

Case Study: Transforming Learning Environments (TLE) - It Matters

Health Education England (HEE) working across the North West asked all Practice Education Facilitators (PEFs), Placement Development Managers (PDMs), Work Based Education Facilitators (WBEFs), and Skills for Health Academy North West to work collaboratively to transform the learning environment following an HEE event in 2015.

The WBEFs initiated contact with partnership organisations within the north of Greater Manchester and the "Transforming Learning Environments (TLE) Initiative Greater Manchester North" was formed.

The continuation of meetings was co-ordinated by Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust. To complement the team, a lecturer from the University of Salford School of Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work and Social Sciences also joined the group. The group, through cumulative thoughts and ideas, agreed to deliver a half day event.



The main catalyst for the half day event proposed for both educators and learners was the introduction of the HEE Quality Framework 2016/17 (see Further Links) addressing the quality standards and expectations that support and empower both learners and educators.

The group were also keen to demonstrate the theory of transformational learning, which could be facilitated through this event;



Transformative learning involves experiencing a deep, structural shift in the basic premises of thought, feelings, and actions. It is a shift of consciousness that dramatically and irreversibly alters our way of being in the world. Such a shift involves our understanding of ourselves and our self-locations; our relationships with other humans and with the natural world; our understanding of relations of power in interlocking structures of class, race and gender; our body awareness, our visions of alternative approaches to living; and our sense of possibilities for social justice and peace and personal joy.”

O’Sullivan, 2003

Material presented in the various sessions would provide the framework for both educators and learners to reflect and build upon. To determine if transformational learning had taken place it was acknowledged that follow up would be required at a later date.

Key Outcomes

- Collaborative and cohesive working of stakeholders within the group with varying agendas
- United learning and development for both educators and learners in one event
- Provision of skills to participants that could be utilised both in professional and personal life
- Facilitation of addressing different perspectives and perceptions
- Contribution to the delivery of HEE standards as cited in the HEE’s (2016) Quality Framework

Background

The TLE Initiative Greater Manchester North group formed in 2015 with the remit of embracing the TLE concept and contributing to the enhancement of standards of practice, and innovation, in learning through joint initiatives. Hosted by Pennine Care the groups would be a collaboration with key external stakeholders inclusive of:

- Practice Education Facilitators (PEF) from Pennine Care Trust and Pennine Acute Trust.
- North West Placement Development Network (NWPDN).
- Work Based Education Facilitator (WBEF) Network.
- Skills for Health Academy North West.
- University of Salford School of Nursing, Midwifery, Social Work and Social Sciences.

Working under the direction of HEE the group espouses that the quality of teaching, learning and assessments within learning environments is at the core our responsibility in the NHS. The relationship between the quality of education and training does have an effect on the delivery of healthcare (Barr, 2001). The latter was further reinforced through TLE events, which the majority of members attended, which aimed to inspire delegates to deliver this agenda locally.

As outlined in the HEE Quality strategy (HEE Quality Framework, 2016) it is paramount that we ensure that learning and educating are optimised to facilitate the delivery of the Five Year Forward View (2014) and to ensure that there is a workforce that is equipped to deliver on New Models of Care (2015). As a group with a shared goal of maximising the quality of learning it was decided that we would deliver an event for both the educator and learner together – this would be a pilot with the vision to ‘go large’ if it was successful.



Key Aims

- To deliver an event that brought educators and learners together, as traditionally these are educated as separate groups
- Enhancement of continuous quality improvement for learners throughout the locality
- For educators and learners to identify and understand their learning styles, and that of others, thus facilitating optimisation of learning and educating

- To provide both groups with the knowledge and skills to provide the delivery and receipt of feedback in a constructive and positive way
- To address and embed the Francis Report (2013), the Cavendish Report (DoH, 2013), the Willis Report (2012), HEE standards (2016) and, TLE agenda in delivery of education

Key Stages of Set-up

The group met briefly in November 2015, although this was sporadic on membership and no clear purpose or focus of the group was established at this time. It was acknowledged that all project groups involved with a focus on quality learning would need to be represented at future meetings. These included the North West WBEF network, HEI provider, NWPDN, PEF network and the Skills for Health Academy. Due to work commitments the group did not meet again until May 2016.

At the May meeting a chair and vice chair were elected and Terms of Reference produced. General discussions also took place as to what the group wanted to achieve and how this would address the HEE quality standards, which were later embedded in the HEE Quality framework 2016/2017, and how to utilise the skills acquired from the [TLE Master Classes](#) for those that were attending.

The TLE Master Classes were commissioned as part of HEE’s initiative to innovate, stimulate and continuously improve quality for learners throughout organisations across the North West area. The contents of the Master Classes involved four sessions: Transforming Learning Environments; Techniques to Evaluate Effective Learning; Educating the Educator; and Integrating Technologies.

