



Bridges to Learning ‘Lunch and Learn’; an Evaluation report of the pilot

1 Introduction

The Bridges to Learning partnership, of the Open University, UNISON and the Workers Education Association, exists to promote learning in the workplace and to engage all in learning. Its primary aim is to develop progression routes for learners in the health, social care and education sectors through to first steps of higher education and beyond.

Over the last five years it has helped over 7000 people from 10 different workplaces access learning. Its greatest success over the last five years, has been most particularly in engaging those who feel less confident in their skills or their capacity for learning.

This has been achieved by providing a wide variety of topics and range of learning opportunities, from tasters to whole day professional workshops and conferences, through the support and expertise of the network of Union Learning reps (ULRs) and effective project management. As a result thousands now have improved their English, maths and IT skills, undertaken professional development opportunities that may not otherwise have been open to them and some have progressed to gain further and higher education qualifications.

Many though remain daunted by the prospect of having to attain the higher-level qualifications that may be required in the future for them to keep their job. This applies especially those who were not made to feel successful at school or college. The Bridges to Learning ULRs, all of whom have proven to be some of the best examples of lifelong learners themselves, still believe that many of their colleagues have a deep-seated fear of ‘higher education’, feeling its ‘not for them’ or ‘beyond their reach’.

The proposed Lunch and Learn model was to offer ‘tasters’ on a number of healthcare-related topics, aimed primarily at Bands 1 – 4 NHS staff, their equivalents in local authorities and other workers in the Health and Social care sector who have not participated in learning at a higher education level.

The format, of an hour and a half taster session included providing a sandwich lunch for participants. It was envisaged that this would act as both an incentive to improve attendance but also enable staff members to take part in the session with minimum disruption to their workday, and avoid the need for complex backfill arrangements.

The Open University identified sufficient resource to provide tutor time and OU materials, Bridges to Learning provided the organisation and

administrative support along with the funding for the catering, whilst their wider partnership with employers and support organisations such as the TUC provided the workshop space.

The initial aim was to provide one lunch and learn taster in each of the eight workplaces, with an audience of 12-15 participants. However, such was the response to the programme that a total of 22 workshops that took place, with 328 participants and many others left disappointed due to the overwhelming demand for places.

The purpose of this report is to:

- Provide an overview of the Lunch and Learn programme
- Highlight its successes
- Explore the reasons for success
- Identify Lessons Learnt
- Highlight any challenges and areas for further improvement
- Provide recommendations.

2 Methodology

The findings in this report are drawn from a series of interviews with Open University staff, members of the Bridges to Learning team and ULRs, managers and HR staff in workplaces and eight participants in the Lunch and Learn programme, together with the two delivery tutors. The resulting themes from the interviews are underpinned through an analysis of the attendance data from the Bridges to Learning learner progression database.

3 The Findings

The overwhelming response from all of the participants in the interview programme were extremely positive, as:

- Despite the tight timescale, the Lunch and Learn programme was implemented successfully through efficient organisation and project management
- Almost three times as many learners than the initial targets were engaged in the programme greatly exceeding anticipated numbers
- All 8 workplaces took part
- A range of models emerged to suit individual workplaces
- The sessions attracted a huge diversity of participants, from grave diggers to local authority senior managers and NHS consultants
- The pilot has stimulated a greater demand and a wider range of topics for a further lunch and learn programme
- There is a proven thirst for 'higher education' level learning across the Health and Social Care sector, which now must be supported and stimulated

- The evaluation results are outstanding, with almost two-thirds of participants giving the taster an 'Excellent' rating
- 'Lunch' was greatly appreciated, but not as much as the learning!

A number of outcomes have been identified throughout the research and interview process, not least:

- Continued involvement in learning
- Raising the profile of OU
- Feed through to other OU provision
- Other positive impacts:
 - Increased staff morale/confidence
 - Improved cross-organisational communication
 - Demand for further taster sessions.

The pilot did identify some challenges, including:

- Managing 'demand'
- Pressure on organisation and administrative resources
- Developing efficient feedback mechanisms from participants
- Improving follow through to OU flexible learning routes
- Continuing and expanding the Lunch and Learn programme to meet demand.

