

# NASMA News

## Update from the Chair

It would be good if I could say that things had gone much calmer and a bit easier on the SFE front but obviously they have not!

Since I wrote to you in the last newsletter, things have been just as busy in the sector as it would appear (certainly in my experience) that SFE have simply left all the complex applications until last. I wanted to update you on a number of the 'hot topics' of the moment:

### Consent to share

This has caused us a lot of additional work over the past year. As I am sure you are aware SFE have come up with a plan that enables students to register consent for SFE to share information with up to two individuals as well as possibly an advice centre, CAB or

disability team.

Forms will be available from the direct.gov website or students can ring up and give consent over the phone.

Students will be able to choose a password which the nominated centres or individuals will need to have when they ring up as well as the SSN or customer reference number.

Once up and running this system will be used for all aspects of a student's application – from pre entry to repayment and it will be applied equally to traditional students to those applying for targeted support such as CCG, DSA, etc.

For 2011 this consent will be incorporated on the PN1/PR1/online application – but students will still have the option of adding consent later.

I had hope that this would be up and running successfully by now but SFE have said that the proposal had to be approved by their legal team and the SLC management board. They also need to do some changes to the screen that staff see when they are on the phones. I will give you more information as soon as I have any.

### Migrant Workers

Work continues in relation to these ongoing issues – thanks for raising them. We would like more examples of genuine cases.

Please e-mail them to

[office@nasma.org.uk](mailto:office@nasma.org.uk) or use the on line form to report them to us. We are in the process of setting up another meeting with SFE and BIS to discuss working practices, eligibility and entitlement. We also have UKCISA at our conference running a session on this topic.

### NHS review

The outcome of this review has been put on hold until after the election. Whilst understandable this is quite disappointing as those of us working with DoH funded students understand the financial constraints that they are studying under.

### Ongoing work in relation to links with other organisations

As advised previously we are keen to not let SFE monopolise all of our time and efforts (this has certainly been a challenge this year).

We are hoping to have some news fairly soon in relation to Rightsnet and reduced membership charges for NASMA members. The meeting with CPAG is now to be held at the beginning of June.

Hope you all have a slightly more relaxed term and I look forward to seeing many of you in Brighton.

Best wishes  
Lynne Condell

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## Conference 2010 Brighton

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For those of you who have not booked already you have missed the early booking discount. To guarantee your place you need to book soon as possible as Conference is filling up fast and is now advertised to external organisations.

After the feedback from Conference 2009 we have once again, we hope, put together a programme that meets all of our Members' development needs across all levels of experience.

Brighton is a vibrant seaside town and has lots to offer in terms of sights, attractions, shopping and weather permitting swimming. Lets hope we get that Barbeque Summer this year!

And to give you a flavour.....

Brighton hosted it's first full marathon on this year.

Many of the local buses have names of famous people who have a connection to the city. Examples of former residents of Brighton and Hove include Rudyard Kipling, Dame Anita Roddick, Adam Faith, Martha Gunn, Graham Greene and Lord Olivier.

Brighton was the first major resort in Britain to allow a portion of beach to be designated for nude bathers. For those brave enough to bare all, head to Black Rock.

Watch out for the seagulls – these giant sized birds have a taste for chips and ice cream and can spot a unsuspecting tourist a mile off. Check out the Facebook group 'I have genuine FEAR of the seagulls in Brighton!'

The Sea Life Centre claims to be the world's oldest aquarium.

Thanks to the Prince Regent, the dirty weekend was invented in Brighton

True locals fiercely reject the term London-by-sea.

Brighton boasts itself as the 'gay capital of the UK' and Kemp Town Brighton's own 'Gay Village'

By Helen Abrahams,  
University of Brighton

### Brighton Facts

In 2000 Brighton was granted city status.

The West Pier is one of only two Grade 1 listed piers in the country. It closed to the public in 1975, and despite much local and national interest and support in restoring the pier to some of its former glory two arson attacks in 2003 destroyed any chance of salvation as the Heritage Lottery Fund decided to withdraw its funding of the project.

Having had their ground sold from beneath their studs in 1997 to make way for a retail park (including a Burger King drive-thru), League 1 football club Brighton and Hove Albion are looking forward to a bright future with the construction of a new 22,500-seater stadium adjacent to University of Brighton's Falmer Campus. The stadium is due to open next year.



## How to get the most out of your AGM

Getting the most from your AGM

Private companies are no longer required to hold AGMs under the terms of the Companies Act 2006. So, if we wanted to, we could choose to change NASMA's constitution (the Articles of Association) to reflect this. As a Board, we'd hope the membership would not wish to go down this route, as we believe the AGM is the ideal opportunity for members to have direct discussion with the Board on important issues.

What happens at the AGM?

The AGM serves a number of important functions, it:

- Reports from Board members and Committees receives the Company accounts
- Receives the minutes of the previous AGM for approval
- Considers recommendations for Honorary Life Membership
- Holds elections to the Board of Directors
- Receives and considers motions

It is the last two items we'd like to draw attention to.

