

What is the role of Higher Education Institutions?

Tuesday 18th January 2011

John McIntyre Conference Centre, University of Edinburgh

EVENT REPORT

1. Background

With the growing financial and demographic pressures on health and social care systems, the need to innovate to ensure quality and ongoing improvement has never been greater. Government policy continues to emphasise the importance of integration between health and social care to achieve the required improvements and efficiencies. Building the capacity and capability of the workforce to understand, lead, implement and evaluate the changes required is central to delivering on these ambitions.

The aim of this event was to bring together key stakeholders from policy, practice and higher education to examine the contribution that higher education can and should be making to support integration, quality and improvement in health and social care. The event was jointly hosted by the University of Edinburgh and NHS Education Scotland (NES). The event was attended by more than 50 individuals from across Scotland and included presentations from policy, practice and higher education perspectives and small group discussions. This report provides a summary of the discussion under three key headings and concludes with recommendations and actions for taking this agenda forward.

Professor Jim McGoldrick NHS Fife chair of the event introduced the key note speakers to the audience and enabled a high tempo discussion and debate to be held through the afternoon session.



2. The shifting landscape of Health and Social Care: Are Higher Education Institutions keeping up?

Mike Martin, Director of the Joint Improvement Team at the Scottish Government addressed the event and summarised some of the key challenges facing health and social care systems, notably financial and demographic. In his presentation he outlined the policy response to these challenges: maximising integration; keeping supports for individual service users and carers close to home and building community capacity to prevent individuals, as far as possible, from coming into contact with services.

Mike discussed the challenge of embedding this vision in practice and the vital role that higher education can play in supporting individual practitioners and organisations to make the necessary shifts. In particular he argued for the need for professional training to help break down professional silos as opposed to reinforce them and challenged Higher Education Institutes (HEI's) to break down their own institutional boundaries and deliver training and education in ways that are flexible and responsive to the needs of the current workforce.

These themes were echoed in the general discussion which included recognition of the need for:

- ◆ Short, flexible and affordable courses as an alternative to longer term and expensive courses
- ◆ Inter and multi professional integrated training programmes that focus on how service delivery works, that ensure the requirement (fit for purpose) to integrate is understood and that how to do it is taught, shared and delivered
- ◆ Providers of education and training to consider what students need to do 'the job they are doing' and to determine 'what works' with benefits realisation analysis of programmes and clear evaluation and reporting framework
- ◆ Better links between the organisational workforce development needs and Higher Education programmes.

3. Putting learning into practice: Individual and organisational benefits and challenges

Susan Taylor, Head of Children's Services at East Ayrshire Council who had completed further degrees in health and social care was the second key note speaker. Susan presented an approach to learning that stemmed from her own participation in an MSc in Leadership. Specifically she described the MSc dissertation she completed around the re-organisation of residential childcare services. Through her dissertation she engaged the workforce in thinking through how services could be re-orientated to take on a more informed and directed parental role with children. This process allowed Susan to get close to staff and to support them to engage in their own professional learning, which in turn boosted motivation, made staff feel valued and allowed for the necessary changes to be identified from the workforce, which helped implementation. This example shows how one individual engagement in further education can have significant benefits for the organisation and in this case led to a change in leadership strategy.

Two individuals who are current students spoke of the benefits and challenges of engaging in further education for themselves and their organisations. Jeanette Morrison and Harriet Hunter, current MSc students at the University of Edinburgh and the Health Foundation respectively, identified a range of benefits to themselves of engaging in further education, including the opportunities to:

- ◆ Develop understanding and gain knowledge and skills vital to successful completion of current improvement roles
- ◆ Reflect and embed learning in professional practice
- ◆ Make connections with other students, tutors on the course and visiting speakers, maximising links with policy and practice colleagues
- ◆ Build confidence
- ◆ Refresh skills and boost motivation
- ◆ Chance to do a project that enables them to connect with colleagues / area of practice in a different way.

The key challenge highlighted by the students (alongside that of balancing work and study) was how to bring colleagues and organisations along with them on the learning journey. Several delegates reported that they had experienced a time lag between their own learning and the ability to put this into practice, which further re-iterated the need for health and social care organisations to continue to develop as learning organisations. These issues can be exacerbated by the fact that many organisations are not aware of the learning their workforce are undertaking, often in their own time.

4. Developing curricula on improvement and integration

Kate Bell and Guro Huby both from the University of Edinburgh spoke of their experiences of developing first a course and now an MSc programme to support improvement and integration. The development of the MSc in Integration and Service Improvement has primarily been a collaboration between Guro, an academic with considerable experience of practice based research and knowledge transfer and Kate, who currently works within the NHS in the field of Modernisation along side her work as a tutor. This work has been supported by a range of tutors from academic, policy and practice backgrounds and the ongoing engagement of key policy stakeholders, including NES, the Joint Improvement Team and the Scottish Government Service Improvement Team. The key drivers for this work have been two fold, firstly the need to develop the skills and capabilities of the workforce and secondly the need to bring a more rigorous and evidence based approach to improvement activity.

