

CASE STUDY

Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect:

The online training course accessed by over half a million professionals

A Virtual College Case Study



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Once learners see the quality of Virtual College's online learning, they buy into it.

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Mary-Ann Round,
Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board

The background

It is estimated that over half a million children are abused in the UK each year.

Safeguarding children is everyone's responsibility and it is a mandatory requirement that all professionals who come into contact with children and young people receive safeguarding training.

Those on the front-line of safeguarding, such as social workers, teachers, the police and healthcare professionals are often the most important in spotting the signs of abuse and neglect, and being able to offer protection and safety.

Without the correct safeguarding training, a front-line professional could potentially miss the signs and fail to protect a child. The findings of serious case reviews demonstrate clearly that a lack of correct, up-to-date, quality training has led to failures in child protection.



The solution

The first version of Virtual College's online 'Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect' course was launched in 2006 and intended to help give large numbers of professionals easy access to appropriate training.

The course is regularly updated to reflect current understanding and recommended practice.

Depending on the speed of the learner, this course takes between an hour to two hours to complete, but as it is online, this can be undertaken at a time and pace convenient to the learner.

The course educates professionals on the various types of child abuse and neglect, the national guidance and legislation, and actions to take should they believe a child or young person is at risk. It provides content options specific to the various multi-agency professionals involved in safeguarding children.



The challenge

Given the huge number of professionals who come into contact with children and young people and the continually changing nature of the issues they face, the task of providing regular, up to date training is significant.

In 2006, Virtual College started to work with subject matter experts from Local Safeguarding Children Boards (LSCBs) to create online learning resources which could help to address these challenges.

LSCBs were created as a result of the Children Act 2004 which required each local authority to establish a LSCB consisting of representatives from a number of agencies, including schools, the police and the NHS.



The results

Virtual College is now the leading provider of online safeguarding training in the UK.

Over half a million professionals have completed Virtual College's 'Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect' training helping to spread knowledge over a wide range of professionals cost effectively in a relatively short period of time.

There are numerous instances of the practical benefits this online training has delivered.

Within Northamptonshire, thousands of staff come into contact with children and young people every day, so the task of ensuring they received appropriate safeguarding training was daunting.

Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board's (NSCB) Kevin Johnson is project officer for the Learning and Development, Policies and Procedures and Young People's LSCB Sub Groups.

Kevin commented: "We were challenged by the need to train a large workforce on a limited budget."

"Specifically, we needed to be able to reach a large number of practitioners with a consistent 'introduction to safeguarding.'"

By the end of March 2015, over 1500 practitioners had already completed an e-learning course. This included all of the lunchtime supervisors in the county taking an 'introduction' course, a group which was not covered previously by the NSCB, and learners from other areas of county being able to access training.

"This really is an efficient and cost effective way of delivering training to large numbers of people quickly," added Kevin.

What next?

Safeguarding issues, and recommended responses to them, evolve constantly so there is a need to refresh training and content on a regular basis.

Virtual College works with safeguarding experts frequently, re-investing in new and updated online courses.

The latest version of Virtual College's online 'Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect' training was created in December 2015 and has been completely updated in style and content.

It includes pioneering features such as personalisation, reflective practice and immersive work-based scenarios. As the nature of the content is often disturbing, a 'Safe Place' is provided for learners with a calming screen, relaxing music and links to phone numbers that provides support should they need it.

Although half a million professionals have already undertaken Virtual College's 'Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect' courses, delivering safeguarding training to all appropriate individuals is an ongoing mission and Virtual College is continuing to work with safeguarding professionals to address these challenges.

“ This really is an effective and cost efficient way of delivering training to large numbers of people quickly. ”

Kevin Johnson,
Northamptonshire Safeguarding Children Board

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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