The report will now provide the findings in more detail across a number of themes, providing feedback from participants, the Bridges to Learning team and its partners, and data where appropriate.

3.1. Planning and organising

The opportunity for funding the Lunch and Learn initiative was grasped by everyone concerned and thus the programme was in place within 6 to 8 weeks of the funding being made available.

Despite the fact that all of the key individuals already had clear roles and challenging workloads the well-established partnership working paid dividends, with:

- The Health and Social Care Faculty team of the Open University in the North securing two experienced tutors to deliver the events, identifying suitable OU materials for the taster sessions and supporting tutors to adapt these for the both the Lunch and Learn format and the Bridges to Learning audiences
- The Bridges to Learning core team identifying the taster themes, in collaboration with the ULR team; the resources and the catering arrangements and supporting the production of promotional materials for each of the workplaces. A key success was in effectively co-

ordinating and delivering the overall programme in light of the unanticipated huge demand

- The ULRs successfully negotiating with workplace management to take part in the taster pilot; harnessing a range of promotional mechanisms, from printed flyers to e-mailings and use of workplace intranet facilities to reach as many potential learners as possible, as well as taking responsibility for the overall delivery of the taster sessions.

Only one of the eight workplaces had to cancel sessions; in one case due to the lack of participants and, in the other case, to the illness of a tutor.

ULRs clearly faced challenges particularly due to the relatively short implementation timescale, and also in managing the overall numbers and the necessary booking and cancellation process. Yet not one of the ULRs expressed frustration; instead they still glow with enthusiasm about the pilot and see it as a welcome addition to their toolbox to attract learners.

Despite the efforts of the ULRs, however, there were a small number of instances where the number of participants turning up on the day for the taster sessions far outstripped the intended numbers. Once again, this was perceived positively by all of the participants in the interview programme:

“The tutor must have been overwhelmed by the number of people who turned up. All walks of life were there, from cardiac consultants and doctors to community nurses. The great thing was, there were so many people there that you couldn’t sit with your friends like you would normally do but, in the end, it meant I exchanged views with people I would never normally meet in my job and it definitely improved the flow of ideas. “

(Diane H. Occupational Therapist, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust)

The ‘success’ in attracting so many applicants nevertheless provided some challenges, not least in making last minute room changes, finding additional chairs, sourcing extra photocopies of handouts at short notice and in capturing registration and follow-up details for participants. In fact, not one of the interviewees saw this as a negative aspect of their experience, and both tutors gave instances of how smoothly this had been handled by ULRs and workplaces.

Future challenges:

- Need for tighter control of application process
- An expansion of the Lunch and Learn taster programme will require more complex organisational arrangements and thus Bridges to Learning staff time, in light of a larger tutor pool and taster subject offering
- Refining the mechanism for providing handouts and accompanying lunch and learn material for learners.

3.2 The range and suitability of topics

The Open University in the North acknowledge that the task in identifying suitable topics for the taster pilot was made easy through the resources and expertise of the Bridges to Learning partnership: a combination of the existing knowledge and networks of the Bridges to Learning ULRs along with the partnership's learner database, both of which were used to assess which topics would be most in demand and could be delivered using existing OU materials. Hence the topics and titles identified for the taster pilot were:

- Cavendish Review
- Dealing with Dementia
- Dealing with death and dying
- Dementia awareness
- Diabetes and nutrition awareness
- Dimensions of Health
- Ethical Issues around end of life care
- Implications of the Francis Report
- Nutrition and diabetes awareness
- Spirituality
- Understanding Bereavement
- Understanding death and dying.

Given the number of participants and the comments from the evaluation forms it is clear that the range of topics were well-chosen and that there is likely to be significantly more demand for repeated sessions if funding is available.

The interviews undertaken as part of this evaluation have uncovered a further list of topics:

- Counselling skills
- Dignity and respect
- Dignity and Dementia
- Equality and diversity
- Infection control
- Mental Health Awareness,

Some of which have already been incorporated into the second programme of lunch and learn events to be delivered up until the end of July 2015.

Future challenges:

- Keeping the programme topical and relevant
- Broadening the scope to meet the needs of other workers, like teaching assistants and a broader range of staff in the healthcare sector, such

- as administrative staff
- Identifying any staff groups who may need greater support to participate in higher education level learning.

