

Human and Health Sciences Public Partnership Group: Empowering People to Influence Change

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Welcome from Professor John Playle, Dean of the School of Human and Health Sciences

“Since forming in 2013, the Group will shortly be running into its third year. After a period of consolidation a service user and carer office has been established, as well as the appointment of Alison Morris, Public Partnership Group Administrator, who will be dedicated to the administrative leadership. These additional resources which will support the Group reflect our ongoing commitment and recognition of the importance of this work.

“So far this year the Group has supported the International Day of Disabled People and hosted a well received play ‘Don’t Leave Me Now’ by the New End Theatre Beyond, which explored the effects of living with dementia. As a University we were shortlisted in the 2015 Nursing Times Student Awards in the Education Provider of the Year (pre-registration) category. Two members of the Group had the opportunity to attend the ceremony and although we did not win the award it was a big achievement for the work of the team, including the service users, to be recognised in the shortlist.

“Although service user and carer involvement in education has been recognised as essential, little has been published to date researching the importance of service user and carer involvement with health and social care education. So I am pleased that the initial stages of piloting and validating a survey exploring the effect of such involvement is now well underway.

“Dr Christine Rhodes, Dr Jane Tobbell, Frank Adams and I have recently submitted a funding bid to the General Nursing Council Trust to explore the experience and impact of service user and carer involvement in adult nursing education. The outcome of this application will not be known until later this year, however we will keep you posted.

“I am also looking forward to hosting the National Learning by Experience Network (LEN) meeting, as well as further exciting and important work in the coming year.”

Contents

Upcoming events

- Lived Experience Network Event

Reflecting on the year

- International Day of People with Disability
- Student Nursing Times Awards
- ‘Thank you’ awards
- Authenticity to Action: Involve and Evolve
- Exploring students’ learning in response to service user involvement in the curriculum
- Goodbye and thank you
- Welcome Alison
- Congratulations to Rebecca Ross

Service user experience

- Spotlight: a passion for involvement

Student experience

- My experience of working with the Public Partnership Group

Upcoming events

Lived Experience Network Event

We are delighted to announce that the University will be hosting the Lived Experience Network Showcase on 11 August 2015.

The event will provide the opportunity for individuals to learn about the range of involvement activities across the School of Human and Health Sciences from service users, students, staff members and community groups. This will be achieved through formal discussion and a number of discussion tables.

The Lived Experience Network is a national network of people with a shared interest in patient and public involvement in higher education.

The aim of the Network is to develop strong relationships with people who have real life experiences, students and academics, in order to enhance and improve practitioner education, patient experience and associated research in health and social care.

The Lived Experience Network is led by Jools Symons, Public and Patient Involvement Manager at Leeds Institute for Medical Education. The membership of the network has increased nationally and a number of very successful showcases have been held over the last two years in Leeds, Southampton, Surrey, Liverpool, Bradford and Sheffield.

In the next edition of the newsletter we will report on the success of the event.

Reflecting on the year

International Day of People with Disability

To celebrate International Day of Disabled People in December 2014, the Public Partnership Group held a stall in the University's Student Central.



Ilyas Akhtar, who is currently studying Health and Community Development BSc(Hons) and also a member of the group, had the opportunity to help prepare and host the event as part of his second year placement.

The event was a huge success and helped raise awareness of who and what the Public Partnership Group are and the work they do.

On 3 December 2014 people all over the world celebrated this day and promoted the achievements of disabled people.

Student Nursing Times Awards 2015

"I was delighted to be asked to attend the Student Nursing Times Awards 2015 in May 2015, alongside Kauser Iqbal to represent service users and carers from the University.

The University was successful in being shortlisted in the Education Provider of the Year (pre-registration) category, and Angela Yates, a student midwife at Huddersfield was shortlisted in the Student Midwife of the Year category.

Sadly we did not win in either category but had done exceptionally well to have been shortlisted. Everybody had a fabulous day and I really enjoyed the whole experience.”

Written by Christine Raw, Service User, pictured far right next to Kauser Iqbal



‘Thank you’ awards

In order to recognise the kindness and support shown to them, the Public Partnership Group introduced ‘thank you’ certificates, which they awarded to members of University staff who they felt had gone the extra mile in offering help.



The work of two members was acknowledged. Mick Digman for the amazing car parking assistance he provided and Jill Murphy for her fantastic work and helpful service at the number 10 café in the Harold Wilson building.

Both who just claimed they were just doing their job, were extremely surprised and pleased with their awards. We would like to thank them once again for the excellent service they provide.