In the initial stages of the formation of the group it was important to recognise that all group members had different agendas and differing priorities so these would need to be embedded within any work produced.

A skill matrix was completed by all members – this enabled effective distribution of key tasks. Members were also given the opportunity to develop skills alongside colleagues.

It was decided in the infancy of the group that a learner event would be delivered that addressed HEE quality standard 3 – “Supporting and Empowering Learners” and standard 4 – “Supporting and Empowering Educators” (HEE, 2016).

A six month time frame was decided necessitating the need for monthly meetings and cohesive working - this was facilitated by splitting into small working groups and meeting outside of the regular meeting.

How it Works

Whilst the delivery of a learner/educator event had been decided further clarification was required on what type of learners and educators would attend. To ensure the day provided enrichment external speakers would be invited to deliver on more specific topics. It was agreed that a quorum of thirty was ideal for this initial event – these would be an equal split of both educators and learners with varying backgrounds, professions, ages and life experiences. It was also acknowledged that there would be a mixture of learning styles so delivery of all sessions would need to address these (Honey and Mumford, 1992).

Effective learning takes place when an individual goes through the four stages of learning:

(1) having a concrete experience followed by

(2) observation of and reflection on that experience which leads to

(3) the formation of abstract concepts (analysis) and generalisations (conclusions) which are then

(4) used to test hypothesis in future situations, resulting in new experiences.

(Kolb, 1984)

As the group were not able to specifically orientate to the individuals preferred method of learning all the sessions needed to ensure that activities were designed and delivered in ways that offered each learner the chance to engage in the manner that they were best suited to.

The group of 30 would be further broken down into three groups of 10, each containing learners and educators from different groups addressing the inter-professional learning agenda. Research undertaken by Barr (2001) demonstrated that inter-professional learning can contribute to collaboration in practice therefore enhancing delivery of care.

Brief presentations and the beginning and the end of the day were also delivered – this outlined the aims and objectives and also some ‘food for thought’ of how they may utilise the subject matter both in a professional and personal capacity.

The group titles were;

- Supporting and Empowering the Learner (see Appendix 1)
- Emotional Resilience and Mindfulness (see Appendix 2)
- Effective Communication and Feedback (see Appendix 3)

Resources

To enable the group to work effectively and collaboratively time and commitment was required from each member. In addition to this, supplementary members were added to meetings and the event, as necessary, to ensure quality and to increase knowledge base concerning particular subjects – for example mindfulness. These members did not increase the core group but their input was valued and the benefits appreciated.

The event was held at a Pennine Care NHS Foundation Trust location and refreshments were provided as part of the venue booking with additional 'goodies' (biscuits, fruit, chocolates) provided by group members to ensure a welcoming environment to those who attended. There was no financial cost for the venue or refreshments.

As a 'Thank You' for attending, each participant left the event with a canvas bag, 'Dignity' badge, mouse mat and information fliers. These were provided free of charge by Skills for Health.

Key Challenges

- Group formation and dynamics – The formation of the group was a challenge in itself as members had not previously worked together on a project such as this and there was a lack of knowledge regarding each others abilities, strengths and weaknesses. This was overcome as the group evolved. During discussions it became clearer where people's strengths lay; and the advantages they could bring to the group. Belbin's (2010) concept of team roles and evolution was reflected in this and each group member's strengths and weaknesses were acknowledged when roles or tasks were delegated. As a result of this the group performed effectively and the event was held without delays with all tasks completed. In addition, this also helped to overcome the challenge of putting trust in others when delegating tasks and/or roles.
- Group performance – Another challenge presented was ensuring the group worked in a timely matter to meet deadlines and make certain the event was successfully held on the date determined. With this challenge, Tuckman's 1965 team development model as cited by Nestor (2013) could be visualised as the group naturally progressed through the four stages of forming, storming, norming and performing. Moving through these stages allowed the group to grow, face challenges, tackle problems, find solutions and deliver results.
- Resources (time) – Each member of the working group had work commitments and pressures. This, on occasion, led to absentees at meetings and decisions being made without all group members present. This challenge was overcome by effective and timely communication via emails to keep each member up-to-date with changes and developments. Additionally, meeting dates were attempted to be set up well in advance and taking into account different working patterns and availability.
- Geography – Challenges surrounding the geography of the proposed event and where to host it as it was targeted towards the north sector of Greater Manchester but needed to include varying professions from the HEI's/ Colleges/Trusts.
- Geography (of group members) – The group could be described as coterminous, in that members were spread across organisations as well as having work bases spanning the north west of Manchester and Salford (Milhauser, 2011). This presented challenges such as proximity of decision makers as well as being geographically challenging when co-ordinating meeting venues and times ensuring these were mutually beneficial to all. As previously mentioned, effective communication via email was utilised along with ensuring all members agreed on venues and meetings were held with as many members in attendance as possible.

