



# Love Our Learners: One year on

## Executive Summary

Love Our Learners is a programme of communication and engagement, running through all functions of Health Education East Midlands, working towards attracting and retaining learners in the East Midlands and its healthcare workforce. The programme aims were to build rapport, aid an understanding of the NHS and encourage the learner to have a voice.

As a live programme that is one year old, Love Our Learners has shared its key messages about the work of Health Education England, Health Education East Midlands and the role of the learner in the NHS. This was achieved through a network of ambassadors working closely with Trusts and Higher Education Institutions, attending events, inductions, and staff recognition ceremonies. Through these activities the programme reached 2,900 learners and 15,000 healthcare professionals. With a presence on social media, there were 1,378 separate mentions of *#loveourlearners* on Twitter which generated 150,000 impressions.

Work is now underway to share this approach, and consider how best practice from other LETBs and teams within Health Education England can be incorporated into future work as part of a 'One HEE' approach.

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## 1. Introduction

*“HEE will need to establish mechanisms to ensure that ongoing engagement takes place with a wide range of partners including students, trainees and staff representing the health and care workforce.”*

[Health Education England Mandate \(6.78\) May 2014](#)

Love Our Learners is a programme of communication and engagement of healthcare students and trainees in the East Midlands, designed in 2013 and launched on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2014. This report summarises the activities, achievements and challenges of the programme and recommends next steps for Health Education East Midlands (HEEM).

## 2. Background

At its inception in 2012 the HEEM Operations Group ran a series of workshops to identify current challenges. A recurring theme across the organisation was the attraction, recruitment, retention and transition into employment of East Midlands’ students and trainees (learners) in healthcare.

The Innovation Directorate developed a programme which aimed to achieve three key objectives:

- i. **Build rapport between the NHS and learners:** Creating a variety of interventions to explain the role of HEEM, including information about the workforce planning process in the NHS and how HEEM’s role sits in a wider context.
- ii. **Encourage the learner voice:** Giving each learner a voice by encouraging them to complete their surveys (GMC, University) and provide feedback directly to HEEM (website, email, social media) about concerns, highlights and experiences in their education.
- iii. **Promote the role of the learner in the working environment:** Interventions to prepare the placement and rotation environment to make the learning experience as welcoming and effective as possible. This included presenting the role of HEEM and learners to NHS organisations and their employees.

The HEEM Operations Group agreed that investing in these three areas would increase the profile of the learner, the learners’ rapport with the NHS and work towards alleviating the issues identified.

## 3. Programme content

Ambassadors were recruited from a cross section of staff groups within HEEM to assist in the programme. During early meetings the group defined the content of the programme and created resources including presentations, leaflets and promotional materials. Content was adapted to the audience and to the presenter, giving the opportunity to tell their own story or give a variety of perspectives.

The programme team worked on the physical preparation of the content, decision making, recording of activities and building relationships with internal and external stakeholders across the region.

Working towards the aims described in section 2, requests were made of stakeholders including Higher Education Institutions (HEI’s) and NHS Trusts to enable the activities of the programme described below.

### 3.1 Identity

Integral to the success of the programme was a strong visual brand. The ‘#loveourlearners’ heart-shaped logo was devised (Fig 1) and used extensively on all materials, such as incorporation with HEEM values in banner stands (Fig 2). The effect of this was to enhance the programme’s visibility and make it memorable to those who engaged with it across a range of organisations, reinforcing the message about HEEM and the support it continues to provide to its learner constituency.



Fig 1. Love Our Learners Logo



Fig 2. Love Our Learners banner stand

### 3.2 Learner inductions and visits

HEI’s and NHS Trusts were invited to host presentations and feedback sessions during their learner induction process.

After initial pilots in September 2013, which provided a valuable learning ground for refining the programme approach, the majority of learner inductions took place between February 2014 and January 2015. A summary of these is given in figure 3, detailing the geographic and professional breakdown of over 2900 learners met.

