

Mercian Collaboration Steering Group

30th October 2024 (Online)

In attendance

Emma Walton, Chair (EW)

Sue Ackermann, Vice-Chair (SA),

Pete Maggs, Treasurer (PM)

Ruth Jenkins, Executive Officer (RJ)

Judith Keene (JK)

Sarah Pittaway (SP)

Jo-Anne Watts (JW)

1) Conference Group update

The Mercian 2024 conference went really well and came in under budget (in fact made a profit) – thanks were given to the Conference Group (CG).

The CG had met since the conference and had some proposals and some additional thoughts

- To remain in person (valued by attendees and sponsors)
- To be held at the same venue (DeMontfort University, Leicester)
- To review the need for a theme – would a no-theme conference speed up organising the conference
- Timing – the timing of the conference (2nd week of September) causes some issues for organisation due to the summer vacation. The CG had no suggestions about a new time but did think that deciding on a keynote/venue etc needed to be earlier in year.

In addition, it was felt that more support could be offered to presenters and that the guidance currently offered be extended.

The SG agreed

- that the conference should remain in person
- following some discussion that the 2nd week of September was as good a time as any and was established as Mercian conference time.

- However, there were some concerns about the conference taking place in the East Midlands two years in a row and that the alternate West/East Midlands was preferable.
- The SG also felt that having no theme could leave to challenges with organising the conference, agreeing papers/presentations, for those submitting etc,

Action: SA to update CG on the discussion and to convey thanks

Action: SA to contact West Midlands members re venue.

2) Finance update

1. Finances

An update was received – indicating that despite the conference group’s excellent efforts we will have more expenditure than income for 2024.

2. Finance/subs review

PM to put together a group to review rates and bandings. JW to be a member plus Chris Porter (as agreed at Board 23/8/24) and others to represent a range of bands. Group will be small initially to start the work.

3) Review of Groups

Agreed actions following Summer meeting held on 23/08/2024:

1. Operational groups to be renamed core groups to reflect their significance to the work of the collaboration.
2. Proposed that Disability Forum could become a group with a broader EDI remit and become a core group.
3. Further work be looked at around how we define groups and expectations for support, what we expect of the groups etc.
4. Emma to work with Deputies group separately as this doesn’t quite compare to other groups

Action : EW to this work is using paper delivered to the Board (23/8/24) which will be reviewed made simpler. Work will include – expectations of the group and expectations of the SG/Board.

4) Agree a scheme of work to look at groups

Action: EW will work with G E-C (OU) to help plan and organise (as above).

5) Steering Group and officers' terms

1. Proposal from Chair re timing

Chair proposed

- That the handover from EW to SA be moved from March 2025 to November 2025.
- As a consequence, all SG members and Treasurer would need to stay on for the same extended period.

All SG members agreed that this should be taken to the Board as a proposal and if approved are happy to stay on for an additional 6 months.

- A look at the governance around this is advised to ensure clarity etc

6) Agenda for Mercian Board on 29th November 2024

This will include continuing discussions on value as agreed at the August Board meeting.

Action: RJ/EW to work on agenda including request for items from the wider membership.

SG colleagues suggested that reorganisations/restructures/service redesign would be a useful topic as this is affecting several members.

7) AOB

Website and officer reduction in hours.

Action: EW and RJ to work with SCONUL on website move which may have a bearing on when RJ's hours are reduced to 0.3 from 0.4fte.

Emma Walton, Chair
Ruth Jenkins, Executive Officer

November 2024