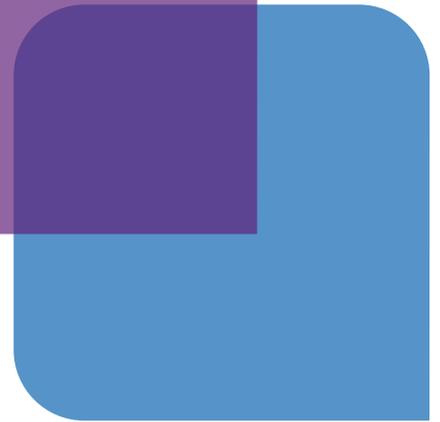




social care
institute for excellence

Get connected to elearning for social care providers



What is elearning?

eLearning is a general term that covers the use of any sort of information technology (IT) to provide or support learning. It includes:

- the internet
- DVDs or CDs
- digital TV
- mobile phones (e.g. via text messages)
- social media.

This booklet focuses on learning via the internet, often called online learning. It is written specifically for small- to medium-sized organisations and businesses in the social care sector.

Online learning can be done using any form of technology that connects to the internet.

The most common way to access the internet for learning is by using a desktop computer or laptop. More learners are now also using mobile technologies such as smartphones and iPads.

People use the term elearning to refer to just a single snippet of learning about a specific topic, as well as larger units of learning grouped together to form online courses. Where there are a number of online courses together they may all be contained in a system, often called a learning management system (LMS).

Formal learning

Formal learning comes in the shape of modules, courses, guides, or any organised learning experience with a specific set of learning goals or learning outcomes.

We are focusing on formal learning.

Informal learning

Do not underestimate the great importance of informal learning. The internet has become essential as a reference source. All kinds of web services are now spreading information through social interaction. Social media such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter and Skype have great potential for supporting informal learning in the workplace. For example, they can be used for follow-up after training, or a way for people to question a subject expert.



Find out more about social media at:

- Netskills www.netskills.ac.uk
- Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies www.c4lpt.co.uk

The strengths and weaknesses of elearning

Strengths

Flexibility

Unlike traditional group learning, you don't need to get a large number of learners in the same place at the same time. You can use this to your advantage when:

- people are on different shifts
- you have starters at different times
- only one, or a few people, need to be trained in a particular topic
- you have a number of different worksites, or staff working remotely
- people prefer to learn individually at their own pace.

Cost-effectiveness

elearning can be cost effective because:

- the unit cost per learning can be low
- there is no travel time or trainer's expenses to pay
- you can reduce the amount of back filling of your staff rota compared to traditional training.



There is an increasing amount of good quality free elearning available. We have suggested examples at the end.

It is a good idea to get a feel for what elearning can do by using free material first, as some elearning can be expensive to buy, particularly for smaller organisations.



'Some of the staff can't get in for training events if they work flexi-time around their children. I can arrange a day and time to do the elearning and it can be done from home.'

Patricia at Chatham House

Develop knowledge, test knowledge, track results

- eLearning is particularly well suited to helping staff learn facts, and build up the essential areas of knowledge they need for their work.
- eLearning can easily be linked to multiple choice tests, some have built-in feedback for the learner.
- Many learning management systems allow you to track time spent on the learning, and the results of tests, for each individual learner who is registered.

Learn in privacy

- Not everyone feels confident admitting that they don't know something. eLearning is a great chance to bring their ideas up-to-date without embarrassment.

Blended learning

To combat the isolation of elearning it is usually best used alongside other methods of learning, such as tutor-led group training, or practical hands-on training. Using elearning in conjunction with these other learning methods is called blended learning. By having discussion groups and supervision around the areas of the elearning, staff can access the benefits of both learning alone and learning together.

A pace that suits

eLearners go at their own pace. This can be good for motivated learners who benefit from working at their own pace.

Weaknesses

Not hands on

eLearning is less suited for teaching hands-on practical care skills. For example, seeing diagrams and descriptions of the recovery position in a first aid course are good starting points, but you can't really know it until you have done it for real.

Not so good for subtle judgement

eLearning is good for clear-cut situations and for facts, but can be less good for learning about subtle communication and judgements.

