

Case study: Brighton & Hove City Council

Introduction

This case study explains how Brighton & Hove City Council has benefited from using eLearning in:

- Preparing staff for new responsibilities
- Up-skilling staff in existing roles
- Spreading knowledge of housing management across the organisation
- Ensuring staff are familiar with and understand the organisation's policy, procedures and other key documents
- Improving efficiency and customer service
- Providing a cost-effective, flexible alternative to traditional training.

Brighton & Hove City Council owns and manages 12,500 homes, over 10 per cent of all housing in the region. The housing management team consists of specialist teams, for example the tenancy management team and income management team. Within the tenancy management team, housing officers, housing management advisers, and community wardens deal with most frontline tenancy issues such as low-level anti-social behaviour.

Integration, implementation and uses

The Council's Performance and Development Planning Scheme (PDPS) feeds into the team development plan. As part of the PDPS a personal development plan is agreed between individual staff members and managers after appraisals and reviewed every 6 months, so they decide together what training can be used to meet the staff member's training and development needs. The majority of staff are using some form of eLearning alongside other training methods such as coaching, shadowing or attending occasional training courses.

Training for the team had previously included in-house induction, local courses and occasional conferences for managers. Helen Clarkmead, Brighton & Hove City Council's Business Improvement Manager, felt this was too ad hoc and was looking to develop a more consistent training package.

Brighton & Hove City Council has used Lemos&Crane's eLearning courses in 4 major contexts.

Induction and preparing for new roles

The courses are used as part of induction for new staff, and for training for existing staff who are moving to a new role.

“Over the last year I was working as a Cashier, and wanted to move into my current role as a Housing Management Adviser. My manager encouraged me to start using the system to give me a better understanding of the job in advance. I started with the Tenancies course and learnt the basics – it was ideal for me.” *Ben Reeves, Housing Management Adviser*

Refresher training

Existing staff use the eLearning suite for refresher training, particularly if courses have been integrated into their personal development plan.

“Now I am getting more experience it has come in handy for giving me an overview of how things work. I’ll find it useful to dip into as and when I need it.” *Ben Reeves, Housing Management Adviser*

“It helped me understand more about my role.” *John Wingfield, Rent Accounting Officer*

Informing non-specialist staff

The resource has also been used to help non-specialist staff outside the tenancy management team make better sense of specific tasks that they have been asked to complete by colleagues, based on a more thorough understanding of the objectives of housing management.

“I am working on a project to produce figures for HouseMark ASB benchmarking, helping to re-write reports, and I need to understand the legal terminology. Our training officer recommended I use the eLearning suite. It’s excellent! I’ve recommended it to the rest of the IT team. It’s a good way to learn for someone who hasn’t got a background in housing management. I got so much out of it. I understand the differences between a demotion order and notice, and all the different steps, also that you can put in more than one notice at once – to extend and to terminate a tenancy – so now I understand why our system needed to allow both to be put in. Now, when people ask us questions, I understand the terms they’re using.” *Philippa Toogood, IT Officer*

Feeding into development plans

Helen Clarkmead asked that managers identify learning needs and incorporate the eLearning courses into personal development plans for all tenancy management staff. Over 100 staff registered within 2 weeks.

“It was good, I just logged in. It’s straightforward, you just follow the instructions.” John Wingfield, Rent Accounting Officer

“It was straightforward and easy to get started. I hadn’t used anything like it before.” Ben Reeves, Housing Management Adviser

The Development Manager emailed all tenancy management staff members outlining the subjects on the eLearning suite, the benefits for the learner and the organisation, and registration details. A link to the eLearning was also featured on the staff intranet system.

“It was advertised on Wave [the council’s staff intranet] and it said around 100 members of staff had signed up so I was curious.” Trevor Jones, Community Participation Assistant

Benefits for the organisation

Lemos&Crane's housing eLearning courses have provided Brighton & Hove City Council with a highly flexible training resource, which has motivated staff to develop their knowledge of housing management functions across the organisation based on a thorough understanding of policy, procedures and other key documents.

Cost-effective, flexible

The resource has provided Brighton & Hove City Council with a cost-effective and flexible alternative to traditional training.

“The problem with external training courses is the time spent getting there, being there, getting back, but with the eLearning I am still on site, ready to attend an emergency if necessary. So, time-wise it’s excellent.” Janice Bradbury, Sheltered Scheme Manager

Knowledge of policy and procedures

Working through the material has required staff to refer to their organisation’s policy, procedures and other key documents, familiarising themselves with the detail of the documents’ content and to understand how they relate to best practice.

“My main piece of advice would be to dig out all the procedures before you start – know where to find them, even before the first page of the subject.” *Philippa Toogood, IT Officer*

Recognising staff commitment and engagement

Information for managers shows when and how often courses have been accessed, enabling the commitment of staff to their own learning and development to be recognised and acknowledged.

“I completed the ASB course and worked through the Tenancies course afterwards. I used it from home where it was quieter.” *Philippa Toogood, IT Officer*

Improved customer service

Staff feel more confident and knowledgeable and better able to serve customers.

“When a tenant comes to me with a query – rather than calling around, I’ll be able to help straight away, which will be much more efficient.” *Janice Bradbury, Sheltered Scheme Manager*

Organisational learning

The learning of the organisation as a whole has also the potential to improve. In using the resource with staff from different teams, knowledge has spread widely which means people think about the nature of what they do and why they do it, and feel able to come up with new ideas and suggestions.

“It inspired me to think about how training for our ASB procedures should change; we’re undergoing massive changes to our ASB system.” *Philippa Toogood, IT Officer*