Authenticity to Action: Involve and Evolve

Dr Christine Rhodes attended the Authenticity to Action service user conference organised by the Comensus team at the University of Central Lancashire in March 2015. This was attended by around 100 delegates comprising of service users, students and staff from Universities across the UK, Australia, Belgium and Italy.

The conference featured a wide range of excellent presentations, relating to the promotion and development of service user involvement in health and social care education. This included face to face engagement, co-production and the development of online resources.

Christine presented a paper on the critically engaged academic and the need for participatory approaches that promote a partnership approach to involvement. The event provided a great opportunity to network and learn about other activities taking place across the UK and beyond, as well as spend time with others who share the passion and enthusiasm for involvement.

Exploring students' learning in response to service user involvement in the curriculum

Service users now make significant contributions to the curriculum in the University's health and social care departments.

People who have personally experienced the service, in a wide range of areas from social work to podiatry, are now involved in the recruitment, teaching and assessment of future healthcare and social work professionals. However, there is very little research which explores what and if students learn from this.

Within the School of Human and Health Sciences, a project team including Dr Jane Tobbell, Dr Dan Boduszek, Dr Susie Kola-Palmer and Joanne Vaughn have designed and are validating a questionnaire aimed at understanding student learning in response to service user involvement.

This involved interviewing a number of university staff who have been responsible for writing the curriculum. Curriculum documents were examined and the literature already available was reviewed, including research that members of the Public Partnership Group had contributed to.

Using all this information a 31 item questionnaire was designed. This included items relating to the access of service users, for example: 'I have encountered different service users in my classroom study during my degree'. As well as items which call for a more subtle understanding of learning in healthcare such as: 'I would always share all the information I have with the service user'.

The questionnaire is currently within the validation process to ensure that it does what it is meant to do. The first step in the process involved asking service users from the Group to comment on the questionnaire items. Subsequent changes were made in response to these.

A pilot questionnaire was distributed to first year health and social care students at the beginning of the academic year and also to those graduating at the end of the academic year.

In order for the questionnaire to be valid, differences in responses between these two groups is expected to be seen. The results from these questionnaires are currently being analysed.

Goodbye and thank you

We recently said goodbye to Mandy Walsh, who has carried out many of the administrative duties for the group since it was set up.

Mandy has managed the workload on top of her other duties and provided over and above what has been expected. She is a real credit to the group and will be missed. The group thanked Mandy with a gift of flowers and chocolates. Mandy was happily surprised and said how much she had enjoyed working with the group.

Mandy officially handed over the baton to new Public Partnership Group Administrator: Alison Morris.

Welcome Alison



The Group are very happy to welcome Alison Morris, Public Partnership Group Administrator, who will be dedicated to the administrative leadership.

“I am so happy to be a part of the Group at the University. I have been in post for a couple of weeks now and have spent most of my time meeting people and finding out about the fantastic work that has already been undertaken. I am already planning some amazing future events and witnessing the beginnings of ideas in the pipeline. It is a real pleasure to be a part of something where I feel I can make a difference.

“I have had a bit of a varied career so far. I began by training in London as a Stage Manager. I worked on various projects such as rep theatre, theatre in education, performance art, trade shows, festivals, touring theatre companies and not forgetting Panto’s.

“I worked on a myriad of fringe projects which culminated into being co-founder of a theatre in education company called Bedsong, where we toured schools and colleges, but were finally forced to close our doors due to lack of funding.

“Whilst working as a senior bookseller in a bookshop in Trafalgar Square, I volunteered at Springboard for Children, a Children’s Literacy Charity in South London. I also volunteered and then went on to run

the Blue Elephant Young People’s Theatre in Camberwell South London.

“I trained as a Drama teacher to work with young people in further education. Once qualified and after some temporary posts I moved back home to the North of England and worked in an adult learners centre teaching literacy and numeracy along with IT.

“I then worked as a Befriending Scheme Coordinator for the Mental Health Charity: Making Space. Two gorgeous children later, here I am and raring to go. I have a personal interest as a parent of a child with additional needs, which inspires me every day and instils an even greater passion to provide support and positivity for this role.”

Congratulations to Rebecca Ross

Congratulations to Rebecca Ross who graduated this summer from Health and Community Development BSc(Hons).



Last year Rebecca completed her placement as a student working with the Public Partnership Group. She made an excellent contribution to the group and was a great asset. We benefitted greatly from her expertise and enthusiasm, and we would like to take this opportunity to thank her for all her hard work and wish her every success for the future.

Service user experience

Spotlight: a passion for involvement

“A brief background to this report may help understand my view point. Whilst teaching in a secondary school, I was interested in the distracting impact that alcohol and drug use had on the processes of teaching and learning.