Hard to review

It can be hard to judge the quality of elearning unless you do it all yourself first. Before you buy elearning for your staff, you should get at least a demo of the content and ideally be able to review the entire course.



Isolating

eLearning is generally done on your own, which can be lonely and isolating. It can also raise lots of questions that go unanswered.

Demotivated learners

Demotivated learners can fall behind and only engage at the minimum level. They need to be supported and managed in elearning as in every other type of learning, but they can be harder to spot than in a class-based situation. A learning management system can help you monitor people's progress – encouragement needs to come in person from the manager or trainer just as in traditional training.



- Most elearning relies on good reading skills for learners to understand the material
- elearning can be vulnerable to unsupervised learners cheating
- where face-to-face support is impractical, online mentoring can also help learners overcome isolation and improve their confidence in using IT.

Limited IT skills

eLearning can be daunting if you struggle with computers. This can be solved through managing the introduction to the elearning. A good introduction to elearning will open up new IT skills for the user, both in work and at home.



The BBC's Webwise service offers a number of short introductions to getting started with computers, including the First Click campaign: www.bbc.co.uk/connect/campaigns/first_click.shtml

You can contact them to find out about free computer training in your area.

Towards Maturity, a community interest company that supports learning technologies at work, has a short guide about helping staff get online. There are useful tips for smaller businesses and organisations:

www.towardsmaturity.org/article/2010/10/30/how-help-staff-get-online

'Flexibility is key for us; that staff can do it at their own pace, at a time that suits them. They can get instant feedback on any assessed work they do because it's built into the elearning.'

Joanne at The Crown Rest Home

Staff training and development

Start with your training needs

eLearning, just like every type of learning, needs to start with an understanding of what training you need. This is often called a Training Needs Analysis (TNA). Think of this like building a bridge; you need to know where your staff skills are now, and where they need to be. The training is the bridge between the two.

Training Needs Analysis (TNA)

- Skills – Third Sector provides TNA guidance aimed at not-for-profit organisations: www.skills-thirdsector.org.uk/training_needs_analysis
- BusinessLink provides TNA guidance aimed at small businesses: www.businesslink.gov.uk (go to the 'Employment and skills' section and then the 'Skills and training' section)

Once you have done your TNA ask yourself:

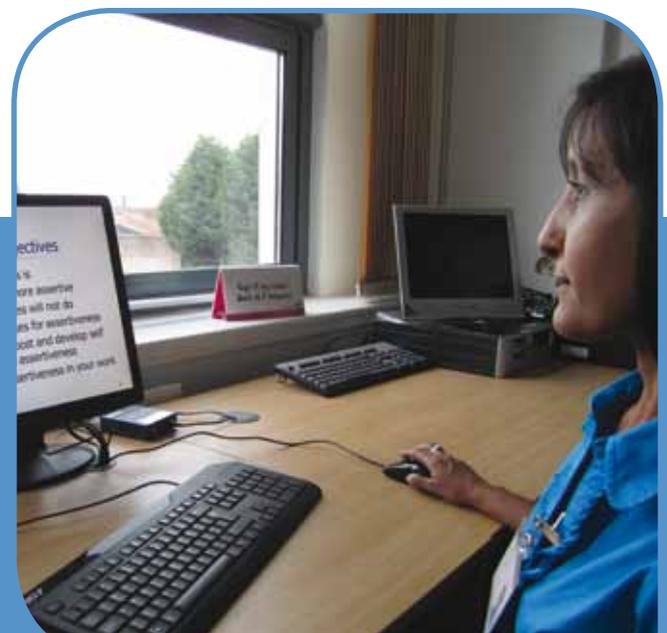
Which training needs are suited to elearning?

'eLearning is so much more practical, flexible and instant. We need to react quickly when training needs come up. We can't have eight staff at a time doing face-to-face training whenever they need updating.'
Joy at Smartcare Epsom

Matching learning needs to learning methods

eLearning is good for underpinning knowledge and assessing factual understanding, but less suited to teaching practical skills. However, by using blended learning (mixing elearning with other types of learning) you can get the best of both worlds.

For example, you might use video or elearning to explain the theory behind moving and positioning training, which has the advantages of showing principles and techniques clearly. Then combine that with practical group sessions and one-to-one supervision and assessment until the learner is safe to work alone.



