

The LearnHigher Quilt: “Celebrating Partnership”



(Left: view of quilt; right: Becky Bell & Ed Foster working on their square)

Why a quilt? As LearnHigher came to the end of its initial phase as one of the 74 HEFCE-funded Centres of Excellence in Teaching & Learning, and moved into a new future as part of the Association for Learning Development in Higher Education (ALDinHE), the idea of creating a friendship quilt to complement LearnHigher’s more formal academic outputs seemed a particularly appropriate way for the partners to celebrate five years of collaboration.

Quilts have traditionally been associated with collaborative working, with piecing together material fragments of memory to tell a collective story. In our case, each square represents a learning area and was made by one or more of the partners. There was no attempt to impose a single style – LearnHigher has always gained strength by allowing our differences to flourish within a framework that holds us together.

Historically, the quilt form has other resonances for those of us who work in learning development. It was a sociable medium, bringing together sometimes isolated people for mutual support and discussion; it was practical, taking ordinary materials and re-fashioning them to give them a new purpose; and, until recently, it was too low in status to be considered worthy of serious attention - though by a happy coincidence a major exhibition of quilts opened at the Victoria & Albert Museum just days before our own quilt was displayed for the first time at the LearnHigher/ALDinHE joint conference in April 2010.

We are delighted to have this opportunity to display the quilt again at this year’s conference in celebration the relaunch of the LearnHigher website and the continuing vitality of LearnHigher as a key element of the Association’s work.