3.3. Bridges to Learning responses

As outlined earlier, the key conclusion from the interview programme and analysis of the evaluation data is that the teamwork to deliver the taster programme was effective and impressive.

However, the fact that the programme was in place within a matter of weeks means that the existing resources of the Bridges to Learning team were stretched. Hence the passion and commitment of the core team, and the extra out-of-hours work they did to provide the central co-ordination to deliver the OU's aims and support ULRs in the workplaces, must not go unnoticed; it must be planned for as the programme grows.

Similarly, all of the ULRs put considerable effort into making the initiative a success, from brokering venues and publicising the events to adapting the taster model to meet the needs of their key audiences. In every case, they provided innovative approaches; for instance:

- The ULR (Mary) collaborated closely with a shop-steward in the local authority's Environmental Services Department to make sure that there were topics to attract male employees, resulting in 18 people attending, from grave-diggers and refuse collectors to cleaners and transport managers attending a session on Nutrition and Diabetes awareness. As John, the shop steward reported:

“ The sandwich might have been one of the initial carrots to get them in, but what made a difference was that the front-line rarely get the chance to go to something like this, so they all stayed for the whole session and some of them have been tested since for Diabetes themselves, so it has made a real difference.” (John W. Gateshead Council)

- A ULR in a mental health trust invited partner organisations, including the NE Ambulance Service and the Council's Adult Care team, to circulate details of the Lunch and Learn taster sessions. She also researched to find organisations that provide literature about Diabetes care so that there was follow-up information for participants to take away from the session
- Another ULR used the taster sessions to target the Trust's Payroll staff who have been hard to engage in Bridges to Learning provision so far.

The evaluation sheet used for the tasters attempted to capture how participants had learnt about the sessions; a summary of the responses is provided below.

How did you hear about the workshop?

Bridges to Learning	5*
Chance encounter – diverted from a cancelled course	2
College	1
e-Bulletin/Newsletter	7*
Mentor	3
No comment	15
Poster/Flyer	7*
Through line manager/colleague/work	48*
UNISON	36*
Via email	29*
Word of Mouth	2*
*Attributable to the work of union learning representative (ULR)	

Almost all of the responses to the available categories suggest that attendance came as a result of the work of ULRs and the communication mechanisms that ULRs already have in place.

However, it may be worth including ‘through my Bridges to Learning Union Learning Rep’ as an explicit option in future, as this may increase awareness of the services of UNISON Bridges to Learning ULRs, particularly amongst non-union members.

Future challenges:

- Ensuring that sufficient resource is available for central co-ordination
- Putting in place systems that enable ULRs to follow-up participants who may want to develop learning progression plans to higher education
- Identifying ways that Lunch and Learn attendance can be used to increase UNISON membership.

3.4. Workplace responses

The existing and strong partnerships between Bridges to Learning, workplace UNISON branches and its eight employer partners enabled the ULRs to use rooms, acquire catering and other support arrangements to bring the pilot to fruition at relatively short notice as well as make it a success.

In most cases, the taster sessions followed the prescribed model, of one and a half hour sessions with lunch provided. However, in one NHS Trust, the decision was taken to provide two different workshops on the same day, without lunch due to some difficulty in making catering arrangements. This worked well; all of the sessions received very positive feedback. As one of the interviewees confirmed:

“It was all so easy, as the ULR (Sandra) sent such detailed instructions I was able to drive to Durham from Darlington, use the Park and Ride as she suggested and have a really stimulating day.” (Susan F, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust)

One local authority trialled two different models in order to meet the needs of two distinct audiences. Whilst the prescribed model worked well to attract a range of ‘hard to reach’ staff from environmental services, the taster was instead incorporated into a full-training day for domiciliary care staff. This provided not only an interesting and welcome focus for the afternoon session but also avoided the complexities of arranging lunchtime cover for such a busy part of their day.

Hence the pilot has already demonstrated that the lunch and learn taster model not only works well, and can be most effective when it is used flexibly to fit in with the working commitments of hard to reach groups.

In many instances, HR and Learning staff welcomed the idea of taster sessions that linked higher education to currently important topics, and some took part in taster sessions themselves.

