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An alternative route: widening participation into higher education for prospective health and care professionals

Monday, 31st March - 11:00: 1.1 Post-reg education - sustaining and developing the nursing workforce - Oral - Abstract ID: 202

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Aim Of Paper

The abstract aims to present the University of Hull's innovative model for widening participation in higher education through its level 4 university certificate in health and social care. The programme addresses access, success, and progression for students lacking formal qualifications. By offering comprehensive support and flexibility, it enables students to develop transferable skills, overcome barriers to higher education, and progress to undergraduate programmes. The model serves as an inclusive approach to addressing workforce shortages, particularly in health and social care, and highlights strategies for other institutions to replicate the success of this programme on a national scale.

Abstract

The University of Hull's level 4 university certificate in health and social care is a year-long, part-time programme designed to widen participation in higher education for students without formal qualifications. It provides a flexible learning pathway that enables students to develop skills, confidence, and knowledge, facilitating progression into undergraduate health and social care programmes. This model aims to address regional workforce shortages by cultivating a "grow your own" approach, where local individuals are trained to meet the healthcare needs of their communities.

Key features of the programme include comprehensive academic and pastoral support, which helps students from diverse backgrounds, including first-generation learners, navigate the challenges of higher education. The programme offers various modes of assessment and a blend of virtual and in-person learning opportunities, enhancing accessibility for students balancing work, family, or other commitments.

The programme has demonstrated a high qualification rate, with most graduates progressing to undergraduate studies at the University of Hull or other institutions. Additionally, many graduates remain in the local area, contributing to workforce sustainability. The success of the programme can be attributed to its inclusive approach, adaptable structure, and strong emphasis on student support.

The University of Hull's experience provides key recommendations for other higher education institutions, including leadership continuity, fostering widening participation, implementing targeted marketing, prioritising student feedback, and collaborating across institutions. This model demonstrates the potential of widening participation programmes to contribute to a more diverse and inclusive health and social care workforce.

Delegate Learning Outcomes

- Understand how widening participation initiatives, like Hull's level 4 certificate, promote access and success for students lacking formal qualifications.
- Identify key strategies that support students' progression to higher education and employment in health and social care.
- Recognise the importance of flexibility, inclusivity, and comprehensive student support in creating sustainable pathways to higher education.
- Apply lessons learned from Hull's model to develop or enhance widening participation programmes in other institutions.

- Evaluate the impact of localised educational initiatives on addressing workforce shortages, particularly within health and social care sectors.

Recommended Reading Titles

1. Connell-Smith A, Hubble S. (2018). Widening participation strategy in higher education in England.
2. Quality Assurance Agency. (2021). Access to Higher Education: statistics.
3. NHS Health Education England. (2014). Widening participation: it matters! Our strategy and initial action plan.
4. Russell E, Skinner MW. (2021). Developing rural insights for building age-friendly communities.
5. Shah M, Cheng M. (2018). Exploring factors impacting student engagement in open access courses.

Presenter biographies

Jayne Walker

Jayne is a registered nurse with the NMC (Adult Nurse; SCPHN; Community Practitioner V100 Nurse Prescriber). She began her career in 1996 as an Adult Nurse and transitioned into Midwifery in 1999. In 2005, she became a Specialist Community Public Health Nurse (Health Visitor) and earned her Practice Teacher qualification (2012). Jayne holds an MSc in Health Studies (Leadership and Education) and has been a Lecturer at the University of Hull since 2017, advancing to Senior Lecturer in 2022. She is Programme Lead for the Professional Nurse Advocate Programme and Joint Programme Lead for the MSc Healthcare Leadership (online) Programme. A Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and Fellow of the Institute of Health Visiting, Jayne champions perinatal and infant mental health. She is a steering panel member for local Schwartz Rounds and works with student groups, external partners, and healthcare organisations to ensure high-quality education and service evaluation.

Leonie Oxley

Leonie is a lecturer within the Adult Nursing Team at the University of Hull, contributing to various programmes including the University Certificate for Health and Social Care, BSc Nursing, and both BSc and MSc Midwifery. She serves as the module leader for Promoting Health and Preventing Ill Health (BSc Nursing) and Introduction to Health and Social Care Practice in the University Certificate Programme.

Leonie's passion lies in public health, where she is dedicated to improving health outcomes for individuals and families. Her expertise as a qualified Community Practitioner Nurse Prescriber allows her to bring real-world clinical knowledge into the classroom.

In addition to her teaching responsibilities, Leonie has supported and assessed students in clinical practice, bridging the gap between academic learning and professional application. Recently, she completed a Post Graduate Certificate in Practice Education, further enhancing her ability to mentor and educate future healthcare professionals.