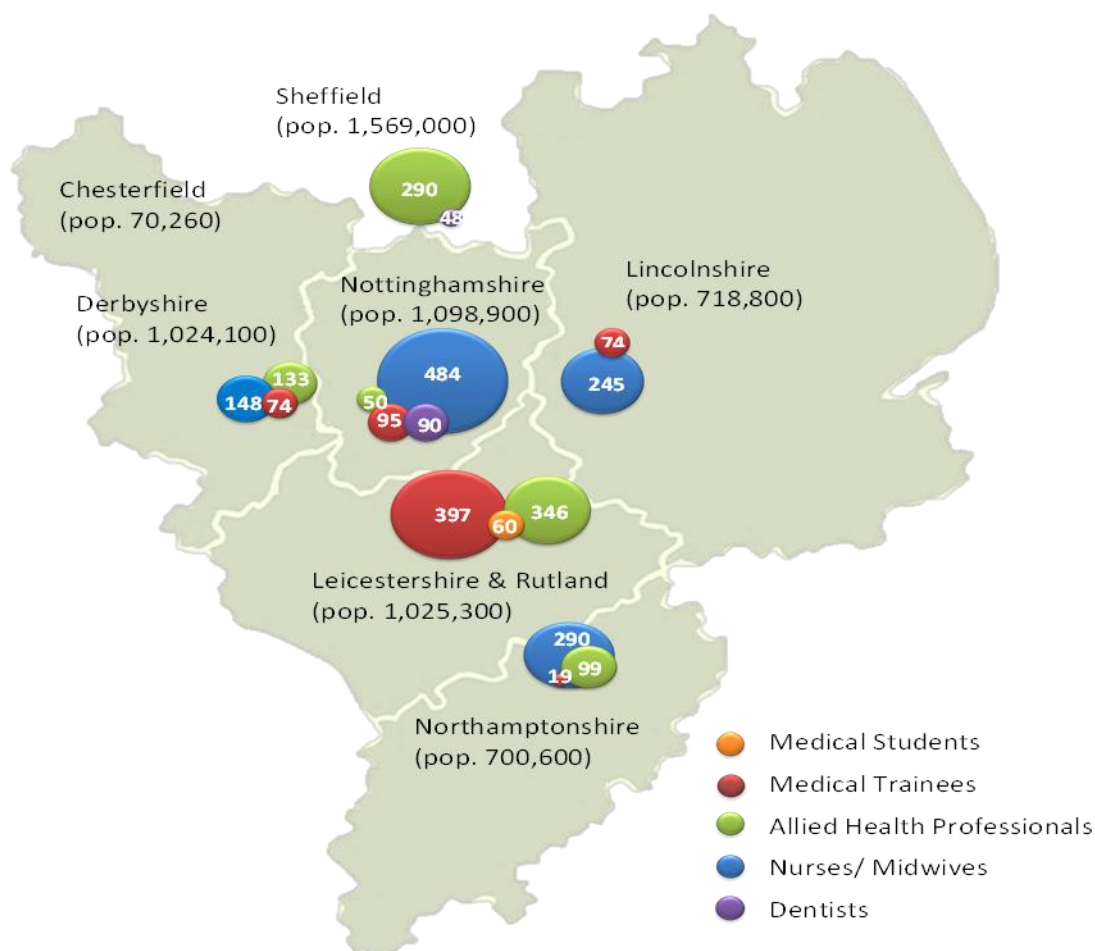


Fig.3 Health Education East Midlands – Inductions/ Workshops. NB: Dentists occupy region-wide posts

### 3.3 Stakeholder Events

In addition to learner inductions, between February 2014 and January 2015, the Love Our Learners messages were shared through presentations, stands, leaflets and promotional materials on 56 occasions. These included education workshops, meetings, conferences and staff engagement events. It is estimated that the messages reached over 15,000 NHS employees across the East Midlands as a result of these activities.

### 3.4 Learner Awards

NHS Trusts were invited to host a Love Our Learner award within their existing staff recognition schemes. HEEM sponsored these awards by drafting criteria for the Trust against which to judge entries, providing prizes where appropriate, sending a representative to present the award and supporting the entire process with communications. In 2014 four Learner Awards were given out by Trusts in the region;

- Nottingham City Care - 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2014
- University Hospitals Leicester - 12<sup>th</sup> September 2014
- Leicester Partnership Trust - 12th November 2014
- Derby Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust - 27th November 2014

In addition, a further eight trusts have shown interest for awards in 2015.

### 3.5 Learner Certificates

Learner Certificates were developed in August 2014 following close working with HEEM local workforce teams who had identified the need for their own way of locally rewarding learners who had made exceptional achievements. Certificates were provided to each HEEM local workforce team along with guidance for awarding learners a certificate and publicising this systematically.

### 3.6 Social Media

The HEEM communications strategy recognised that a presence on multiple platforms would be difficult to maintain and chose Twitter as its primary social media tool. At the launch of the Love Our Learners programme on 14<sup>th</sup> February 2014 the hashtag *#loveourlearners* was shared through a series of Tweets from the HEEM account - @EastMidsLETB.

The capacity and capability to meet the challenge of using social media as a communications tool was built through a series of internal and external workshops. These were delivered to HEEM staff to enable them to participate in the programme and also to learners and other groups of health professionals to build and enhance their social media skills. There was specific reference to sustaining the learners and professionals ongoing engagement with the programme. The increase in activity of targeting and reaching organisational and learner stakeholders led to an increase in followers, with HEEM becoming the most followed LETB account in England (from December 2014). At the end of January 2015, HEEM had over 2,300 followers, from a starting figure of 75 in March 2013.

This hashtag has continued to be the focal point of the campaign through social media, there were 1,378 separate mentions of *#loveourlearners* on Twitter which made 150,000 impressions (the total number of accounts the Tweets will have reached).

Messages shared came from HEEM, stakeholders and learners sharing and celebrating their work and experiences. The programme team continue to monitor and re-share this activity, following up learners who are celebrating achievements to create further news stories.

