Held at Glenfield Hospital education centre, the event was led by staff from two LIIPS partner organisations (UHL and UoL) and attended by staff from six LIIPS organisations. The aim of the event was to encourage local leaders from healthcare organisations across Leicestershire to consider how measurement can contribute to their improvement work.

The session took the format of three presentations interspersed with structured group-discussions, which gave attendees the chance to discuss the issues raised in more detail and apply to practical examples.

Presentations were made by Jay Banerjee, Carl Walker, and Simon Sutherland with great energy and passion, and included occasional light-hearted moments! The emphasis across the three talks was on bringing discussions about data away from mathematical analysis of scary statistics and into the complexity of the real world. Spreadsheets and graphs were balanced with clear, everyday examples that ranged from cooking to growing a beard, from becoming a parent to a journey into work.

The event emphasised not only the many benefits of collecting data, but also the potential complexity involved in this – the presenters were able to raise a lot of new perspectives for attendees to consider. For instance, as Jay Banerjee noted, “Routine data doesn’t exist”, meaning that whenever data has been collected it has been collected in order to answer a specific question. Using it to then answer a different question will be less effective, and potentially less accurate. Other key points included the importance of monitoring balancing measures closely, and some useful advice about the most valuable uses of data in relation to understanding, and reducing variation.
The facilitated group sessions focused on the practical application of the learning from the presentations. Actual run charts and SPC (statistical process control) charts from NHS data were used to discuss variation.

The event seemed to be a great success, and hopefully everybody left with at least a couple of new ideas about how measurement and data can best be used in improving healthcare. It’s a much quoted saying that “Every improvement is a change, but not every change is an improvement.” Measurement is how we tell the difference, and I doubt anyone left the session unconvinced of its importance.

An alternative perspective and excellent summary of the event can be found at Damian Roland’s storify.