“It was really interesting to have someone else’s perspective on the Francis report. There’s definitely a place for this kind of provision alongside our mandatory training and CPD offer and it was great to see such a mix of staff, from healthcare assistants to Band 7 staff and such an interactive discussion amongst them. I’m really keen to work even more closely with Hazel, our ULR, in the future to get more staff along to these events.” (Adrienne C. South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust)

The success in stimulating interest in higher education amongst these groups does however present a challenge, in that their enthusiasm may be dampened when low-waged members of staff come to realise the financial barriers they may face in pursuing higher education, particularly as training budgets in public sector organisations have been severely reduced as a result of the cuts.

It also appears that learners, in many cases, are unaware of the higher education opportunities that are currently being funded by their employers and Health Education England.

Future challenges:

- Harnessing HR and Learning and Development teams to promote the Lunch and Learn sessions
- Securing financial and other support for individuals who want to develop a progression path for HE learning.

3.5. Learner responses

Having previously undertaken a number of evaluation projects, and thus being aware of how difficult it is to gain feedback on events, the fact that by 304 of the 328 (93%) participants completed the evaluation forms and provided the comments speaks for itself.

Please tell us how useful you found the workshop?

Excellent	195
Good	103
Average	4
Poor	0

These results are outstanding: with two-thirds judging the provision as 'excellent' and only just over 1 per cent of the participants choosing the 'average' option, providing the most positive participant response of any evaluation project I have ever undertaken.

Some comments from the evaluation forms:

'I want to learn more, going to see if any more opportunities for me career-wise' (Understanding bereavement)

'Learning about what dementia is, and how it affects others. Learning what increases quality of life for people with dementia' (Dealing with Dementia)

'Interesting and factual. Made me identify my own possible dangers' (Nutrition and Diabetes awareness)

'Talk about ideas/beliefs with cross section of CDDFT staff' (Understanding Death and Dying)

'Useful update – makes you think more about what you are doing and aware of how you're interacting with patients' (Spirituality)

'Excellent being able to discuss openly something people find difficult to discuss' (Dealing with death and dying)

'Exchange of information and academic contributors' (Understanding grief)

'Really enjoyed course, the bite size workshops work so much better than full day courses. Right amount of interactive exercises balanced with presentation' (Dimensions of Health)

'Good awareness session – interesting that some things that have changed to improve client/patient experience that we were not aware have been due to this and other reports' (Implications of the Francis Report)

'Some interesting concepts to take away from the session to research further' (Ethical issues around end of life care)

'Debate between health care professions encouraged by the facilitator and the different ethical opinions' (Ethical issues around end of life care)

'Excellent event, brief but useful. Appreciate the opportunity to learning about current issues' (Cavendish Review)

Other comments:

'Needs to be a longer session as I found it really useful' (Dealing with Dementia)

'Well delivered, interesting – enjoyed interaction and helpful hand-outs' (Dementia awareness)

'Ben (tutor) was fantastic in his presentations. Learned and felt so much, due to his knowledge, compassion & soothing voice' (Understanding death and dying)

'Too short! But it was just a taster' (Understanding grief)

'Very informative and well worth attending' (Nutrition and Diabetes awareness)

'Trainer (Caroline) had very good rapport and responded well to group, very knowledgeable and able to share experiences and participation from the group' (Dimensions of Health)

'More time needed for the session' (Cavendish Review)

'Plan to look into accredited OU courses' (Dementia awareness)

There were very few negative comments:

- There was only one instance of learners expressing disappointment with the content of a taster; a participant with a keen interest in Spiritualism had hoped that this would have had a higher profile in the discussions around spirituality
- A couple of respondents expressed disappointment about the facilities and the environment, particularly noise from nearby rooms for instance
- The most common criticism was about the sessions being too short, which is a complement rather than a criticism
- There were no negative comments about either the quality of teaching or the content of the sessions, which is significant achievement given 300 respondents.

Future challenges:

- Developing clear definitions and criteria to manage learner

expectations

- Profiling the most likely learners for specific topics
- Identifying which topics may be delivered more effectively as other OU Progression opportunities and/or through other Bridges to Learning mechanisms, such as one-day workshops and other events
- Converting lunch and learn attendees into potential higher education learners.