Matching learners to learning methods

eLearning may be particularly suited to some people. Others may find it more difficult, for example if their IT skills or their English language skills limit their learning. You will enjoy greater success if you match the learner to the learning method. Find out what learning approaches staff prefer.

Specialist needs

You don't need a lot of people on the same course so elearning can be responsive to a particular training need. This might be because:

- a worker is weak in a certain area
- a role requires a higher level of knowledge of a particular condition or technique
- a member of staff has a particular specialist interest.



You could plan for some staff to access elearning at home, where they may feel that they can go at a slower pace to suit them; and maybe allocate a dyslexic worker online video elearning, rather than learning that requires a lot of reading.

If you have a number of staff with communication, language or number skills issues you may find the free SCIE resource, **Care Skillsbase** useful. It contains a number of skills checks, as well as some practical guidance for managers on managing basic skills issues.

www.scie-careskillsbase.org.uk

Keeping track of results

No system does all the overall tracking work for you, but many commercial elearning modules come within a learning management system (LMS). This makes it much easier to keep track of which learners have logged in, who has started which units, who has completed them, and their scores from any online tests integrated into the learning.

Some LMSs also allow you to enter the details of in-house training, external courses, and mentoring. In addition, some can incorporate elearning modules from other external sources, such as the free SCIE elearning modules. These can be added into the commercial elearning to track that as well.



Some useful sources of videos about social care:

- **Social Care TV**

This free online service from SCIE offers access to video-based training resources and general interest programmes on current social care practice.

www.scie.org.uk/socialcaretv

- **MyHomeLife**

A not-for-profit initiative that aims to celebrate existing best practice in care homes and promote care homes as a positive option for older people. The website offers a number of free training resources, including videos.

Go to <http://myhomelifemovement.org> and then select My Home Life DVD site

There are some non-commercial LMSs. These can be cost-effective for managers who want to get engaged with the process of managing elearning. You would have to feel confident in setting them up yourself without any technical support other than online forums.

Keeping those you care for in focus

Any training is only being effective if it is having a positive impact on the care we deliver. Completion rates, percentages and pass marks can sometimes distract us from the simple question: **'Does this improve our care?'**

Reviewing how effective elearning has been will help you plan for the future and, over time, develop a training strategy that minimises gaps and overlaps.



One of the best known of the free learning management systems is Moodle. This is very popular in many schools and colleges, where there are large numbers of learners and courses. If you have close ties with any of your local colleges you could ask their advice about LMSs.

There are also other alternatives to Moodle. Refer to the Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies to find out more:

www.c4lpt.co.uk

In addition, some local authorities may have a free-to-access LMS which you can take a share of, rather than having to manage your own.

Carers getting to grips with new technology

Six weeks ago, Mike Hawkins thought a mouse was a small furry animal, but that was before he joined Alzheimer's Support's Computer Club.

Mike is one of ten carers halfway through a computer course to help them get to grips with modern technology including email, word processing and surfing the world wide web.

"It will be so useful. I have a son in South Africa so I am looking forward to being able to converse with him, as well as all the others things you can do online."

Chris Auckland, who is delivering the training said: "Trying to get to grips with the Internet when you have never used a mouse before is really difficult and can be frustrating but they are all so patient and keen to learn."



How to recognise good elearning

Many of the factors that make elearning effective are common to any good set of training materials, so your skills and experience in evaluating any type of training will help you evaluate elearning. It is hard to judge a course's quality without taking the course yourself, so spending that time will enable you to judge if it hits the mark.



Skills for Care produces a general guide for care organisations on buying training:

Care training code for purchasers

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training

It also provides guides for learning providers and for learners.



If any training providers are unwilling to let you see whole courses and to undertake assessments before you buy, you should be wary of proceeding.

By completing the course yourself, you will have a chance to evaluate if it contains the right depth of information. Look out for:

- **Insufficient depth:** sometimes content can be very good as an introduction, but not go into enough depth to cover all your training needs. You might still want to use it but work out what supplementary information you need to give and how.
- **Too much depth:** sometimes the training can assume you know too much at the start and use unfamiliar technical terms and unexplained jargon. This is very likely to put learners off.

