Responding to the learning needs of the Healthcare Science workforce

Victoria Heath¹, Anthony De Souza¹, Philippa May² & Elaine Cloutman-Green¹
¹Great Ormond Street Hospital for Children NHS Foundation Trust, ²Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

Introduction
Providing effective and engaging Continuing Professional Development (CPD) opportunities leads to improved staff morale, staff retention and service improvement. In order to develop and deliver appropriate educational events, the learning needs of the target workforce must be assessed.

Learning Needs Analysis (LNA)
An online learning needs analysis (LNA) survey was designed to capture the current learning status and needs of the London healthcare scientist (HCS) workforce. The survey contained 17 questions that assessed the demographics, current CPD opportunities and the respondents preferred learning styles. The survey was hosted online in order to be accessible across the Trusts and distributed in October 2018 to all interested NHS Trusts and NHS Providers in London via social media and through the London Scientific Diagnostic Network (LSDN).

Results
In total, 358 responses were received from 16 London NHS Trusts and NHS Providers. Almost half of the respondents (46.9%) were life scientists, and 40.5% of the respondents were registered with the HCPC as either a biomedical scientist or clinical scientist. The agenda for change (AfC) band of each respondent was requested to ensure an even distribution of the survey across all bands. Band 7 staff made up the highest proportion of responses; however, there was representation from all bands.

Respondents were asked to list the types of CPD activities they had undertaken, and also the type of CPD activities they felt were most beneficial to their own learning. In 16 out of 46 categories (Figure 1), more respondents felt that a particular activity was beneficial than had been able to undertake it in the previous 12 months.

Over half of the respondents stated that attending conferences was their preferred method of undertaking CPD; however, almost a third (33.1%) stated that they had not attended any courses in the previous 12 months. This highlights the need for accessible HCS specific courses.

Response
£15,000 of funding from Health Education England (HEE) was successfully applied for to run four one day events. Each event was to have 50 fully funded places for HCS currently working for a London NHS Trust or NHS Provider. This strategy allowed for HCS to attend events without using personal or local Trust CPD funds. Pre and post event surveys were carried out using the Slido application in order to gain attendee feedback to improve future events.

Responses to the LNA showed a strong preference for all day events that took place on a weekday. The topics for each of the four following events were selected based on the LNA results (Figure 2.)

Event 1. Routes to statutory and voluntary registration as a clinical scientist, Monday 11 February 2019.

The first event that covered different routes to registration as a clinical scientist sold out in a week, demonstrating that it was a much desired topic.

Overall, attendees rated the event 9.3/10 and reported an increase in understanding of the routes available from 6.1/10 before the event to 8.6/10 after. (Figure 3) Almost all attendees (97%) reported that they would take action as a result of what they had learned on the course.


Science communication was a highly requested topic in the LNA and was the subject of the second event. All (100%) of the attendees that completed the post event survey stated that they would recommend the event to others and that they would take action as a result of what they had learned that day.

Overall, the event was rated 9.0/10, and understanding of science communication increased from 6.0/10 to 8.8/10.

Event 3. How to apply for grant funding: a workshop for healthcare scientists interested in research, Monday 10 June 2019.

There was a strong interest from the LNA respondents to learn about research opportunities. To help with this, the group organised an event on how to apply for grant funding. The increase in understanding for this event was the highest of all the events, rising from 4.6/10 to 8.4/10 with 87% of those responding that they intended to take action as a result of the day.


The fourth CPD event has been booked for November, and is the first event to be targeted at a particular group of HCS.

Conclusions
By engaging directly with the workforce via the LNA survey this group was able to develop and deliver three high-quality and well reviewed educational CPD opportunities. At all three events 100% of attendees reported that they would recommend the event to others and demonstrated a strong increase in the understanding of the topics. This showed a successful collaborative response to the learning needs of the HCS workforce.

The group aims to continue this work into 2020 by using the positive feedback from the first three events in order to apply for further funding.

Acknowledgements
Health Education England: awarded the Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust a £15,000 grant.
Thanks to the London Healthcare Science Education Collaborative for organising the events.