“However, it was later, after training in counselling, that I was interested in the harmful impact that problematic drinking had on the families and others around them. This led me to pursue some more specialised training in the treatment of alcoholism and drug addiction with a focus on working with families in the early 1990’s. Since then, over the years I have worked as a counsellor and trainer in this field and, whenever possible, taken the opportunity to highlight the concerns of families and others, as it is not often that their voices get heard.

“I decided to study Health and Community Studies BSc(Hons) where I had the opportunity to explore my passion further by undertaking my literature based research study around the impact problematic drinker has on family members and the availability of services for families.

In particular the literature research study findings emphasised that:

- Individuals or families impacted by the problematic drinking of others have a health status below that of the general population (Casswell 2011).
- There was shortage of service provision for families (Flynn 2010).
- Services for alcohol and drug problems are focused on the person whose misusing is causing difficulties (Flynn 2010) (Orford 2010).
- There is a gap in knowledge and skill and a shortage of trained health personnel in this area (Crespi and Rueckert 2008).

“The consequence of all the above factors was that many family members, who might benefit, are not given the interventions needed.

“I had the opportunity to talk about these observations to Mental Health Nursing staff whereby I was asked to prepare a presentation on the ‘Effects of Alcoholism on the Family’. The response inspired me to ask other lecturers for a meeting to discuss these findings, explaining that I had training in the field and could prepare a lecture on the topic.

“In March 2014, I delivered the presentation to second year counselling students. From the evaluation feedback sheets, the students found the content useful and relevant, and recommended the session to other students, whilst the tutor and module leader recommended the input to all health professionals. This was very encouraging.

Service user involvement:

“During the final year of my studies, my role as a Student Support Worker introduced me to the Public Partnership Group, when I attended with a disabled student I was working with. Listening to the discussions of the group, I realised that there was a link with what I had been studying, in terms of the need to make use of the experiences of service users and carers in order to influence and improve the quality of the education around health and social care services.

“Of all the different ways in which people can be involved as a service user or carer; curriculum development, attending meetings and seminars, and assessments and research, had instant relevance and attraction for me. This was because I had come to the conclusion that there was not enough promotion of the effects of alcohol on families and their need for support in their own right. There are stories out there of quiet desperation, including my own, which are better told by the service users themselves.

“The Group’s agenda at one of their meetings included an item about piloting a series of skills development sessions. In April 2014, I had the opportunity to attend ‘managing quality: from student interviews to committee work’.

“The aim of the training was ‘to help service users and carers to recognise and develop skills for supporting the quality of education and training for health and social care professionals’. It was then I realised that my proposal could be pursued within the Group as it was consistent with their goals.

“This led me to write a brief proposal on the ‘Effects of Alcoholism on the Family’ which was circulated to nursing, midwifery and allied health staff, to see whether and how it fitted in with their curricula.

“In May 2015, I delivered a presentation entitled ‘Alcohol and Families’ to students on International Nurses Day. The feedback from the participants and the lecturers was positive and encouraging, another good indication that the presentation does indeed address a knowledge gap.

Taking steps to address the issue:

“It seems clear that there is a need to advance the debate about the effect of problematic drinking on families and the skills and confidence students gain in addressing this. I would like to see this taught as a mainstream topic within the curriculum. However, I will also continue to use my involvement within the Group to raise awareness and promote debate.”

Catherine Richardson, Note-taker for Student Services and Public Partnership Group member

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Flynn, B (2010) ‘Using systematic reflective practice to treat couples and families with alcohol problems’. Journal of Psychiatric and Mental Health Nursing. 17, pp 583-593.

Orford, J, (2010) Methods of assessment for affected family members’, Drugs Education, Prevention Policy. 17(1), pp 75-85.

Student experience

My experience of working with the Public Partnership Group

“During my second year of studying Health and Community Development BSc(Hons) I had the opportunity to undertake my work placement with the Group, which I really enjoyed.

“I fitted in well and all of the members welcomed me and made me feel part of the Group. I had the chance to put my knowledge and theory into practice and enhance my skills through undertaking a number of tasks including hosting and organising events, meetings, research and catering for service users.

“Over the months I have really got to know the members, who all have their own experiences and knowledge. They have made it a rewarding experience simply because they are all amazing individuals with lots to offer.

“This placement has helped boost my confidence and self-esteem, as well as teaching me many skills. I now feel fully equipped and ready to put my knowledge to work.”

Ilyas Akhtar, currently studying Health and Community Development BSc(Hons)