

A case study about Newport City Homes and eLearning

Newport City Homes was established in March 2009 and owns and manages over 9,000 homes in Newport, South Wales. Housing management is structured into specialist teams, including the income team. The income team has been using the Housing Benefit & Rent Arrears course as part of their ongoing training and development. The eLearning courses are also in the Operational Plan for all neighbourhood officers, and housing managers have agreed that Lemos&Crane eLearning is part of training for staff this year.

How Lemos&Crane's eLearning has been used

After Newport City Homes subscribed in early 2010, completion of the subjects and case studies on the Housing Benefit and Rent Arrears course was included as an objective in the personal development plan of each member of the income team.

Ellen from Lemos&Crane visited in January 2010 to conduct a day of introductory training sessions for small groups of staff from different teams within housing management. After the training, the Housing Income Manager, Leanne Herberg, discussed using the Housing Benefit and Rent Arrears course with her team, and agreed it would be added to their personal development plans.

The objective of using the Housing Benefit and Rent Arrears course was to ensure that **everyone broadened their understanding of the work of the income team**, beyond their own particular roles and expertise.

"I learnt lots of extra stuff I didn't know about financial inclusion and Housing Benefit, which I'll remember now, so that's a good thing." *Jonathan Keating, Income Recovery Officer*

"Learning about Housing Benefit and Financial Inclusion has been beneficial as it's not directly part of my job." *Bridget Mai, Legal Assistant*

"It was interesting as I learnt a lot in fields I don't normally work in." *Marilyn Plaister, Income Recovery Assistant*

"I already knew that debts stay for 6 years, and about priority/non-priority debts, but I'm not a qualified debt advisor, so in some parts I learnt more and deepened my knowledge, for example about credit reports, finding out what information is held when someone has a poor credit rating." *Sian Jenkins, Financial Inclusion Officer*

It was also useful for **refresher training for more experienced members of staff**.

“Even if you’ve covered it before, it’s good to refresh things, for example to remind yourself of Housing Benefit issues, getting good pointers and making sure you don’t forget the basics. ...

With certain aspects of the module, certain people don’t cover all the topics on a regular basis, so if you’re not working in that area on regular basis it’s good to refresh yourself.”
Sherie Greer, Debt Recovery Officer

Learners found it easy to get started and use the website:

“It was user-friendly and not difficult to get into, it was positive that I didn't have to waste time working out how to use it.” *Jonathan Keating, Income Recovery Officer*

“I’d not used anything like it before and had a good first impression, it was very easy to use, it was easy to follow” *Marilyn Plaister, Income Recovery Assistant*

“I’m a technophobe to be honest, but it was fine! I found it easy to follow” *Sian Jenkins, Financial Inclusion Officer*

The resource will also be used to help non-specialist staff outside the income team gain a better understanding of the principles and objectives of this area of housing management.

Benefits from using Lemos&Crane’s eLearning

The income team was established over a period of six months (between August 2009 and January 2010), and eLearning *Housing Management* has provided a **flexible training resource** for staff with different levels of experience and knowledge.

“The e-learning fits in well with our training strategy, offering vocational training that can be completed flexibly around work commitments” *Leanne Herberg, Housing Income Manager*

“This has been particularly useful for those staff who have joined the team without a rent management background, or with limited knowledge of the housing benefit system” *Leanne Herberg, Housing Income Manager*

As it is web-based, Lemos&Crane's eLearning offers **accessible** training which staff can use where and when they feel comfortable.

"Sometimes I use it at my desk – which isn't a problem, we have time set aside – but I sometimes use it at home. It's a personal thing to be honest, I can concentrate more at home rather than in our open-plan office." *Marilyn Plaister, Income Recovery Assistant*

"I used it in work... I was going through them when I had spare afternoon or morning. I know some people did them at home, but I preferred finding some quiet time for half an hour to an hour at work" *Sian Jenkins, Financial Inclusion Officer*

Staff feel more confident and knowledgeable having broadened their understanding of other areas of housing management outside their everyday role.

"It was great to get quick access to background information, and to get a quick indication of what to expect: it gave me a general overview even though I don't have direct experience to help me answer some of the activities." *Bridget Mai, Legal Assistant*

Members of the team have **enjoyed** using Lemos&Crane's eLearning.

"I'd definitely recommend it! Even if you're busy, set aside the time, because it's beneficial. It was daunting at first for some of the team, especially if they were thinking it was a test, but once you get started and get over the fear, it's simple and it doesn't take long. Don't be frightened – give it a go!" *Sian Jenkins, Financial Inclusion Officer*

"The whole team uses it and we all tell each other what scores we got!" *Marilyn Plaister, Income Recovery Assistant*