3.6. The Open University and Tutor responses

It is clear from interviews undertaken with the Open University in the North's Health and Social Care faculty staff that the outcome of the pilot is seen as a huge success. Staff value the way the model has contributed to widening inclusion in higher education learning and demonstrated, once again, the strength of the Bridges to Learning partnership. Faculty staff particularly valued the opportunity to raise the profile of the OU in workplaces as a flexible and locally engaged Higher Education provider.

The extraordinary take-up of the opportunities provides food for thought. Firstly, there is clearly an untapped market and aspiration for higher-education level learning in the healthcare sector that workplace activities can help stimulate. Secondly, there are existing progression routes through 'Open Learn' for example that can provide the free 'next step' that many Bridges to Learning learners are eager to take, given the opportunity to find out about them. Follow on progression routes exist into flexible delivery of Foundation degrees and Pre-registration Nursing.

These ideas stem from the interviews undertaken with eight learners. Though they all appreciated the quality of the taster sessions, the tutor's skills, materials and the interaction, some of the participants explained why they were reluctant to provide their personal details to the OU for future contact. Whilst some of this is about privacy and being overwhelmed with unsolicited e-mails and calls, closer questioning suggests that lack of confidence was the core issue.

Key to this is the fact that the taster sessions were so 'accessible', were of such high quality and so successful that participants were not always aware that the learning was at a higher education level. Indeed some of the interviewees were visibly pleased when this was pointed out to them:

"Until I went along I didn't know all the things that Bridges did. When you meet someone like Ben you feel like you are capable of contributing, it gave me confidence to know that this was 'higher education'! I have to admit though that I just binned the e-mails from the OU – they filled me with fear. I always wanted to do a university course and I would love to do an OU course now but people like me

need spoon-feeding. “ (Susan F, County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust)

It may therefore be worth exploring whether workplace-based OU Open Days can be piloted, as these may attract potential learners who may not have the confidence to attend a regional open day. It might be worth the OU reconsidering the local venues that are currently used, such as private libraries and academic buildings, as entering them for the first time may be too great a challenge for some less than confident potential students.

It is pleasing to report that both of the tutors who delivered the sessions greatly enjoyed being part of the pilot and felt that it was a great success. As Ben (tutor) observed:

“It all went surprisingly smoothly given the fact that I was driving up from Lancashire to meet people I’d never met before and delivering sessions. It was all planned and organised very well. It’s almost as if I had been running for years.”

Caroline, the other delivery tutor commented:

“I enjoy all of my work for the OU but I especially enjoyed delivering these workshops. I thought the levels of engagement were particularly impressive, with people from all skill levels, including some highly qualified individuals. They were all willing to listen and keen to contribute to the discussions, so I thought it was a powerful experience as these were audiences we don’t reach very often.”

Keen to continue to improve the quality and impact of the lunch and learn model, both tutors have made a small number of very helpful suggestions:

- Having a short template, perhaps of one or two slides added to their workshop presentation, which succinctly highlights the nature and level of the OU taster materials and summarises the progression ‘offer’ would help in providing these key messages and in bringing the taster to a conclusion. This is particularly important as the pool of tutors is enlarged to meet demand
- Explore ways to improve the closure of the session, as tutors had to ensure they managed the session within the allotted timescale, distribute and collect evaluation forms as well as deliver a clear and concise summary of the session. Both tutors are happy to be involved in a discussion to develop the PowerPoint materials and explore ways to improve the taster model
- Improved arrangements for distribution of materials, via the Bridges to Learning website for instance, and/or via ULR e-mail distribution would assist in providing a professional service for learners.

The advantage of the ULR e-mail is that it may assist in capturing e-mail addresses so that ULRs can follow up participants to identify their future needs and support, where appropriate, their progression to other OU provision.

Future challenges:

- Ensuring sufficient tutor resource
- Providing a written briefing for all new Lunch and Learn tutors
- Auditing other faculties for potential topics and links to other OU progression routes
- Developing more effective ways in capturing participant details and follow up mechanisms.

3.7. Line manager & Workplace responses

The comments from HR and Learning development staff that have already been cited in the report illustrate that managers and workplace employers welcomed the lunch and learn programme, recognising that it filled gaps in their provision and addressed very important topical issues in the healthcare sector.

