

Delivering Excellence Locally

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Educating the local multidisciplinary team: the Hull and East Riding Airway Focus Group



Francesca Robinson talks to **Joanne Thompson**

The Hull and East Riding Airway Focus Group (HERAFG) has grown so successfully since it launched in 2013 that it has put on its first one day conference for 85 enthusiastic delegates.

The PCRS-UK affiliated group was born after a "lightbulb moment" for Joanne Thompson, Respiratory Nurse Specialist at Hull and East Yorkshire NHS Trust.

"I'd heard about other people trying to run educational respiratory groups and I thought, we've got nothing locally why can't we give it a go? I broached the idea with a respiratory consultant and he said tentatively, let's run with it, and it went from there," explains Joanne.

The group started with a series of evening events, which generally attract between 40 and 50 people, and caters for the multidisciplinary team involved with respiratory care across primary and secondary care in the Hull and East Riding region of Yorkshire.

After running five evening meetings Joanne decided to be more ambitious and organise a one day conference. She says new developments are occurring all the time in respiratory medicine and events like this are vital for cascading vital updates down to local healthcare professionals.

The conference, held in November, covered a variety of topics including an update on some new local COPD guidelines, home ventilation, learning from the National Review of Asthma Deaths, lung cancer and palliative respiratory care. Breakout sessions covered an update on new inhalers introduced in the local guidelines, a spirometry session and telehealth.

Speakers gave presentations for free and local pharmaceutical companies funded the event by paying for exhibition stands.

Joanne says organising this event was a steep learning curve. She admits that at one point she felt she had taken on too much as she had to learn about practicalities such as how to plan the event, what venue to use, how to advertise and market the event, how to produce leaflets and how much to charge exhibitors for stand space. "Speakers had to be organised so that they knew where they needed to be and at what time, presentations had to put on to a slide set, the room had to be set out correctly – these were all things I had never been involved with before. Although it is time consuming, you learn as you go along and when you've done it once it gets much easier."

At first Joanne struggled with the administration; preparing paperwork for meetings, doing and distributing the minutes, and collating evaluation forms, herself. Now the local pharmaceutical companies have eased her load by providing several hours of secretarial support a month.

Despite all this hard work she says the many positive comments and suggestions for future events she got back after the conference have made it all worthwhile.

Joanne now runs HERAFG jointly with a registrar colleague and is supported by a steering group of up to 15 healthcare professionals which meets four times a year to plan events.

She says she found it really hard to delegate in the early days but now she will approach people who are willing to help and says the response from her colleagues has been fantastic. "Over time I have gained the respect of colleagues and pharmaceutical representatives, who have been very pleased with the large turnout at events. It is this support that is enabling us to go from strength to strength. The group is a success because it is held together by the commitment of the steering group. We are all driven by a passion to change and improve respiratory services for local people."

Joanne is now looking to develop a website, a blog and a newsletter to keep the group in touch with new developments and future meetings.

"The Hull and East Riding Airways Focus Group is about sharing good practice. I am passionate about respiratory care and education and get a real thrill from seeing lots of people come to the meetings and sharing the learning and the updates then taking it back to their practices and their workplaces. At the end of the day the group is all about improving the care of the patient," says Joanne.

Tips for running a successful local respiratory group:

- Start by running small events – don't try to run before you can walk
- Set aside plenty of time – planning events can be time consuming
- Share the load – be prepared to delegate
- Gain the support of your colleagues
- Share PCRS-UK resources at your meetings
- Let PCRS-UK help you to publicise your event via email and social media
- Join the PCRS-UK Affiliated Leaders Group where you will gain valuable support and be able to share tips with others.

HOW PCRS-UK CAN HELP YOU TO SET UP A NEW GROUP...

- We can help you get started and introduce you to members who are already running successful groups so that they can help mentor you through the initial stages
- We can provide you with a resource pack to help you get started see <https://www.pcrs-uk.org/resource-pack-help-you-get-started>
- We can promote your events/meetings by sending emails to members in your area and adding your meetings to our events listing on our website
- We will list your group on our website and promote it to our members
- We can point you in the direction of tools and resources that you can use as a basis for discussion and local update
- We can help you network with other colleagues who are running groups and support your professional development through PCRS-UK programmes and our annual affiliated group leaders meeting
- We offer complimentary membership to the PCRS-UK affiliated leaders' group*
- We will send you a regular newsletter especially for group leaders offering tips and advice for managing your group and sharing information

Simply affiliate your group to PCRS-UK to receive this support. See <https://www.pcrs-uk.org/affiliation-pcrs-uk-0> for more information.

Contact us at tricia@pcrs-uk.org to discuss your ideas and for more information about our affiliated groups

*subject to the completion of a short online annual report on the activities of your group