

CASE STUDY

# Clarion call for online learning to support tenants' employability

A Virtual College Case Study



**CLARION**  
HOUSING GROUP



“ With Virtual College, it was easy for learners to log on, complete their training and print off their certificates. ”

## The **background**

**Clarion Housing Group was formed in 2016 by combining two of the national housing associations, Affinity Sutton and Circle Housing.**

With over 125,000 homes, Clarion is also one of the biggest housebuilders in the country. Committed to helping to tackle the housing shortage, the Group is set to build 50,000 high quality homes of all tenures during the next ten years from 2019. Two thirds of these will be affordable homes to help those in housing need.

In addition to new homes, Clarion transforms existing communities through sustained regeneration, helps people to access employment and training opportunities and gives young people a better start in life.

## The **challenge**

Clarion's award-winning community investment programme is one of the largest of its kind in the country and focuses on three key areas: financial and digital inclusion; work and training and improving neighbourhoods.

The Group's Ready 2Work scheme is a national award-winning service, initially implemented by Affinity Sutton, which helps tenants move towards work. With thousands of properties across some of UK's most deprived areas, the Group operates with 122 local authorities throughout the country and works closely with associated regional LEPs and employer networks.

The Ready2Work service is Matrix accredited, a unique quality standard for organisations to assess and measure their advice and support services, which ultimately supports individuals in their choice of career, learning, work and life goals.

When the Group was looking for an e-learning programme to help support its tenants' move towards work, it needed to ensure that it could offer:

- a wide range of courses to meet their varied needs
- straightforward and accessible online material which could be completed by a range of residents with a spectrum of IT skills
- employability courses such as interview skills and job searching
- life skills courses such as personal budgeting and managing a home
- sector specific courses such as food hygiene and health and safety
- IT courses such as MS Office or basic skills

Online learning would help the Group to offer tenants in areas of low housing density, in particular, an accessible learning solution.

## The **solution**

Ryan Matthews, Clarion Housing Group's Employment and Training Team Leader, said: "We chose Virtual College primarily for the range of courses they could offer and the ease of using their learning management system, Enable.

"We had found some online learning solutions from previous providers to be complex and difficult to administer.

"With Virtual College, it was easy for learners to log on, complete their training and print off their certificates."

Free employability support is provided to its tenants by the group, including online courses from Virtual College.

Sector skills courses are also offered by the group, at no cost, which deliver the specialist training required in certain types of jobs.

The scheme has been relaunched this year with Virtual College providing a wider range of over 30 courses, hand-picked to meet the specific needs of the group's Ready-2Work service.

Tenants now have access to IT skills, including Microsoft Office training, and courses in life skills such as 'managing a home' and 'healthy living'.





# The results

Clarion uses dedicated e-learning sessions, provides access for tenants to do the training at their own homes or runs the online sessions alongside other face to face Group training sessions.

In 2015/6, its Ready2Work team helped 1000 people into work, placed 110 apprentices, created 350 work placements and supported residents to achieve over 2500 training outcomes.

Last year over 3000 of the Group's tenants accessed the online learning resources from Virtual College.

A sophisticated 'social value calculator' is used to determine the benefits accrued. For 2014/15, this equated to £1670 every time a tenant completed some training.

All of the tenant training is voluntary and is often the result of recommendations from the network of employment support workers who work alongside their tenants.

Ryan commented: "These e-learning resources provide a huge range of flexible, cost effective options which will fit in with 95% of our tenants' needs.

"They can learn from home if they have IT access but we also run sessions for those who need us to provide available IT or need some IT skills support.

"Online learning is an important complement to the other services we offer to help people get into work.

"The current e-learning options we offer have played a key role in helping our tenants work prospects by gaining relevant certificates and qualifications.

"We can quickly and easily pull reports from the LMS to create a traffic light system for learner completions which is really helpful.

"As we cover a huge geographical area, it is particularly useful to be able to offer all of our residents this support especially if they reside in areas of low stock density where face to face learning would be particularly very to implement.

"Learner feedback has been very positive as it helps to improve confidence, enhance the job seeker's CV and overcome barriers to work."

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## About Virtual College

With over 2.5 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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