These topical tasters attracted a number of other line managers, who were keen to improve their own knowledge as well as support their co-workers. For instance one manager reported during her interview:

“I went along to the session really as a refresher, but primarily to see if these sessions might be helpful for my team members. What I found was that it was a higher level than basic, and I really enjoyed it. I found that the tutor was able to deliver it in such a way that it engaged everyone and seemed to meet their needs. I hadn’t participated in Bridges to Learning events before and I have to say that the whole thing was extremely well organised.

I don’t think some of them were really aware that this was higher level stuff, because the pitch was just right. It exceeded my expectations and, as a result, I have followed up all of the suggested reading and am using the PowerPoint as a reference document” (Carol M. Newcastle City Council)

Similarly a manager from a third sector care organisation commented that:

“I attended several sessions as many of the topics related to the things I do at work every day. I do a lot of end of life assessment and planning as part of my job and I found the session really helpful. I especially appreciated the emphasis on dignity and respect for the families. It is now the kind of thing I’d like some of my staff to do as well ” (Ambrose I. Coquet Trust.)

These and other comments illustrate that managers and organisations are aware that staff need continuing development because of the rapid rate of change in policy and the delivery models in healthcare, as well as ever-increasing demand for care services. As one tutor observed:

“I learnt a lot myself from the people who participated and from organisations that were new to me too, as these are live topics for them and I sensed that many of them are feeling overwhelmed by their work pressures.”

It suggests that there is still much to do for all players to meet workforce needs, and thus there is an opportunity for both Bridges to Learning and the Open University to strengthen their roles as strategic partners in providing learning and progression routes to higher level skills in the healthcare sector.

Future challenges:

- Quality-assuring and ‘standardising the model’ for a greater number of tutors
- Providing information about all of the available funded progression routes to higher education and higher level skills.

3.8. Attendance

As noted earlier, 328 people attended the 22 sessions, giving an average of around 15 per session, which the tutors feel is an appropriate size of audience for taster sessions.

However in a small number of cases, the number of attendees exceeded 20 and in one case, 45 people attended a session on the Francis Report.

It is likely that it was the relevance of topic itself across all occupational groups rather than organisational arrangements that led to the large turnout, as great care had been taken to manage the numbers through the booking process. Nevertheless, people still attended who had been notified that the course was fully booked.

“Even though we have had sessions provided on the Francis report internally by the Trust, it was really valuable to have the summary provided by an external person who really had a grip on the report and its implications.” (Diane H. Occupational Therapist, South Tyneside NHS Foundation Trust)

Whilst the demand for some topics may decrease over time, the model is likely to be popular for some years to come as new and emerging topics are added to the offer. It may well also be the case that some of the more

reluctant learners who continue to participate will begin to see themselves as higher level learners.

Future challenges:

- Managing audience numbers: the topics should be carefully chosen to attract the less confident learners to meet the 'widening participation' remit
- Developing a wider range of OU-provided learning opportunities and identifying funding streams
- Ensuring that topics are topical and can meet the needs of staff from a range of occupations.

3.9. Resources

As outlined earlier, the Open University funded the tutor time and OU materials for the first pilot phase, Bridges to Learning provided the lunch and administration whilst their wider partnership provided the workshop facilities.

As this worked well, the same model and shared resources are the basis for a further series for lunch and learn taster sessions, which are to run up until the end of March 2015.

The recent announcement of a further year's ULF (Union Learning Fund) funding for Bridges to Learning means that the project can continue to test and refine the model. However the short term and uncertain funding of Bridges to Learning undermines the viability and credibility of this work into the future.

However the further year provides an exciting opportunity to explore sources of longer-term funding, including Health Education England North East (HEENE), the North East LEPs and their new EU Structural and Investment Funds Strategies 2015-21, in order to mainstream higher education tastes and progression routes across other healthcare providers in the region.

Future challenges:

- Bridges to Learning having the capacity to service the taster programme
- Centrally co-ordinated production of taster support materials
- Finding more effective ways of follow-up to measure impact
- Developing 'stepped' progression routes that will lead people to HE provision
- Engaging line managers in capturing 'distance travelled' in skills and/or behaviours
- Securing a longer-term funding framework to mainstream the progression routes to higher level skills and learning.

