



Mercian Collaboration Development Officer

Update report to Steering Group, 13th August 2020

Since the May Steering Group, the Officer's focus has continued, as usual, on: supporting SIG activities, maintaining governance and operations, alongside facilitating communications, liaison and marketing. Nine formal group meetings have been attended during this period [1], with numerous other shorter informal meetings with SIG chairs and officers also held [2]. Demand for the Officer's attention and input, alongside the preparations and outcomes from these meetings, have accounted for a large portion of the Officer's working schedule over this period. Infrequent exchanges with SCONUL have continued during this period, with far more frequent engagement with other regional collaboration officers/managers. In the absence of the treasurer, the Officer has been monitoring expenditure in cooperation with SCONUL Accounts, alongside providing subscription models and information for consideration by the Chair and Steering Group in their decision-making process.

The Officer also chaired and hosted the most recent Regional Collaboration Officers' Colloquium. Key issues which emerged from this meeting included:

- Northern Collaboration and NoWAL, following their consultation, are moving towards a proposed merger of the two groups. This will need to be in a configuration which is agreeable to members of both groups, and while there is overlap between their membership, it is noted there are concerns over a 'reduction in regional agency and representation' from some members. Additionally, variances over post/pre-merger subscription levels and SIG remits remain to be resolved. Hence this merger is by no means a certainty.
- The Northern Collaboration, akin to the MC, has moved its conference online, and delayed it to mid-Nov 2020. Following our event's cancellation, they are concerned that they may suffer a similar downturn in session proposals. It is also scheduled to take place over two days, rather than their standard single day event.
- SCURL have successfully shifted their AGM to an online event within their organisation's rules.
- NoWAL's Senior Staff Group (analogous to our Deputies & Senior Staff Group) has been meeting on a monthly basis during lockdown, due to member demand. This has been very successful in propagating best practice and responses to the changing service environment.
- M25 Manager and Staff have permanently pivoted to home working, and have permanently closed their offices from Aug 2020. Their AGM is also online, but with over 50 members voting arrangements have been challenging.
- WHELFF noted demands on senior staff time during lockdown have precluded some of their efforts to bring people together. They too hosted an online conference in June, using live and recorded elements.
- Numerous online events have been trailed, with reasonable levels of success across the collaborations. Experience from these continues to be shared on the Officers' private forum.
- Various discussions were also held regarding individual managerial, support and oversight arrangements.

Notably during recent months, the Officer has organised and co-hosted three virtual networking events (13/5, 10/6, 29/7) which have been extremely well reviewed and received by participants. These events represent the bulk of the events offered by the Collaboration since the instigation of lockdown in March. Further events are planned for September onward.



Operationally, numerous updates to the website and its information have been managed (group membership, conference details, event information), alongside two batches of security update testing at the request of Adaptive. The Officer produced [seven news items](#) for the website during this period, with an eighth imminently expected, detailing events and activities, announcements and sources of Collaboration support for member staff. In this way, alongside its social media feeds and general discussion lists, the Collaboration can be perceived by its membership to have continued to deliver value during the ongoing lockdown/pandemic period. Additionally, the Officer has rolled out the completed Strategic Plan and Annual Report 2019, alongside revising the Conference Sponsorship policy, to reflect the online pivot. He has also produced two reports concerning the [virtual networking event](#) and feedback on the [MSDG's future event plans](#).

[1] Discounting vacation weeks, this covers 11 employed days.

[2] Major meetings attended: Conference Group (7th July), Deputies (23rd June), Directors Board (28th May), MDF Meeting (26th May, 29th July), Regional Officers (2nd July), Staff Development Group (13th July), Steering Group (13th Aug), Virtual Networking (13th May)