefer to study at Open University as it is easier for them. Are we lumping everyone together with their disabilities. Those with a physical support disability need different support and a different pathway.

Rebecca Scarlett – Admissions process for disabled – working with Universities in Scotland – contractual admissions if qualifications have been impacted how do admissions taken this into consideration. Having a better place to input information. UCAS ‘disabled’ on application doesn’t necessary get past to admission person. Move on line.

Julie Kerry (replacing Alison Keir who was unable to attend) – Inclusive support for a range of disabilities – support students to help with needs that need to be addressed. Digital inclusion is sometimes better but sometimes it is not the tech that matches the individual’s needs. Universities need the support.

Maggie Ellis – Digital inclusion – there used to be a CPG on Digital inclusion but the Convener stood down and there was difficulty in finding a replacement. It is a tragedy because that CPG dealt with a lot of the questions being raised today. Met with children and asked them what they wanted. We should try to reinstate it.

Maggie Ellis – Education & Sensory problems – Stan Flett’s example of being blind happens for people with sensory problems, For example, she knows of a case where a child was deemed stupid but wasn’t at all, another could spell every dinosaur but couldn’t write on the line. - Need a better understanding of sensory problems, links between brain and body and it is a tragedy that we still have people in Education not in the know.

UCAS, Ben Jordan – Thank you for your interest in our work. We are trying to drive change and collaboration and keen to work with you individually. Digital accessibility – there is a role for UCAS to be more accessible. There should be a discussion on contractualised admissions and information collected with applications so that data can be sent early on. Institutions have different admissions and we would welcome a conversation on that front. UCAS have an ongoing report programme, personal statements and continue to enhance a range of choices. Happy to speak to organisations off line.

Denis R Shovlin – Encephalytus – can’t read body language, it gets misinterpreted. He used to get beaten and has had a difficult life. He attended University but had a rough time with other students. PED, Glasgow – hopes people in future will get better support in sport.

Agenda item 3

Matters Arising

Maureen Curtin – would like added to the agenda a discussion on how to access training in assisted technology. Mobile masts 3g networks to be switched off. How can we keep people safe?

Maggie Ellis – European group for technology are doing courses on this assisted technology. Alison Skillin and Maggie are involved in this work. There is a Parishioner who does this work for old technology and access to new technology and it would be good to invite her to another meeting.

Terry Robinson – He is aware that people have been sent pin codes to enable you to use 2g for the foreseeable future. Also contacting blind people.. Contact Terry if you wish to discuss.

Ian Buchanan, Secretariat – Advised he will circulate the Slides with the minutes.

The scheduled date for the next meeting is 13 September 2023 at 1pm-2.30pm.

Meeting Closed.