

CASE STUDY

Introducing a comprehensive dispute resolution training initiative

A partnership between Virtual College and the Housing Ombudsman Service

The Housing Ombudsman is set up to look at complaints about the housing organisations that are registered with them. By sharing best practice, they enable landlords and tenants to resolve disputes themselves at the earliest opportunity. Their service is free, independent and impartial.

Housing
Ombudsman Service

The features

Virtual College have an array of tools to help businesses achieve their goals. The following were used to help the Housing Ombudsman Service:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> E-learning courses	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Evaluations	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Tracking of Learner Progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Training Needs Analysis	<input type="checkbox"/> e-Portfolios	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reporting	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Bespoke e-learning
<input type="checkbox"/> Certificate Printing	<input type="checkbox"/> PDPs - Personal Development Plans	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Customisation	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Visual Representation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CPD Tracking	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> e-Assessments	<input type="checkbox"/> Appraisal systems	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partnership-led Project Management

This case study will focus on the following key areas:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Best Practice Training	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Practical Application of Learning	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Organisational Development	<input type="checkbox"/> Staff Induction Training
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Raising Awareness	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Collaboration	<input type="checkbox"/> Mandatory Training	<input type="checkbox"/> Blended Training Solutions

Overall benefits:

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Cost Reduction	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increase in Quality and Consistency	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Reduced Carbon Footprint	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Flexible Route for Learning & Skills Development
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Produce Change	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Awareness of the Housing Ombudsman Service		

For more information on the features and tools used, or to request a bespoke feature, please get in touch with our team or visit www.virtual-college.co.uk

The background

One of the key aims of the Housing Ombudsman Service is to increase awareness of dispute resolution best practice across the housing sector, in the hope that this will result in a clear reduction to the number of escalated complaints. They are also interested in gathering data and intelligence into the sector to inform future developments and decisions.

This approach to dispute resolution is the basis of their work with landlords and tenants, MPs, councillors and tenant panels.

Virtual College are well established in the housing sector and currently work with over 130 social housing providers on staff, board and tenant training. This strong history within the housing sector was a key factor in the Housing Ombudsman Service's choice of development partner.

The two parties met back in January 2012 at a launch event to celebrate the partnership between Virtual College and the Chartered Institute of Housing. The relationship between Virtual College and the Housing Ombudsman Service evolved and they decided to combine expertise by working in partnership to launch an innovative training programme.

Paul James Neville, Head of Sector Development at the Housing Ombudsman Service, commented: "The partnership with Virtual College was a natural choice as we share similar organisational values and objectives."



"The partnership with Virtual College was a natural choice."

Paul James Neville,
Head of Sector Development
at the Housing Ombudsman
Service

The challenge

“
The training had to produce change with a measurable impact on performance.
”

The Housing Ombudsman Service has over 2,000 members of varying size and knowledge base on dispute resolution, so producing content which was suitable, technically correct and engaging, was always going to be a challenge.

The primary objective was to raise awareness to as many people as possible, therefore developing a flexible learning solution that could be rolled out to an unlimited number of staff within all member organisations was required. In addition to this, the training had to produce change with a measurable impact on performance. To do this successfully, Virtual College needed to identify the best way to reach learners within the rented housing sector organisations.

The Housing Ombudsman Service brand was important to the success of the project; the training design and supporting materials needed to be consistent with established guidelines for branding, iconography and visual representation.

The solution

Having recognised that face to face training was not viable, the Housing Ombudsman Service opted for a more cost-effective, practical and modern learning solution – online training. As the main project aim was to increase awareness of dispute resolution best practice across the housing sector, both parties agreed that the best way to do this was to offer the training for free through a self-registration website.

With a wide variation in expertise within member organisations, the need for the e-learning content to be tailored for each individual was clear. The best way to do this was to create a pre-training skills analysis focusing on the key organisational development areas. The

learner must complete this before accessing the training.

This ensures training is efficient and relevant to the specific needs of the learner and it allows the learner to focus their time effectively.

The tailored content is split into 3 bite-size 20 minute pieces of e-learning, which learners can prioritise depending on the outcome of their skills analysis. There is a strong focus throughout the training on practical application of learning with real case studies and various interactive examples.

The results

The training initiative was successful in both engaging organisations with the work of the Housing Ombudsman Service and in raising awareness of the training initiative.

It is clear that the training has been well received and successful in encouraging individuals to think about the way in which they work to resolve disputes and complaints. The registration got off to a good start with over 100 different landlords signing up for the free training in the first week alone.

From those recorded, 94% of individuals said they would recommend the training course to others and 53% said they would be interested in speaking to the Housing Ombudsman about how they could help them further with dispute resolution principles.

Over 80% of individuals agreed that the training would improve the way in which they work, with a further 5% indicating it reinforced existing knowledge.

The following quotes, taken from learner evaluation responses, support this:

“It has made me aware that complaints are the responsibility of all employees in the organisation, from the top to the bottom.”

“It will enable me to challenge where I feel the right decisions have not been made.”

“

It will help me to stop a complaint becoming a formal complaint by trying to resolve issues as soon as they occur.

”

When asked about the initiative, Paul James Neville commented: “This initiative has been designed to offer the most up-to-date and expert learning advice at the click of a button. The programme is based on the Housing Ombudsman Service’s extensive experience gained from dealing with thousands of cases, as well as from wide consultation with the sector. When used, these dispute resolution principles create better relationships with tenants, save resources, and are more likely to deliver a successful outcome at an early stage.”

Kevin Young, Community Participation Manager at Slough Borough Council, has completed the training and commented: “The training will challenge current processes and thinking, potentially leading participants to review the status quo to ensure complaints handling and resolution is something that is integral to their organisation and not something it just reacts to when things go wrong.”

Virtual College operate a partnership-led project management style, where the client is encouraged to be involved at each stage. This was particularly the case with this project as it required a great deal of collaboration and various amendments to content throughout the process.

Paul also added: “Thanks to the team at Virtual College for working with us in a professional and solution focused way.”

What next?



“

We are committed to communicating the core principles of effective dispute management, and will help individuals and organisations benefit from the best practice.

”

The training initiative is a long-term programme and will take time to cascade out to organisations and for staff to train.

Virtual College and the Housing Ombudsman Service will be collaborating on further projects in the near future, starting with a pilot of virtual classrooms.

To access the free training on dispute resolution principles, please visit drp.virtual-college.co.uk or to find out more about the partnership between Virtual College and the Housing Ombudsman, please contact us by calling **01943 885085** or email us info@virtual-college.co.uk

To find out more about what benefits the implementation of e-learning can bring to your company, please get in touch by calling 01943 885085 or email us: info@virtual-college.co.uk

Other case studies



The successful roll out of e-learning at Hanover (Scotland) Housing Association



How e-learning helped to increase customer satisfaction at Unity Housing Association



Wigan Council adopts e-learning in order to provide training to Early Years sector



Phone
01943 885085



Email
info@virtual-college.co.uk



Web
www.virtual-college.co.uk

About Virtual College

With over one million online learners, Virtual College is one of the leading providers of e-learning in the UK. For over **eighteen** years, we have provided online courses to individuals and companies across the world, breaking down the boundaries of traditional learning to deliver cost reducing, time efficient training. Unlike many other e-learning providers, our training extends to actual programme and qualification creation and delivery – resulting in a unique blended solution. The knowledge, experience and feedback that this delivery provides helps ensure that we strive to continually improve our solutions.

Virtual College Ltd

Marsel House, Stephenson's Way
Ilkley, West Yorkshire
LS29 8DD, England