- Project containment - Ensuring the size of the event was manageable as it was a pilot project and did not need to be too large. As the event was aimed at learners and educators, the planning needed to include a good mix of the two with the learner category further broken down into different professions to reflect a good blend.
- Containment of group size - As the project developed and ideas became more solidified; different professionals were invited to offer opinions and suggestions to enhance the proposed event. As a group, it was felt that these guests should not be included as permanent members of the group as it would then become too large and decisions would become more difficult to finalise.
- Different agendas – As the group was formed from varying job roles, this presented a differing view with regard to working agendas, targets, operational plans and proposed outcomes. This was overcome through discussion and developing a mutually beneficial outcome for the project that could be taken back to each management team and justify the time spent organising the proposed learning event.
- Learning styles/presenting styles – An additional challenge faced by the group was ensuring the event accommodated the different, unknown learning styles of participants whilst utilising the presentation skills of those within the group. This was overcome by each workshop being presented in a style that suits the topic and using visual learning styles alongside verbal and written information. A guest presenter was also invited to perform a more practical task to help underpin the theory presented on the day.
- See also Appendix 4 for further feedback

Key Learning

As a group coming together to deliver an informative event it was evident that the chosen venue and time scales were not adequate. For the event and for future events the venue would have to be reconsidered to allow for a bigger audience to participate. Additionally, the timings for future events will need to be re-evaluated as feedback from participants highlighted that they would have appreciated more time in each workshop to allow further depth of the topic and a better understanding to be gained.

From a reflective perspective, it was observed by the group that it is possible to achieve collaborative working when challenged with different agendas. It was reflected that this was due to the group having the same, or similar, learning cultures and the group worked in a positive, innovative and proactive manner.

The feedback from those who attended suggested that each student and educator had a unique perspective on learning and the workshops left both parties feeling empowered with new skills.

The group recognised the event highlighted and showcased leadership happening at all levels. As supported by the findings of the Francis Inquiry, a new generation of leaders is required in the NHS who can develop, and sustain, a leadership culture that sees efficiency as the ally of safety, compassion, and the friend of productivity.

Sustainability

The aim of the Transforming Learning Environments event was to bridge the gap between learners and educators and empower participants with knowledge and skills surrounding learning cultures and emotional resilience.

This would support the DoH's (2015) Culture Change in the NHS, applying the lessons of the Francis Inquiry, by developing a culture of learning within the NHS, which is critical to improving patient care.

At this time, there is no evidence that the event has had an impact on the practice of participants, however the intention is to follow up the learning event with a questionnaire regarding the impact of the event on their practice and the changes this has made. Immediate feedback from the day was positive and demonstrated a shift in perception around the three topics covered in the workshops (see Appendix 4). Participants acknowledged the need to change their practice to better meet the needs of their patients and better support their colleagues, peers and learners. Additionally, the immediate feedback from participants suggests learning had taken place during the event with regard to actively engaging patients. This would support recommendations made from the Berwick Report – Improving the Safety of patients in England (2013).

Supporting Material

- **Appendix 1** – Supporting and Empowering the Learner
- **Appendix 2** – Emotional Resilience and Mindfulness
- **Appendix 3** – Effective Communication and Feedback
- **Appendix 4** – Thematic Analysis and Overall Themes from TLE event
- **Appendix 5** – Contact Details
- **References and Further Links**

Next Steps

The event received a lot of positive feedback from participants and requests to lengthen the workshop to enable more in-depth learning to take place. As a result of this, the question of 'what next?' arose and was discussed, the outcome of which is to deliver the event again in the near future, however, varying methods of delivery will be considered for example; talking heads. The aim of different delivery methods would be to capture a larger group of participants whilst removing the challenge of venue size and location.

This would also allow more flexibility with the timing of the event, supporting different learning speeds whilst eliminating pressures on managers and educators to approve requests for time away from work, university or college.

As previously mentioned, there will be a follow-up questionnaire sent to participants to establish the long term effects of the event. This will take place six months from the date the event was held. Each participant was informed of this so the hope is that response rates will be high. In addition to this eWIN article, there will be additional write ups of the event in relevant journals. Finally, the event will be presented at TED (Technology, Entertainment and Design) in May 2017. This will detail the aim of the event alongside the findings and feedback with the hope of supporting similar learning events being held within a wider geographical area.

For more information contact:

Tracy Jones
North West Placement Development
Network (NWPDN) Greater Manchester
Tracy.jones@uhsm.nhs.uk
0161 475 0629

Authors: Gill Pilkington and
Wendy Sutton