In their presentations Guro and Kate reflected on the benefits brought by the development of the MSc. Evaluation of their work has confirmed that completion of courses in integration and improvement has produced cohorts of students with enhanced analytic, research, communication and practical skills and the confidence to apply them in practice. Furthermore, the practical nature of the students' projects has contributed in a very immediate way to the evidence base about what works.

However, delivering such a practically orientated course within an academic context has proved challenging as it has required breaking with tradition to develop meaningful and accessible approaches to teaching and assessing student's learning. Furthermore, balancing the need for the university to generate income with the need for education to be affordable to public sector organisations facing cuts has been challenging.

Guro went on to identify a range of factors vital to the successful development of curriculae in the field of integration and service improvement. The most important requirement is that education around improvement and integration is co-produced, developed in partnership between academic, policy and practice stakeholders. This partnership ensures that curriculae are relevant and responsive to developments on the ground and helps build sustainable and resilient links between tutors, students and key stakeholders that support ongoing learning and development. In addition the course has shown the need to integrate theory and practice. Not only do students need to develop analytic and research skills to develop future practice, but also benefit from developing experience in practical tools and techniques, such as project management, that can be applied in their day to day work immediately.

5. *Small group discussions*

After the presentations attendees had the opportunity to reflect on what they had heard and to work together in small groups to identify issues and priorities to maximise the contribution that Higher Education can make to improvement and integration. In addition to those points already included in the report, the following recommendations were made:

- ◆ **All stakeholders need to be involved** to ensure the market represents what the customer (service) requires
- ◆ Considering the service delivery from a **Person/Customer journey** point of view as opposed to organisational boundaries
- ◆ **More research** in Integration to build an evidence base and inform policy and practice
- ◆ We need to recognise and factor in the various '**Culture**' issues that exist to reach a common understanding of policy, language/terminology, and barriers to implementation.
- ◆ New and topical direction with the appetite to harness the enthusiasm to **support service improvement and innovation.**
- ◆ **Strong Leadership** required to lead the way to understand the actual value and benefit of the training/learning experience to service development and service improvement
- ◆ Acknowledge the complexities and the need to work together to build capability and **be proactive and strengthen the communication** between the key stakeholders – HEI, Service (Operational and Strategic), independent sector and policy makers plus the local and national perspective.
- ◆ What role for Universities Scotland? **Stronger links and partnerships**
- ◆ **Blurring the boundaries** between academic work and practical application
- ◆ **Practice based Research – and jointly set research/practice** agendas (more research into areas that have historically and continue to challenging the service agenda)
- ◆ Recognise the **core business and additionality of public sector organisations** and also invest in the integrated working agenda with additional resources or ring fenced **joint resources**
- ◆ Consider a structure current or new to **network information** between Scottish Government departments
- ◆ Showcase students work, assignments and projects to share the challenges and findings (**Integrated improvement working showcase** linking policy, practice and research findings)
- ◆ **Knowledge management** – shared space to highlight evidence into practice
- ◆ Build the view of the **application of learning** to a current project as **adding value to ongoing work** in the workplace.

6. Better integrated Service Improvement together

A formula that could be heralded as the way forward emerged from the day:

- ◆ Build **Confidence** in the workforce, give staff time and support to create the **Capacity** and build **Capability** to meet the **Challenges to deliver service improvement efficiently** AND meet the **Quality requirements**.

Jim McGoldrick, chair of the event drew some conclusions from the plenary session and invited Shona Cowan from NES, co sponsors of the event to describe how the work of the event would be taken forward.

7. Shona described the next steps in the following actions

1. NES conference 28 March 2011 on research, networking, Quality and Service Improvement and workforce needs.
2. NES are scoping what is available across all HEI's on the subject of service improvement. This will be shared with all stakeholders
3. NES through Shona Cowan will co-ordinate a network either new or through relevant existing structure such as the Quality Improvement Hub to take forward the agenda raised at today's meeting.

Contributors

Chair: Jim McGoldrick, NHS Fife

Aims of the Day: Shona Cowan, NES

Policy perspective: Mike Martin, Joint Improvement Team

Practice perspective: Susan Taylor, East Ayrshire Council

Higher Education Perspective: Guro Huby

Service Perspective: Kate Bell, University of Edinburgh

Student Perspective: Jeanette Morrison, NHS Lothian and Harriet Hunter, Scottish Government.

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