A case study of Brighton & Hove City Council’s subscription to eLearning *Housing Management*

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**Introduction**

Lemos&Crane’s e-Learning *Housing Management* can help any social landlord maximise the value of its human resources at a time when budgets are being cut and organisational restructuring is being considered.

eLearning *Housing Management* is a competency-based package that covers all core aspects of housing management:

- managing tenancies
- housing benefit and rent arrears
- anti-social behaviour.

Launched earlier this year, eLearning *Housing Management* is already being used by 34 organisations – ranging from national housing associations such as Home Group to local providers such as Durham Aged Mineworkers’ Homes Association, ALMOs such as Newport City Homes, and local authorities such as Brighton & Hove City Council.

This case study explains how Brighton & Hove City Council has benefited from using eLearning *Housing Management*:

- in preparing staff for new responsibilities
- up-skilling staff in existing roles
- spreading knowledge of housing management across the organisation
- ensuring staff are familiar with and understand the organisation’s policy, procedures and other key documents
- improving efficiency and customer service
- providing a cost-effective, flexible alternative to traditional training.

Brighton & Hove City Council owns and manages 12,500 homes, over 10 per cent of all housing in the region. The housing management team consists of specialist teams, for example the tenancy management team and income
management team. Within the tenancy management team, housing officers, housing management advisers, and community wardens deal with most frontline tenancy issues such as low-level anti-social behaviour.

**How eLearning Housing Management has been used**

The Council's Performance and Development Planning Scheme (PDPS) feeds into the team development plan. As part of the PDPS a personal development plan is agreed between individual staff members and managers after appraisals and reviewed every 6 months, so they decide together what training can be used to meet the staff member's training and development needs. The majority of staff are using some form of e-learning alongside other training methods such as coaching, shadowing or attending occasional training courses.

Training for the team had previously included in-house induction, local courses and occasional conferences for managers. Helen Clarkmead, Brighton & Hove City Council’s Business Improvement Manager felt this was too ad hoc and was looking to develop a more consistent training package.

“*I’m so happy – it does exactly what it says on the tin!*”  *Helen Clarkmead, Business Improvement Manager*

Brighton & Hove City Council has used eLearning *Housing Management* courses in 4 major contexts.

The courses are used as part of **induction for new staff**, and for **training for existing staff** who are moving to a new role.

“*Over the last year I was working as a Cashier, and wanted to move into my current role as a Housing Management Adviser. My manager encouraged me to start using the system to give me a better understanding of the job in advance. I started with the Tenancies course and learnt the basics – it was ideal for me and just what I needed to progress to the next level.*”  *

*Ben Reeves, Housing Management Adviser*

Existing staff use the eLearning suite for **refresher training**, particularly if courses have been integrated into their personal development plan.

“*Now I am getting more experience it has come in handy for giving me an overview of how things work. I’ll find it useful to dip into as and when I need it.*”  *

*Ben Reeves, Housing Management Adviser*

"*It helped me understand more about my role.*”  *John Wingfield, Rent Accounting Officer*
The resource has also been used to help non-specialist staff outside the tenancy management team make better sense of specific tasks that they have been asked to complete by housing colleagues, based on a more thorough understanding of the principles and objectives of housing management.

“I am working on a project to produce figures for HouseMark ASB benchmarking, helping to re-write reports, and I need to understand the legal terminology. Our training officer recommended I use the eLearning suite. It’s excellent! I’ve recommended it to the rest of the IT team. It’s a good way to learn for someone who hasn’t got a background in housing management.

I got so much out of it. I understand the differences between a demotion order and notice, and all the different steps, also that you can put in more than one notice at once – to extend and to terminate a tenancy – so now I understand why our system needed to allow both to be put in. Now, when people ask us questions, I understand the terms they’re using.”  
*Philippa Toogood, IT Officer*

Helen Clarkmead asked that managers identify learning needs and incorporate the eLearning courses into personal development plans for all tenancy management staff. Over 100 staff registered within 2 weeks.

