

Deputies & Senior Staff Group (D&SSG)

Inaugural Discussion Forum: Meeting Notes

University of Birmingham, 27th Nov 2019

Present: Diane Job (Chair, Birmingham), Kirsty Kift (Coventry), Cheryl Coveney (OU), Selena Killick (OU), Vicki Mcgarvy (Staffordshire), Janet Weaver (Keele), Ant Brewerton (Warwick), Heather Green (Warwick), Jessica Wainwright (UCB), Joanne Dunham (Leicester), John Dowd (Birmingham), Joe Foley (UCB), Ian Keepins (Birmingham), Helen Curtis (Loughborough), Emily Clark (Wolverhampton), Jenny Rochfort (Nottingham), Phil Vaughn (Coventry), Ella Able (Worcester), Gaz J Johnson (Mercian Collaboration)

Apologies: Alan Brine (DMU), Anne Knight (Cranfield), Joss Granger (Wolverhampton), Ben Veasey (Loughborough),

Diane welcomed everyone and introduced the meeting and its purpose: to discuss and consider if a 'senior library staff' special interest group under the Collaboration's umbrella should be conveyed. The meeting was informed through discussions at earlier Directors Board and Steering Group, as well as a survey report. Diane also provided some insight into the strategic development of the Collaboration, and why such a group was seen as a potentially valuable addition to its portfolio of activities. GJJ offered some further insights into the questions thrown up by the survey.

Diane stressed two key outcomes of the meeting: to either convene or not convene a SIG. This was entirely depending on people's input today, although, she noted a group must offer potential value to participants and their own organisations. The Directors Board and Steering Group were largely supportive of the idea of a group, but acknowledged it needed willing engagement from across the Collaboration in order to succeed.

Following introductions, the following areas of concern w.r.t. the group were identified in initial discussions:

- Representation and membership: Who can/should participate?
- Experience and knowledge exchange: How can these be facilitated?
- Widening professional networks
- Regional (local) configuration: Deemed advantageous in contrast to national bodies.
- Relationship with external bodies: e.g. RLUK, SCONUL Deputies, MUAL.
- Overlaps, synergies and benefits to the collective agenda of the Collaboration members.

The Chair then facilitated a wider discussion to explore the viability of the group, and importantly how it could be best configured to be of value to senior library staff, their institutions and the Collaboration. Following an extensive discussion, the key point was: **Yes, establishing the group was seen to be worthy of developing.** GJJ noted that should the group, after exploration, fall short of member expectations, there was always the potential to discontinue it, as with all the other Collaboration SIGs.

The following points were generally agreed upon:

- **Value:** There was value in establishing the group w.r.t.: dealing with change, horizon scanning 'beyond the curve' along with helping provide information and support for strategic planning were all seem as invaluable tangible elements of a group. Provides a USP not met by other SIGs (e.g. MSDG discussions not at a level suitable for senior managerial decisions). Regional perspective valued: avoiding 'capital centrality' but also in meeting unique regional challenges (rurality, transport networks, partnerships etc)
- **Format:** Face-to-face meetings were preferred, although virtualised discussions could be also used for particular topics. Regularity of meetings (2-4 times annually) would drive momentum and commitment. This would contrast positively with national 'comparators' (e.g. SCONUL, RLUK etc).
- **Membership:** An 'inclusive' forum format was preferred to a 'representative' committee, allowing a breath of skills, insights and experience to be present, and not restricting the CPD to a single individual per institution. No 'fixed' membership, to ensure the right people in the room, but would need to have a 'critical mass' to be self-sustaining.
- **Governance:** Draft terms of reference would be established through online discussion and finalised at the next meeting. Input from the Directors Board, via the Collaboration Chair, would be sought as needed. Embracing group autonomy, rather than strictly 'directed' approach was seen as a desirable element, in contrast to national comparators
- **Structure:** A mix of operational and strategic discussions would be valuable, as senior managers deal with box. Shared projects, collaborations and experience sharing could all form part of the meeting mix. . Group could act as a springboard to operationalise national agendas at a regional level.
- **Next Steps:** The group would aim to meet again in 2020 (Feb/Mar) potentially in the East Midlands to identify the next steps. An online discussion group would be set up to facilitate this.

The meeting closed with lunch and networking time for all present.

Actions

ACTION: ALL to participate in drafting outline ToR

ACTION: ALL to agree venue, time and location for next meeting (Feb/Mar 2020)

ACTION: ALL to consider how to widen group membership to ensure representative inclusivity

ACTION: Steering Group to consider funding equipment for virtual meeting attendance

ACTION: Diane to report back on discussions to Directors Board and Steering Group

ACTION: GJJ to set up and configure new distribution list for group

ACTION: GJJ to share notes from meeting on list

ACTION: GJJ to re-share draft MC strategy document (Jan 2020)

ACTION: GJJ to create Webpage for the group