'Classroom-based training can vary a lot on the day according to the trainer and also other learners. With elearning I know my staff are all getting the same information. I do all the courses myself first.'

Joy at Smartcare Epsom



Good content

Good elearning requires the right topics to be covered. It might be mapped to Skills for Care Knowledge and Skills Sets for example, written by an expert in that area or come from an organisation with an established reputation such as SCIE. The course should have accurate information reflecting up-to-date best practice, and also fit with your own organisation's policies and practices.

A good learning experience

eLearning will only be effective if it is interesting and engaging enough to hold the learners' attention. This can be achieved in a number of ways:

- well-written texts
- inclusion of interactive activities to allow learners to test their understanding and get them involved in their learning
- powerful images
- high quality audio and video to bring content alive.

In addition you need to consider:

- **Is it easy to navigate?**
Getting lost in the system, or being baffled by passwords or usernames gives learners an off-putting experience.
- **Can you support and integrate it?**
People will only have a good learning experience if it works with your organisation's IT systems, and it works with the rest of the training system.
- **Do your staff have the IT skills to access it?**
Ask learning providers what skills are needed to access the course, and whether they provide any support for learners to acquire these skills.



For the content to be effective it needs to be at the right level for staff and their job role.

Does the level of the training reflect the level of action and responsibility in their daily work?

E.g. information designed for nursing staff can be good content for nurses, but could give less experienced staff the wrong idea about what was expected of them.

Good outcomes

Good elearning is not just about enjoyable learning. It needs to be effective and result in an improvement in the way staff go about their work, and deliver care. There are a few ways that you can help make sure that you get these good outcomes.

- **Is the testing robust?**

eLearning producers tend to have a vested interest in learners passing. This can mean that the testing can be very easy. As well as doing the course yourself, make sure you also take the assessment. If the testing isn't up to scratch, or testing isn't provided, consider supporting the course with assessment of your own.

- **Is it making an impact on staff?**

It is easier to see if you are making an impact on the way staff are working if you are monitoring the learners' progress. As discussed in the previous section, this is easier if you have a learning management system.



eLearning should enable staff to deliver services more effectively. You are unlikely to find that out straight away. Allow several people to complete the training, and allow some time afterwards to let them use the knowledge they have gained in their work.



'We are meticulous in checking the quality of our training and I now feel there is enough elearning of sufficient quality which small independents such as ourselves can afford.'
Hazel at Calderdale Care Scheme

Where to find quality, free elearning

The following sources provide free elearning that is relevant for social care providers. There is plenty of other material out there. The information within this introduction will help you assess the quality of materials you come across yourself.

We have focused on materials that support formal learning or training in social care, rather than more general social care information services.

eLearning and related resources from individual organisations

SCIE

SCIE elearning modules

eLearning modules, of varying length, covering topics such as dementia care and communication skills.

www.scie.org.uk/publications/elearning

SCIE Dementia Gateway

A collection of different resource types, including elearning, focused on dementia and dementia care.

www.scie.org.uk/publications/dementia/elearning.asp

Social Care TV

Short online films on a range of topics. Although not designed as elearning these videos are useful as learning support materials.

www.scie.org.uk/socialcaretv

Care Skillsbase

A set of online tools for use by managers in social care to help you assess and manage language and communication skills gaps in your staff.

www.scie-careskillsbase.org.uk

BBC

First click

Online support for people lacking confidence with computers, including a beginners' guide to the internet and helpline to locate free IT courses near you.

www.bbc.co.uk/connect

Webwise

The BBC's online introduction to computers, covers using the web, using email, safety and privacy issues.

www.bbc.co.uk/webwise

Open University

OpenLearn

OpenLearn is the Open University's free resource centre for learning materials. There is a health and social care section. The resources have been developed for a student audience. It may be a good place to search for learning materials on specific topics.

<http://openlearn.open.ac.uk>

The Open University also has a YouTube channel with some health and social care-related short films, including titles such as *Living with Multiple Sclerosis*, *Muscular Dystrophy* and *Coping with Depression*.

www.youtube.com/oulearn

Resources on specific topics

Drug safety

The Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA) elearning

MHRA provides an elearning resource on recognising and reporting adverse drug reactions; relevant for care homes with nursing care.

www.mhra.gov.uk

End-of-life care

Lessons Learned

Interactive elearning from Macmillan Cancer Support. You will need to register to use the site – there is no charge.