“It was good, I just logged in. It’s straightforward, you just follow the instructions.”  
*John Wingfield, Rent Accounting Officer*

“It was straightforward and easy to get started. I hadn’t used anything like it before.”  
*Ben Reeves, Housing Management Adviser*

The Development Manager emailed all tenancy management staff members outlining the subjects on the eLearning suite, the benefits for the learner and the organisation, and registration details. A link to the eLearning Housing Management suite was also featured on the staff intranet system.

“It was advertised on Wave [the council’s staff intranet] and it said around 100 members of staff had signed up so I was curious. One or two subjects specifically affect me, for example the ASB side of things.”  
*Trevor Jones, Community Participation Assistant*

“At a team meeting it was suggested by our Line Manager to do some training online, a couple of other Scheme Managers said they’d started using it, so I tried it and it’s really easy to follow.”  
*Janice Bradbury, Sheltered Scheme Manager*
Benefits from using eLearning *Housing Management*

E-learning *Housing Management* has provided Brighton & Hove City Council with a highly flexible training resource, which has motivated staff to develop their knowledge of housing management functions across the organisation based on a thorough understanding of policy, procedures and other key documents.

The resource has provided Brighton & Hove City Council with a cost-effective and flexible alternative to traditional training.

"The problem with external training courses is the time spent getting there, being there, getting back, but with the eLearning I am still on site, ready to attend an emergency if necessary. So, time-wise it's excellent, it's really convenient." **Janice Bradbury, Sheltered Scheme Manager**

Working through the material on eLearning Housing Management has required staff to refer to their organisation's policy, procedures and other key documents, familiarising themselves with the detail of the documents' content and to understand how they relate to best practice.

"My main piece of advice would be to dig out all the procedures before you start – know where to find them, even before the first page of the subject". **Philippa Toogood, IT Officer**

**Information for managers** shows when and how often courses have been accessed, enabling the commitment of staff to their own learning and development to be recognised and acknowledged.

"I completed the ASB course and worked through the Tenancies course afterwards. I used it from home where it was quieter." **Philippa Toogood, IT Officer**

Staff feel more confident and knowledgeable and better able to improve service to customers.

"When a tenant comes to me with a query – rather than calling around, I'll be able to help straight away, which will be much more efficient." **Janice Bradbury, Sheltered Scheme Manager**

The learning of the organisation as a whole has also the potential to improve. In using the resource with staff from different teams, knowledge has spread widely which means people think about the nature of what they do and why they do it, and feel able to come up with new ideas and suggestions.

"It inspired me to think about how training for our ASB procedures should change; we're undergoing massive changes to our ASB system." **Philippa Toogood, IT Officer**
What's in eLearning Housing Management

Authoritative – comprehensive – practical – engaging – tried and tested

eLearning Housing Management has been designed and written by experienced housing managers at Lemos&Crane and by Professor Caroline Hunter of York University Law School.

There are three courses. Each course is divided into themes. In each theme several subjects are covered through short guidance texts, summaries of main points to remember, and activities that relate general principles of good practice to an organisation’s policies and procedures.

