CASE STUDY

Engaging with online learning – Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board

A Virtual College Case Study

Lincolnshire
Safeguarding
Children Board

The **background**

Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board (LSCB) is a statutory multi-agency board made up of representatives from the Local Authority, Police, Health Service, Probation and Rehabilitation companies, Youth Offending Service, the Voluntary Sector and others.

Its vision is that every child and young person in Lincolnshire is safeguarded via the provision of accessible, timely, co-ordinated, high quality, multi-agency services to children, young people and families.

The **challenge**

Ensuring a large number of staff from these multifarious agencies are appropriately trained is a huge challenge.

Lincolnshire is one of the UK's largest counties so LSCB covers potential learners who are geographically dispersed over a wide rural area.

Previously, LSCB ran 6 to 7 face-to-face training events a year but it was not possible to reach all staff requiring training in this way. With regular round trips of over 100 miles for delegates, these were costly events to operate and there was no accurate way of checking the level of learning engagement and understanding.

A paper-based system was used to manage course administration with letters sent to confirm attendance. As well as being a costly administration exercise, awareness of courses available amongst potential learners was often poor, resulting in low attendance levels on some face-to-face courses.

Prior to its decision to join Virtual College's Safeguarding Children e-Academy, LSCB researched several online learning providers in its quest to improve this situation.

The quality of the learning solution on offer from learning providers and the cost effectiveness of their potential solutions, were key considerations.

The **solution**

Collaborative working

LSCB was a Founder Member of Virtual College's Safeguarding Children e-Academy, joining in June 2006. The collaborative group combines the knowledge of safeguarding organisations and the online learning expertise of Virtual College to create e-learning safeguarding and child protection courses.

"There is real value in being able to network with colleagues and discuss solutions to similar challenges," said Mary-Ann Round, Training and Development Officer at Lincolnshire Safeguarding Children Board, "and it is important that members provide their subject matter expertise to ensure the courses created meet their needs."

LSCB has grown from being one of the earliest adopters of online learning solutions to being one of the most active and highly engaged members of Virtual College's Safeguarding Children e-Academy.

As a subject matter expert, it has already contributed to the development of 10 safeguarding courses and is currently providing its knowledge for several new online courses due for release by Virtual College's Safeguarding Children e-Academy.

Blended Solutions

Mary-Ann described the way in which it now integrates online learning with its face-to-face safeguarding training to provide a blended learning solution: "Our learners go through the relevant online foundation courses prior to arriving to consolidate their learning via face-to-face training."

"This reduces the time needed for training sessions as all learners now arrive with same level of understanding and underpinning knowledge."

"Some people were initially anti e-learning people as they have had bad experiences in the past with poor solutions which just provide text on glass and no audio."

"Virtual College's courses use highly developed techniques to ensure learner engagement, including animations, interactivity and supporting audio."

66 **Once learners see the quality of Virtual College's online learning, they buy into it.** 99

Technology Adoption

The speed of technology adoption has paved the way for the growth of online learning.

"In the early days, broadband reach was poor in some areas of Lincolnshire but this has largely been resolved. Some of our partner organisations had firewalls which were blocking the online learning but Virtual College worked with them to overcome these technical issues," said Mary-Ann.

LSCB uses Virtual College's learning management system, **Enable**, to promote, manage and allocate learner requests for both online and face-to-face training courses.

Learners access the system via the LSCB web site and can see clearly what is available, when and where and can book themselves onto relevant courses at the most convenient times and locations. The live system is easy to manage and helps facilitate a multi-agency approach. Schools often dedicate a 'non-contact' training day to safeguarding, setting aside time for their staff to access the online learning resources.

The LSCB branded learning management system was used to manage 75 events with 1227 attendees in the last training year alone. This streamlined system is managed by one person at LSCB with learner support provided by Virtual College.

Mary-Ann commented: "The online event management functionality even sends delegates reminder emails."

"It is much more effective than our previous paper-based systems and has led to major improvements in course attendance."

All agencies have to demonstrate that they have met their safeguarding mandatory requirements that include staff completing the relevant safeguarding training. The Learning Management System has meant that all agencies receive a report so that they can track all safeguarding training.

The **results**

Flexible and economical delivery

Since joining the Virtual College's Safeguarding e-Academy, over 45,000 online courses have been passed by LSCB learners across the width and breadth of Lincolnshire – almost 10,000 in the last year alone.

LSCB has access to over 26 online courses covering a wide variety of safeguarding topics including several variants of the 'Awareness of Child Abuse and Neglect' course created to meet the varying needs of the diverse range of learners.

The average cost per course passed works out at an economical £3.23 each. Integrating online learning into a blended solution is enabling LSCB to provide relevant training quickly, flexibly and cost effectively.

Learner Engagement

"Some people learn at work and some at home. Most learners are now computer savvy," reported May-Ann.

"We are seeing enhanced engagement and better learner retention. Once they do one course they keep on doing others."

"Learners cannot complete an e-learning course without passing an assessment and learners on face-to-face courses need to complete an evaluation."

LSCB is developing another reflective activity to be used 2 months after a course has been completed, to assist in the monitoring of the impact of training and effectiveness.

Mary-Ann explained: "Online learning allows us to provide a quality solution to a large number of learners efficiently. Each year, we are delivering more online training to more learners and economies of scale are driving down the unit costs."

"Without online courses, we would have to employ lots more trainers."

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Simplifying **the audit process**

Enable Audit is an online auditing system developed by Virtual College that is designed to simplify the process of any audit.

Multiple audits can be created, extensive information captured and detailed reports generated – quickly and easily in one central system.

This year, LSCB used Virtual College's audit functionality for its section 11 audit and has moved its early help assessment audit from a paper based to a computerised system.

LSCB's partner agencies are also looking to acquire the Enable Audit tool so they can create their own specific audits online.

"We're really excited about the prospect of using the tool to audit all of our face to face and e-learning – moving from a paper based to a computer based system," enthused Mary-Ann.

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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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