3.10. Impact

The report has highlighted the impacts of the taster pilot that has been identified through the interviews and data analysis. These are summarised below:

- Improved cross-organisational communications and learning in workplaces. This ranges from the ways in which workplace HR and training & development staff are keen to work more closely with and through ULRs to instances of structural change, including healthcare assistants now being invited to participate in daily ward 'huddles'
- Increased levels of respect by managers/consultants for the views of Bands 1-4 staff. The taster sessions in some Trusts were identified as the first time consultants and doctors have shared views on practice and policy with community-based and other healthcare staff
- Significant number of repeat learners joining the taster sessions. This is set to continue through the new face of lunch and learn sessions and likely to lead to a greater uptake in higher education learning
- Increased confidence noted by learners, as illustrated by the quotes and feedback from learners threaded throughout the report. This needs to be fostered to promote progression to HE
- Some interest in progression to OU amongst individuals, which needs to be planned for in terms of ensuring that participants are supported understand and gain access to the available progression routes
- The potential for closer links between the Open University, HEENE and individual Trusts, Local Authorities and other employers.

4. Conclusion and Recommendations for a way forward

As the body of available evidence and summary of the impact of the Lunch and Learn pilot illustrates, the project was an outstanding success. Hence the challenge in undertaking this evaluation has been in identifying where improvements can be made.

The issues and challenges that have been identified through the interview process, by ULRs and tutors to line managers and participants, have all been presented in a spirit of wanting this not only to continue but also to go from strength to strength, and this palpable sense of joint ownership to take the

model forward and mainstream higher education-level learning for all staff must be one of the pilot's greatest successes.

The short summary that follows is an attempt to bring together some of the challenges from the report into some key recommendations:

- **The Open University in the North should audit its capacity to involve academic tutors from its wider range of faculties, such as the Business and Science faculties to:**
 - **Identify any relevant existing provision that can be promoted to this sector during the taster sessions and**
 - **Provide a broader offer of relevant topics**
- **The topics for Lunch and Learn tasters should be carefully chosen by the OU and Bridges to Learning to attract the less confident learners to meet the 'widening participation' remit**
- **The attendance numbers and range of occupational groups suggests that the Lunch and Learn taster sessions should form part of a greater offering to Trusts and other healthcare employers. This may provide scope for developing a range of complementary provision from the wider Bridges to Learning partnership**
- **The OU & Bridges to Learning partnership should continue to build closer collaboration with HEE-NE, and their Employer Sub-groups, for the future roll-out of the Lunch and Learn taster model to ensure:**
 - **Complementarity between what is offered and funded by NHS regionally and the Bridges to Learning tasters**
 - **Funding leverage is maximised**
- **The Bridges to Learning team and ULRs should use data gathered to:**
 - **Develop targeted approaches to reach less confident learners**
 - **Follow-up any learners who they believe may consider progression into higher education with their IAG and mentoring support**
- **The combined Bridges to Learning team should consider ways to:**

- **Gather supporting leaflets and other learning resources from national organisations that can be distributed to taster participants**
- **Disseminate taster materials before or after the learning event**
- **Capture learner feedback and details in a supportive way so that they can follow-up and actively support anyone wanting progression in their learning**

(This may result in a 'business case' for further resources from the OU, HEE-NE, North East LEP and Tees Valley Unlimited, EU-funding frameworks etc)

- **Bridges to Learning should ensure that NHS Health Education England North East (HEE-NE), the North East and Tees Valley LEPs and the emerging combined local authorities are aware of the pilot's success and unmet demand for higher education-level learning opportunities across the health and social care sector**
- **Bridges to Learning should work with the OU in the North to produce a five minute closing PowerPoint presentation for all tutors to incorporate to cover progression to:**
 - **OU Short courses**
 - **Pre-registration nursing programme (where Trusts are sponsoring students on the Programme)**
 - **Other flexible continuing professional development opportunities with the OU**

Lastly, it must be stated that it has been both a huge pleasure and an inspiration to undertake this evaluation exercise, as it rare to take part in recording such a runaway success and to witness such a strong consensus and commitment amongst so many people.

Denis Hall
dha
 December 2014