Courses, themes and subjects covered

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<th>Tenancies</th>
<th>Housing benefit and rent arrears</th>
<th>Anti-social behaviour</th>
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<tr>
<td>TYPES OF TENANCY</td>
<td>TENANTS’ CAPACITIES</td>
<td>REPORTING &amp; RECORDING</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Landlords, tenant security and exemptions</td>
<td>• Financial capability</td>
<td>• Introduction to ASB</td>
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<td>TERMS OF TENANCY</td>
<td>• Personal debt management</td>
<td>• Initial responses to anti-social behaviour</td>
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<td>• Standard elements</td>
<td>• Eligibility rules for Housing Benefit</td>
<td>INVESTIGATION</td>
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<td>• Tenant's responsibilities</td>
<td>• Rules for calculating Housing Benefit</td>
<td>• Interviewing victims, witnesses and perpetrators</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Landlord's responsibilities and tenant's rights</td>
<td>• Special problem claims and payments</td>
<td>• Gathering evidence about anti-social behaviour</td>
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<tr>
<td>TRANSFER &amp; TERMINATION</td>
<td>RENT ARREAS</td>
<td>NON-LEGAL APPROACHES</td>
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<td>• Transfer of a tenancy</td>
<td>• Introduction to rent arrears</td>
<td>• Using non-legal approaches</td>
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<td>• Landlord's grounds for termination of tenancy</td>
<td>• Action before court proceedings</td>
<td>• Supporting vulnerable people involved in ASB</td>
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<td>• Landlord's notices</td>
<td>• Possession proceedings based on rent arrears</td>
<td>LEGAL ENFORCEMENT</td>
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<td>• Landlord's notices</td>
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<td>• Injunctions</td>
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<td>• Tenant termination of a tenancy</td>
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<td>• Anti-social behaviour orders</td>
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<td>• Parenting measures</td>
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<td>• Possession and demotion</td>
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After each subject there is a review quiz designed to test participants’ comprehension of the key learning points from that subject.

Finally, for each course there are five case studies that get participants to apply the learning from the course to real world scenarios based on serious cases involving court action or rulings from the Housing Ombudsman. Completing these case studies is a vital stage in the learning process and

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requires careful thought and attention. They provide valuable lessons to help participants avoid harmful and costly mistakes.

“Staff have told me that they like the case studies, they are very ‘real’ and believable, they say they can really relate them to their own on-the-ground experience.” Helen Clarkmead, Business Improvement Manager

Participants make notes, complete activities, and write suggested responses to case study scenarios in their personal workbook, a key component of the e-learning experience.

“The workbook was great, I was able to cut-and-paste from the training itself and from our procedures” Philippa Toogood, IT Officer

Before starting a course, participants need to complete a pre-course self-review questionnaire that establishes how much time they should expect to take to complete each subject - between 30 and 60 minutes, depending on their experience. Completing the entire housing management suite including the case studies should take around 30 hours.

“The ‘pre-course self review’ is useful for assessing training needs and assessing the level of new starters who are already experienced, and it means people can immediately tailor it to their own level.” Helen Clarkmead, Business Improvement Manager

A management information section allows designated managers to:

- Review latest activity – find out who has been using Housing Management eLearning and which subjects they have recently completed, including dates and times
- Analyse participants – find out for each participant and for each course the number of subjects and case studies that have been completed, and the review quiz scores achieved
- Analyse subjects - find out for each subject and for each course the number of participants from the organisation that have taken part to date, their average review quiz scores and how these compare with the average scores of participants from all organisations using e-Learning Housing Management
- View participants' workbooks – read participants' answers to activities and case studies and reply directly to them where they have specific queries or questions
- Choose managers – assign access to Management Information to colleagues with line management or team leading responsibilities.

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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>eLearning Housing Management subscribing organisations (09.09.10)</th>
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<tr>
<td>2010 Rotherham Ltd</td>
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<tr>
<td>Arena Housing</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ashfield Homes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Brighton and Hove City Council</td>
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<tr>
<td>Broxbourne Housing Association</td>
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<td>Cannock Chase Council</td>
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<td>Coast &amp; Country Housing</td>
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<td>Durham Aged Mineworkers Homes</td>
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<td>Estuary Housing Association</td>
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<td>Gloucester City Homes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Homes in Sedgemoor</td>
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<tr>
<td>Impact Housing Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>Isle of Anglesey County Council</td>
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<td>LHA ASRA Group</td>
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<td>Newport City Homes</td>
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**Find out more plus free trial**

To request a 7-day free trial and full demonstration of eLearning *Housing Management*:

- Call Ellen Fryer or Roderick Kenny on 020 8348 8263
- Or visit [http://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/elearning](http://www.lemosandcrane.co.uk/elearning)