



“Whilst we have utilised other providers across the organisation in the past, we have struggled to achieve a provider who can match the breadth of learning available through Virtual College and to the quality and standard we have grown to love from Virtual College’s products.”

Debbie Crawford, Head of Learning Central, Central Bedfordshire Council

Central Bedfordshire Council

Digital Transformation of an 18-month Training Programme



Central Bedfordshire

Challenge

Work on two projects to develop staff’s understanding of online abuse and special education needs and disabilities.

Solution

Digitally transformed an 18 month face to face training programme into a bespoke online training programme.

The results

Central Bedfordshire Council are yet to find an elearning provider who can match the depth and quality of Virtual College’s courses.

Central Bedfordshire Council are a local authority based in the heart of Bedfordshire. They have over 2,500 members of staff and work to support the development of both internal and external staff workforces across the children and adults care sector.

Central Bedfordshire Council also work on behalf of neighbouring local authorities to provide safeguarding training.

Challenges

Safeguarding training is hugely important to protect the lives of vulnerable children and adults. Central Bedfordshire Council first began their journey with Virtual College by using their bespoke e-learning services. In partnership with the Council, they co-produced bespoke e-learning training modules to support specific local needs in the form of two projects within safeguarding and online abuse.

THINK Project (Marie Collins Foundation)

The first project saw the development of a partnership with the Marie Collins National Charity to develop staff’s understanding of online abuse. The driver behind this project was to replace an established 18-month face-to-face training package on Think, Act and Manage. The project was no longer being funded by external

arrangements, but it was clearly demonstrating a need of frontline workers who were supporting children, young people and their families. Additionally, the face-to-face training had only been delivered to a very small number of the workforce.

Central Bedfordshire Council opted for e-learning to replace their existing face-to-face training methods. The following criteria was set to ensure the e-learning modules met the requirements of the traditional learning approach:

- Ensure that a product was available to a much wider audience and to move the good practice of face-to-face learning into an e-learning package that didn't diminish the quality of learning in any way.
- To provide learning for practitioners but also learning for managers who were supporting practitioners.
- The learning needed to instil confidence in a worker and support for their manager to achieve best outcomes for young people and their families.
- Ensure the learning was accessible locally with the aim to help the Marie Collins Foundation to provide the learning nationally.
- The e-learning should focus on how workers support individuals who have experienced online abuse and what the practitioner can do in support.
- To address the challenge of developing a practitioner virtually by stimulating emotion to enable them to understand and take the learning into practice.

SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Project

The second project is currently in development. It is being designed to develop local staff's knowledge of SEND, and is reaching across four different local authorities in Central Bedfordshire, themselves and their bordering neighbours. The driver behind the SEND project was a collective of local authorities and health colleagues from Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes and Luton. They recognised the importance of providing consistent messages to parents and practitioner and ensuring that they are delivered in a way that enables as many people as possible can apply the learning.

For parents, the training will help them make informed decisions and understand the process. For practitioners in their day-to-day practice, it will allow them to have a shared and consistent approach. Recognising the amount of learning that needs to be covered, meant an approach to develop three small modules, which can

be accessed individually and collectively, will be taken forward.

Solutions

THINK Project

The Marie Collins Foundation Project consisted of a two-part branched module to be aimed at non-people and people managers. The topic of the e-learning is safeguarding training under the title of "Path to Protection". The aim of the project is to win hearts and minds and challenge preconceptions.

The 45-minute e-learning module consists of an MCF safeguarding introductory video, a case study video split into bite-sized chunks and 15-minute managers' bolt-on training section.

The modules start with a self-assessment to understand the user's knowledge and confidence in the topic of protecting children in the digital age. The learner completes a second self-assessment at the end of the course which aim to support their knowledge retention at the end of the training.

SEND Project

The online training from Virtual College will include consistent messages to those engaging with SEND. It needs to ensure that the level of learning is delivered in a way that will enable both parents to be confident in their understanding of what services and support are available, and workers to be confident in their support. It is key to Central Bedfordshire Council to create a model that is able to take all of this into account.



Working with us

Debbie Crawford, Head of Learning Central at Central Bedfordshire Council, describes her experience of working with Virtual College as an extremely positive one. Alongside the project management support she receives, her team are regularly consulted to ensure the objectives are being met. Debbie further highlights her thoughts about Virtual College's services below.

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Advice to other local authorities

Debbie Crawford kindly gives advice to other Local Authorities about e-learning development.

"Without a doubt using a bespoke e-learning solution and having it tailored to meet your local perspective is a great way of delivering knowledge and information. It can provide an emotional engagement in the subject matter that drives practitioners to utilise the learning in their day-to-day practice. We adopt several different models around e-learning. Although it is often fine just to do the e-learning, sometimes we ask people to undertake the learning as a pre-classroom activity and then bring them together virtually or in a classroom to test the learning through case studies and discussion. This reduces the length of time that a practitioner is away from their job role. We often advise some of our partner organisations to get the team to undertake a specific e-learning activity and then discuss in team meetings with case studies tabled that are relevant to their job role".

Debbie concludes by expressing that there is lots of flexibility in the approaches that local authorities can adopt when using e-learning and it has provided Central Bedfordshire Council with a great way of ensuring their local workforce are confident and competent and are able to support their local people well. Most importantly, it gives them the capacity to ensure that the greatest number of people can access learning at a time they choose. The largest benefit of e-learning is that it is available for the learner 24/7.

18 month

face to face training was replaced with a digital training module

45 minute bespoke elearning module was created including bite sized chunks of information

24/7

Access for the learner

About Virtual College

Virtual College create inspiring learning so that people, organisations and communities succeed and flourish. They do this by putting the learner first and sparking their enthusiasm for learning. They believe the most effective way to deliver great results is to make learning meaningful and engaging.

 **Virtual College**

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