Elections are extremely important in ensuring NASMA can continue to play its part in contributing to policy development and debate regarding all aspects of student money advice. Ensuring NASMA has a full quota of active Board members gives us the best opportunity to maintain NASMA's profile and to ensure all its members are aware of developments which affect their clients. Board positions are voluntary but offer a superb opportunity for career development as you can find yourself working face-to-face with policy makers and government ministers. We'd like to ask you to consider running for a Board position, and if you decide not to, to review the information about the candidates who do stand so you can make an informed decision when you vote – please use your vote!

Motions are your chance, as a NASMA member, to get your ideas for improvements or developments to be considered by the membership.

Once approved at the AGM, it is the Board's duty to ensure motions are carried out. If you have an idea or proposal that you'd like to take to the AGM, watch out for the emails which are sent prior to Conference – the call for motions goes out on 23<sup>rd</sup> April and you have until 7<sup>th</sup> May to submit your motion (which must be seconded by another member) to the Secretary.

Phil Davis, NASMA Secretary

## Disabled Students Allowance

NASMA publishes its first guide for students!

NASMA was approached by BIS to produce a leaflet providing an overview to the DSAs application process, placing emphasis on the need to apply early. They were concerned that the SLC had put out messages that the process is 'very complex' and that students might be discouraged from applying. BIS wanted an independent party to provide reassurance.

NASMA took a lead in drafting the material, and worked in consultation with Skill, NADP, NNAC, the NUS, Research Councils UK and the OU. We received very positive feedback from these organisations and BIS for the approach we took and the material produced. The resulting guide has been endorsed by David Lammy MP, who also congratulated us on the work we've done and our professional approach to meet a tight deadline. We hope to work on similar collaborations in the future.

The leaflet has been published on the direct.gov website at [www.direct.gov.uk/dsas](http://www.direct.gov.uk/dsas) and accessible formats are available on Skill's website. No hard copies have been produced, as BIS have incorporated accessibility features into the pdf version, but it can be easily downloaded as an A4 document.

## Regional Focus: Paul Rossi - London & SE

.London and the South East continues to try it's hardest to get the whole membership of the region together... Paul is quite pleased that not everyone comes to the meetings, as we'd need a conference venue all our own. Those that do turn up are a vibrant bunch, willing to scrutinize and offer opinion on whatever other colleagues have burning their synapses. We have enjoyed the opportunity of sharing our frustrations with people who truly understand the complexity of the work we do, because we all do the same work. We have also taken the view that we will not waste

our energies on those things that seem intent on adding to those frustrations (RFCs are no longer invited). We have recently spent time thinking about how to put the world to rights, and shared our thoughts on money advice, ALF and on the general delivery of services to students... that pretty much covers the whole NASMA aims and objects in one swoop.

## Regional Focus: Bill Stronach - Scotland

There have been 2 meetings held in Scotland so far in this academic year. In November 2009 at Edinburgh the meeting was attended by Lynne Condell & Jo Gibson in order to give an update on the Training Project. This visit was well received by members who felt that the thorough update was useful. In addition SFE processing problems were discussed and more specifically SAAS processing problems. Although not on the scale of the SFE problems there was a significant increase in the number of problem cases that members highlighted. SAAS have confirmed that they had difficulties in the processing of applications due to the jump in numbers applying to both HE and FE and are looking at how they can minimise difficulties for the coming year.

In March 2010 at Strathclyde the meeting was attended by Claire Neads of the Higher Education Learner Support team which is based in Glasgow. A recent consultation had taken place with institutions asked to respond regarding changes to the childcare support available to students. Although no extra funds are available a number of options are being looked at from making the childcare support package a fully statutory one to the current combination of support from SAAS and Discretionary/Childcare Funds awards.

## Regional Focus: Jan Galligan - North West

We have so far this year have had two regional meetings held in the North West with another one due on May 20<sup>th</sup>. Attendance this year has been great and it has been good to see so many of our members coming along to share experiences and express views on what has been a challenging year or all. We have had updates from our SFE Regional Financial Consultant John Legg regarding the service students have had from SFE this year, discussions around

Migrant Workers, conference 2010, the NHS review and the Training Project. Other areas of concern to members in the NW have also included students trying to prove independent status and Compelling Personal Reasons and how ALF has been used in supporting our students.

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The Board welcomes any views or opinions for the Newsletter or Website. If you would like to submit an article for inclusion then please contact the NASMA Office in the first instance. I am stepping down this year and so will be handing the reins of continuing the Newsletter & Website to someone new.

Remember NASMA is not just the Board, it is also you, the members, so please do contribute to the development of the Association and it's future.

Lindsey Hobbs  
 NASMA South West Representative

**New on the web**

- National Audit Office Report—March 2010 see links on NASMA website
- Decision Matrix SFE. The hitchhikers guide to the alternative Regs now on the members pages of the web site
- SFE Appeals form and guide—now on the members pages
- Conference 2010 booking forms—deadline for final bookings 21st May
- Minutes from Regional & Board Meetings

**The back page tea break**

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**Words Used**  
 migrant worker, anniversary, conference, relaxation, networking, ghost walk, beach hut, pavilion, hardship, finance, fifteen, delays, loans, grant, lanes, disco, keys, debt, sand, pier,