CASE STUDY

Online solution delivers significant benefits to South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

A Virtual College Case Study

The **background**

South Staffordshire and Shropshire Healthcare provides mental health, forensic mental health, learning disability and specialist children's services within in-patient and community settings across South Staffordshire and Shropshire.

The Trust also has Prison and Drug and Alcohol services in the Isle of Wight, Hampshire, Cambridgeshire, Buckinghamshire, the Wirral and Birmingham. It is also the lead contractor to provide mental health services for the Ministry of Defence.

The Trust aims "to be positively different through positive practice and positive partnerships. What matters most to us are people; the people we work to provide effective services for, the people who work for us and the people we work in partnership with."

> What matters to us are people.

The **challenge**

There was a gradual realisation that the delivery of mandatory staff training was consuming too much time, effort and energy.

Theresa Shaw, Head of Learning and Leadership Development at the Trust, explained: "Despite our efforts to take advantage of the national solution, this just didn't work for the Trust so we chose to look elsewhere for a simpler, more effective solution whereby we could localise the information being imparted to our learners."

There were several clear objectives and requirements for the new approach:

- ✓ Ability to reach the Trust's geographically remote services
- ✓ Simplification of its training needs matrix
- ✓ Releasing time for its subject matter experts to focus on improving quality rather than delivering mandatory training
- ✓ Releasing clinical time – clinicians were being asked to do more for less in the face of constant change in services
- ✓ Improving compliance levels which had plateaued at 85%
- ✓ Introducing a competency-based approach to training rather than repeating training unnecessarily
- ✓ Reducing the burden on the admin team, meaning the Trust would not have to rely on agency staff

There were several clear objectives and requirements for the new approach.

The **solution**

The Trust first explored what other trusts were doing locally.

Theresa said: "We knew we needed to embrace the use of technology based learning more widely."

The Learning and Development team led on the commissioning of the project which started in September 2014 but this also involved numerous other stakeholder groups within the organisation including union representatives, operational partners, subject matter experts and various directors.

The Trust chose a flexible range of online statutory and mandatory training courses for their 3500 existing staff and also created an induction package for new starters.

Theresa Shaw
Head of Learning & Leadership Development

> We looked at a number of different providers during the process but felt that the Virtual College solution was the best for us.

The **results**

Compliance

Theresa reported: "Before we started with this method of delivery, we were running at **85%** compliance, and it had taken us 5 or 6 years to get to this level. Nine months into our contract with Virtual College we had reached the same level of **85%** compliance and we are looking forward to seeing this continue to rise."

"Similarly, in our remote locations, we were running at **72%** compliance but 9 months in we are now running at **88%** which we are obviously delighted with."

Productivity

"Before the Virtual College project, we ran 193 face-to-face sessions in a year which we haven't needed to run this year. This has released 559 hours for our trainers, allowing them to provide more specialist support and concentrate on the quality of higher level training," continued Theresa.

"Our clinicians have also benefited with the average clinical staff member spending just 4 hours to complete all of their core mandatory learning. This this has resulted in the trust benefitting from around 3087 hours in time savings so far!"

What **next?**

> 88% of our learners stated they preferred this method of completing their mandatory training.

Cost Savings

Theresa explained: "We have managed to save **50%** on our refreshment bill alone and also considerable amounts on travel expenses as well as the associated time and cost savings."

"Within our learning & development admin team, we regularly had to rely on agency staff to help us catch up when we had a backlog and the staff were stressed."

"We eventually had a staff member 'on loan' to us from a different team for 12 months who we now no longer need. "

"Strong project management by our Learning & Development Specialist, together with support from the learning and development team and Trust managers have been instrumental in ensuring the successful transition to our new approach".

> We have been really pleased with the overall system and support we have received from Virtual College.

A key part of the project was the opportunity to make significant cost savings that could then be re-invested in the organisation in future years.

"We have been really pleased with the overall system and support we have received from Virtual College. The simplicity of the system from both the learner view and admin view has really enhanced the experience for us, having everything in the one place has been a massive benefit, " Theresa concluded.

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About Virtual College

Since 2006, we have provided training to every NHS Trust and now work with over 60 local safeguarding boards. Over this period, we have donated more than £200,000 to healthcare and safeguarding charities.

We are part of Virtual College, which has over 1.75 million learners and is growing at a rate of 1000 per day across public and private sectors.

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