

In December 2012 the Patient | Carer Community (PCC) hosted the first Higher Education Academy Lived Experiences Network (LEN) meeting. The national Network is led by Jools E Symons - Patient and Public Involvement Manager at Leeds Institute for Medical Education.

The Network purpose is to be a forum for people's lived experience of health and social care; a critical alliance of people with real experiences, students and academics for the purpose of improving practitioner education and associated research in health and social care.

The group identified a number of strategic directions to support its purpose:

- To gain local, regional and national influence, people who use services informing people who work within the service
- To provide education which is aspired to by others
- To create opportunities to meet people we may not normally meet
- To create sustainability; identify funding for this network and for involvement
- To politicise and to support patient and carers involvement in Higher Education, dialogue can take place in universities
- To develop an alliance between practitioners, patients & carers and students
- To maintain democratic communication amongst teams
- To ensure co-operation by all members –a focus on value not competition

In the mornings showcase; Jools Symons, David Blythe, Kay Henderson and Joannie Tate (PCC Members) shared their personal stories of supporting medical students at the University of Leeds. This included how and why they became involved, and how the students, staff and they benefit from being involved. The presentations were a clear demonstrations of the passion they feel about being able to help educate the Doctors of tomorrow.

The meeting was well attended and received great feedback:

"Can I also add how inspirational it was to hear...how much you can achieve if you keep on keeping on"

"Many thanks for yesterday's get together, it was a really good day where lots of things got done. I found it really useful to chat to people about what they are doing, and I really enjoyed the presentations, which were all very helpful and interesting."

"Congratulations on a powerful morning of storytelling and illustrating what is possible, I think it made a strong impact."

"Thank you also for the wonderful warm welcome and fabulous hospitality."

"It was educational and most of all inspirational..."

The next LEN meeting will take place in May and will be hosted by the Faculty of Health Sciences at the University of Southampton with a smaller action-meeting taking place in March at the University of Central Lancashire.