<http://learnzone.macmillan.org.uk>

Current Learning in Palliative Care (CLIP)

A collection of 15 minute, online tutorials, developed by Help the Hospices.

www.helpthehospices.org.uk/clip

With Respect

Training materials for home care and residential care hosted by the Dignity in Care Network and SCIE. Two collections of dignity-specific training resources designed for health and social care; downloadable print based, rather than online learning.

www.dignityincare.org.uk/Topics/championresources

End of life care for all (e-ELCA)

Skills for Care has worked in partnership with eLearning for Health to provide free access to e-ELCA, *End of life care for all*, for adult social care employers registered with the National Minimum Data Set for Social Care (NMDS-SC).

www.nmds-sc-online.org.uk

Health and safety

Health and Safety Executive (HSE) Slips and trips elearning

A short online health and safety course relevant to care home settings.

www.hse.gov.uk/slips

Learning disability care

Rix Centre Multimedia Advocacy

The Rix Centre not-for-profit research charity has produced a short elearning taster introducing the concept of multimedia advocacy for people with learning disabilities.

www.multimediaadvocacy.com

Mental health

The Centre of Excellence in Interdisciplinary Mental Health and the University of Birmingham

Free-to-access short films on a wide range of mental health topics, with an emphasis on service user experience. Although not designed as elearning these videos are useful as learning support materials.

www.ceimh.bham.ac.uk/tv

People management

The Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

ACAS provides 10 short elearning courses on issues such as managing absence, working parents and age discrimination. The courses are free to access but you need to register.

www.acas.org.uk

Stroke care

Stroke competencies is a free-to-access learning resource produced by NHS Education Scotland with a range of partners.

www.strokecorecompetencies.org

Collections of resources

These websites collect resources from a wide range of sources, although some are not social care-specific they all contain material that may be relevant for your training. Individual resources may vary in quality – you should assess whether they are right for you. The list includes both commercial and free resources.

Skills for Care training materials listing

The list includes paper-based and DVD-based learning resources as well as online learning. The majority of the resources are not free. Publishers pay to include their resources in this listing, and Skills for Care does not quality assure the resources.

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/qualifications_and_training

Skills for Care have also produced a listing of free elearning materials relevant to adult social care. A mix of generic and specialist topics are covered, and they have been mapped to relevant units of the Qualifications and Credit Framework (QCF).

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/developing_skills/e-learning/e-learning.aspx

The Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services (IRISS) learning exchange

IRISS in Scotland has an online library of resources called the Learning Exchange. Its focus is social services rather than social care, but it catalogues a wide range of resources relevant to all social care. It contains policy documents and research as well as learning resources. You can filter the results by resource type as well as topic.

<http://lx.iriss.org.uk/>

Jorum

Jorum is an online library of learning resources aimed at the further and higher education sectors. There are 362 courses listed under FE – health care/medicine/ health and safety – many of which may be useful for care providers. There is material from a broad range of learning providers, so quality will vary. The resources have been developed for a student audience, rather than for workplace learning, but it may be a good place to search for learning materials on specific topics.

<http://open.jorum.ac.uk/xmlui/community-list>

More guidance on developing and using elearning for your staff

We hope this guide has given you some useful tips and guidance on getting the best from elearning.

If you want to delve more deeply, the **Centre for Learning and Performance Technologies** has some useful resources to help you and your organisations make decisions on the right tools for your workplace needs. It includes an overview of current learning trends, and a directory of learning tools, with over 1,500 free tools and also commercial products.

www.c4lpt.co.uk

Disclaimer

Please note that the inclusion of all websites and companies does not imply any endorsement of commercial or non-commercial products.

Get connected to elearning

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This introduction focuses on learning via the internet, often called online learning, and is written specifically for small- to medium-sized organisations and businesses in the care sector. It is a useful resource for those who are new to elearning, as well as those who have some experience.

This publication is available in an alternative format upon request.

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