

CASE STUDY

# WM Housing Group benefits from online induction training

A Virtual College Case Study



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## The background

**WM Housing Group exists to create places where people are proud to live and work.**

It has grown into one of the largest social housing businesses in the West Midlands, owning and managing around 30,000 homes across Herefordshire, Worcestershire, Birmingham, Coventry and the wider West Midlands.

The Group aims to deliver over 300 new homes every year providing excellent homes that meet the needs of a range of individuals and families and meet high environmental standards.

## The challenge

**WM Housing Group is a major employer with almost 950 staff employed in a wide variety of locations and job roles.**



“Our training used to be more like a series of briefings with little interactivity,” recalled Michaela Hyman, Learning and Development Manager at WM Housing Group.

“We were aware that this wasn’t always engaging and it was difficult to track the level of learner understanding and retention achieved.”

The briefings also created a major logistical issue. Getting staff to the training locations, booking rooms and associated organisational requirements put a real strain on administrative resources.

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## The solution

**The Group could see the potential benefits of integrating online learning with face to face training to create a blended solution.**

Virtual College was successful in bidding for the ensuing procurement contract against other e-learning providers.

Over 500 members of staff at WM Housing Group now undertake some form of online learning using Virtual College resources. Some of the remaining members of staff, mainly field-based, do not have IT access.

The majority of online learning is focussed on induction and compliance. Each new member of staff is tasked with completing 4 online courses within a month of starting.

These are: Equality & Diversity, Health & Safety, Data Protection and Fire Safety. Over 150 new members of staff from WM Housing Group undertook this training last year.

Some specific online courses are acquired for particular personnel.

Michaela commented: “I joined WM Housing from outside the housing sector so I found the online ‘Governance for Social Housing’ course particularly useful.”

Online training is also enjoyed by an additional 300 members of staff from the head office and neighbourhood offices – covering a huge range of roles from housing staff, to anti-social behaviour officers and estates Inspectors.



# The results

"Covering the induction requirements for 150 members of staff alone would be difficult without online learning," explained Michaela.

"We are now accessing some ad hoc online courses from Virtual College for specific individual job roles, for example, PAT testing and Food Hygiene. This saves us a fortune on booking individuals on external courses."

"E-learning allows our staff to go at their own pace. This method of self-learning helps those individuals who have negative previous experiences of classroom learning."

"Online learning holds no fears for the majority of people – as long as they can use a Smartphone, they can handle the limited technology understanding required by e-learning."

Face to face training is still a part of the learning provided for WM Housing's plumbers, electricians, roofers and other operatives who need practical training in the Health & Safety aspects of their roles.

Michaela commented: "Our face to face training requires a huge amount of administration. It means a member of staff is required to organise rooms, work to schedule people in, take registers of attendants etc."

"None of this is required with online learning. It's easy to set up learners and on the rare occasions we have any issues, I just phone Virtual College who take over the problem and sort it quickly."

## What next?

Michaela continued: "Our sector is increasingly cost conscious so online learning has an important part to play in delivering value."

"I would like to increase the amount of underpinning knowledge provided online as part of a blended solution and widen the scope of our training from Virtual College to incorporate safeguarding, a guide to Legionnaires disease and FGM, for example. The online 17th edition resources would certainly be of value to our surveyors."

"As technology access is improved for our field operatives, we will be able to deliver online learning to more members of staff. My aim is to provide refresher training every 3 years so our staff are always up to date."

“Online learning holds no fears for the majority of people.”



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### About Virtual College

With over 2 million online learners, Virtual College is one of the leading providers of e-learning in the UK. For over twenty 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.

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