

CASE STUDY

# The Manchester Safeguarding Children Board advances online learning engagement

A Virtual College Case Study



“The whole Virtual College package is really beneficial to the MSCB.”

## The background

With a population of over half a million, the City of Manchester is the sixth largest in the UK. Twenty per cent of the population is under the age of 16.

In the 2015 Index of Multiple Deprivation, Manchester ranked as 5th out of 326 districts with 43% of households living in poverty.

The Manchester Safeguarding Children Board (MSCB) is a statutory organisation whose main objective is to coordinate and ensure the effectiveness of work that is done in safeguarding and promoting the welfare of children and young people. It represents over 30 partners including education, the police and health and social care.

Its vision states that “Every child and young person in Manchester should be able to grow up safe; free from abuse, neglect or crime; allowing them to enjoy a happy and healthy childhood and fulfil their potential.”



## The solution

The MSCB first started to work with Virtual College as far back as 2008, when it acquired licences for 1000 learners to undertake its Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect online course.

Marion Doherty, MSCB Training Coordinator, commented: “With such a huge workforce in Manchester it would be impossible to deliver effective face to face safeguarding training to so many people with the resources available to us.”

By 2014, the Safeguarding Children Board’s demands for this online course had doubled and by early 2015, the decision was made to subscribe to a package giving unlimited access to over 40 different online learning courses from Virtual College.

Marion added: “We positively encourage our partner agencies to take ownership and responsibility for their basic safeguarding training and continue to promote and make these online training resources available to them free of charge.”

“Our partner agencies contribute financially to the MSCB so it is only fair that those private organisations who also want to access the training pay a nominal amount towards it. It reduces the financial pressure on the MSCB if we get private contributions but it also encourages them to complete the training if it is paid for.”

In 2015 the MSCB signed a new 3 year contract with Virtual College which provided over 40 online courses and included self-registration for the first time.

## The challenge

Within this environment, providing safeguarding training to support the MSCB’s vision represents a huge challenge.

A huge number of professionals come into contact with children and young people as a result of their various roles. Within each school, for example, it is mandatory for the designated safeguarding lead to undertake specific training every two years.

The MSCB Multi-agency Training performs a development and fostering role in order to help achieve better outcomes for children and young people.

Its training courses have been tailored to meet the needs of professionals within the partnership agencies and in the Voluntary, Community and Faith (VCF) sector.

The MSCB offers a blended solution to safeguarding training, combining face to face to face training with online learning.



# The results

Rapid progress has been made in the level of learner engagement in online safeguarding training within the MSCB with over 3,000 course completions in the last 9 months alone.

"Self-registration and the increased number and variety of courses available are key factors in this success," explained Marion.

"We have very limited administration resources but it's now easy for learners to simply log on and get instant access to over 40 courses."

This is particularly useful for learners who have a wide range of shift patterns and do not want their training access to be delayed by having to get administrative approvals.

"Online learning helps, as releasing staff for courses could create service delivery issues," said Marion, "and, as we now have unlimited access to online courses, we do not need to manage the allocation closely across a large number of potential learners."

"Child minders and foster carers are now doing the online courses which is fantastic. These learning resources are really important for the voluntary sector, in particular, as they have limited training budgets."

Many of the partner agencies are audited externally to ensure they have adequate safeguarding training provision in place. Schools, for example, are audited by Ofsted. It is therefore important that these agencies can be set up as departmental managers on the Virtual College learning management system which provides easy access to learner progress tracking and reporting.

"If anything, the increase in learner engagement in online training has also stimulated demand for more face to face training," explained Marion.

"Even though we go to great lengths to ensure we get real value from our venues for training, there is no way we can deliver face to face courses for the £4 per head cost of an online course completion which we are now enjoying."

"Virtual College is very responsive and receptive and engages with the safeguarding children boards to encourage input into course enhancements, genuinely and openly."

"I went to the last Virtual College safeguarding event for representatives from safeguarding children boards and heard a really valuable presentation on Forced Marriage from a government expert. I distributed summary notes around my colleagues who really appreciated it and are keen to attend the next meeting."

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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 2 million learners and is growing at a rate of 1000 per day across public and private sectors.

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