## 4. Programme Review and Evaluation

The activities in the scope of this programme have been wide reaching and varied. They have provided a great opportunity to raise the profile of learners and the work of HEEM. These initiatives have enhanced local ties, sense of belonging and value locally and encouraged networking. They have also enabled the programme to identify issues of importance to learners and to respond to these through a wider programme of communications. The activities described have provided considerable insight into the whole systems approach identified to progress learner engagement in the wider NHS and are reflected on in recent [HEEM board papers](#).

The degree of organisational readiness required for this engagement has been varied; both in external stakeholders and within internal teams. Within highly engaged trusts there was the use of the logo (fig 1) in recruitment and learner materials and a pro-active sharing of learner progress and achievements. Engagement is reflected in the mapping of activities in figure 3 with a variation on geographies and professions represented. Building on what the programme has achieved through the first year it can continue to target this work in the future.

During the financial years 2013 to 2015 there was a small financial spend on marketing and promotional materials. In addition there were the costs of individuals' involvement, spread across multiple budgets and in some cases external organisations. To create a cost benefit analysis for this time and spend would not be practical. Outcomes such as learner feedback, engagement and transition into employment will be realised in coming years and, based on the breadth of engagement achieved in the key messages, this programme will be amongst a number of factors that will improve that picture.

Ambassadors attending events and inductions were asked to complete a short review of their visit. Quotes from ambassador reports include:

- *Individuals and group discussions with students before and afterwards were useful and they enabled them make a 'personal connection' with the Commissioning Manager*
- *Positive to share with learners about who we are and how we would like to hear from them through use of social media and how important they are as the future workforce*
- *I loved every minute; it took me back to my days when I was fresher student at the University of Nottingham, Derby School of Nursing back in 1994*
- *The slideshow gave a really good reflection on what we do and how it relates to learners*
- *It was brilliant to meet the learners, I would recommend that all employees of HEEM, whether PGME, corporate or workforce do this at least once, it really helps to bring home our role in the NHS*
- *Group were attentive and positive, very worthwhile experience from my perspective, I really enjoyed meeting the students and telling them about HEEM*
- *There was a real buzz with the students around the information they heard and they certainly felt valued which is great to hear*

Building HEEM's responsiveness to learners is a core value of HEEM and this direct engagement is providing valuable personal and organisational learning through the experiences of ambassadors. It is also creating a greater sense of confidence in discussing the role of HEEM through all the points of contact staff have with others in the system.

Learners at events were also asked for their feedback on the presentations, their responses included:

- *It's good to know who is paying your fees*
- *Lots of work goes into planning our training-I hadn't thought about this*
- *I am only in my second week and I feel so welcomed and wanted*
- *I would like this session again at the end of my training*

- *Good employment prospects have focussed me and will motivate me to work hard on the course*
- *I realised how important we are-as part of the future of the NHS and keeping patients safe-scary thought at this point though*

Case studies and stories raised through this programme continue to appear in external communications such as the website and newsletters.

## **5. Summary**

It is clear that in the midst of current economic and political change HEEM needs to focus on designing and delivering education services that will improve workforce outcomes for stakeholders across the system. The Love Our Learners initiative has enabled engagement and communication across the remit of HEEM during its early formative years.

As a fresh approach to the challenges of attraction, recruitment, retention and transition into employment the Love Our Learners campaign has been successful in engaging large groups and spreading key messages.

There are additional benefits to HEEM such as expanding its use of social media, building a cohort of ambassadors, staff engagement and building new relationships with stakeholders within the remit of HEEM. These relationships will continue to be nurtured and utilised as part of a role in the adoption and spread of best practice in the region.

## **6. Next Steps**

To continue to grow and develop the programme the following recommendations are made:

- Continue to recruit ambassadors from across the remit of HEEM, consider including learners who have progressed through their training to induct new intakes
- Conduct an ambassador review meeting to discuss lessons learnt and best practice from events from year one
- Follow up stories from those who have won awards/ certificates
- Target activity for the coming year to focus on areas of low engagement
- Prepare questions/ answers/ knowledge better to address concerns i.e. jobs/money/ bursaries etc. within the presentations
- Provide clear information about the benefits of Love Our Learners, compatibility with organisational goals, straight forward implementation, adaptation to local contexts, and observable improvement.
- Continue to scope best practice from other HEE areas to adapt and adopt into HEEM. For example the [Learning Placement Charter](#) for HEW, Learner Voice events from HEKSS and Learner Councils from HEEoE
- Consider the wider fit of this work under 'One Health Education England'.

### 2015 - 2016 Further aspirations

- Inductions - target final year as well as first year students
- Explore NHS / HEEM presence at key graduation ceremonies
- Awards - include educators awards as well as Learner awards
- Learner Certificates - increase local involvement in their issuing by Local Education Training Councils in recognition of good practice by learners
- Do more presentations/ meets before end of term/ after exams, when students are actively looking for work
- Encourage HEE to promote participation by colleagues at learner events every year as part of their personal development.

### 7. Programme Team

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