Participant’s Guide to the *Housing Management* suite

The *Housing Management* suite of e-learning courses has been designed and written by experienced housing managers at Lemos&Crane and by Professor Caroline Hunter of York University Law School. This guide suggests how you might get most out of the resource. A separate guide has been written for managers.

**Overview**

**Components**

The housing management e-learning suite consists of three courses:

- Tenancies
- Housing benefit and rent
- Anti-social behaviour

Each course is divided into themes:

- Tenancies
  - Types of tenancies
  - Terms of tenancies
  - Transfer and termination of tenancies
- Housing benefit and rent
  - Tenants’ capacities
  - Housing benefit
  - Rent arrears
- Anti-social behaviour
  - Reporting and recording
  - Investigation
  - Non-legal approaches
  - Legal enforcement

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 your organisation’s policies and procedures.

After each subject there is a review quiz designed to test your comprehension of the key learning points from that subject.

Finally, for each course there are five case studies that get you 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 requires careful thought and attention. They provide valuable lessons to help you avoid harmful and costly mistakes.

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

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

**Summary of learning process**

1. Start a course
2. Complete pre-course self-review
3. Start a subject
4. Complete activities in workbook
5. Do review quiz
6. Do case studies if all subjects are completed
7. Graduation from all three courses
Key features

The housing management e-learning suite has been designed to be:

- Comprehensive: the three courses in the e-learning suite cover law and good practice on all the main aspects of housing management.
- Easy-to-use: the structure of the e-learning courses is intuitive and easy to follow.
- Not just for computer wizards: you don’t need to know any more about computers to do these e-learning courses than you would for your normal day-to-day work.
- Structured: to respond to different levels of knowledge and experience; the pre-course experience questionnaire helps you to plan your time and effort in developing all round housing management competence.
- Time-flexible: you can stop and start and return at any time.
- Location-flexible: you can carry on where you left off anywhere you have internet access.
- Personal: the notes you make in your workbook create your own personal record of your learning journey, and become a reference point as you further develop your career and practice.
- Measurable: scores from the review questions give you instant feedback on how well you have understood the subject that you have just been through and what items you need to re-visit.
- Transparent: your manager will be able to see your workbook notes and scores in the review questions and will be able to support and advise you on an on-going basis.

Objectives

The objectives of the Housing Management e-learning suite for you as a participant are to:

- Assess your own level of experience and knowledge on all the key aspects of housing management from commencement of tenancy to eviction, and anything that might happen in-between.
- Develop a personal learning plan that reflects your experience of housing management functions.
- Understand the legal and good practice requirements of housing management in managing tenancies, housing benefit and rent, and anti-social behaviour.
- Understand how the legal and regulatory requirements have been translated into policies and procedures in your organisation and how to apply those policies and procedures.
- Apply the principles of law and good practice to real life scenarios based on cases that have been before the courts or the Housing Ombudsman.
- Reflect on and learn from your own experiences with tenants to improve your day-to-day practice.
- Provide a firm foundation on which to build your knowledge and experience.
Tips and approaches for participants

The tips and approaches that follow are based on the Open University’s approach to distance learning, feedback that we’ve received from users of other Lemos&Crane e-learning systems, and recommendations specific to Housing Management e-Learning.

Get organised

Have ready – and, ideally, read beforehand - key organisational documents such as policies, procedures, tenant’s handbooks, etc before you start working on the relevant course and subject. The ‘welcome to the subject’ page will tell you what documents you need in each case.

**Participants’ tips**

“Take time to gather all the documents you need before starting a subject – this will prevent interruptions midway through”

“It may be a good idea to read through your organisation’s policies and tenancy agreement before you begin the eLearning course”

Adapt your reading style

Depending on the results of your pre-course self-review you will be told that some subjects might take longer than others to complete.

For subjects where you have little experience you should aim to ‘focus read’. This means reading with a high level of concentration, making notes of thoughts, questions and queries, pausing between sections to think over what you’ve read, and re-reading sections where necessary. The main advantage of this style is that it gives you ownership of the material and creates a detailed record of your reading.

For subjects where you have lots of experience you should aim to ‘scan read’. You can do this easily on our e-learning pages because the text columns have optimum width - you can run your eye down the middle of page to pick up key words. You can then decide which items you need to spend a bit more time on. The main advantage of scan reading is that it saves time and allows you to interact with the material not just follow it passively.

Use the workbook

You’ll quickly find the workbook to be an indispensable companion – it follows you everywhere on screen. It’s easy to use, just like making notes on paper only everything gets saved in one place and
nothing gets lost. The more you use it the more valuable it will become as a personal record of your learning.

Your manager can see your workbook online (only managers can do this, other participants who aren’t managers can’t) and can even respond to your questions and queries directly.

**Participants’ tips**

“Make use of your workbook by taking notes along the way – this is good preparation for the review questions at the end”

**Aim to complete the activities**

Try to finish as many of the activities as possible. Typically, the activities ask you to research key documents such as policies and procedures, find out facts from colleagues and managers, or to look through case files. They are an excellent way for you to apply the theory of best practice to your organisation’s actual way of doing things and to its day-to-day experience.

**Participants’ tips**

“If possible view your organisation’s policies and tenancy agreements on your computer rather than on paper, so you can easily search for key words”

“For some activities it may be easier to cut-and-paste sentences from your organisation’s policy”

**Take care over the review quizzes**

The review quizzes are multiple-choice questions that generate a score. They deserve to be take seriously because your manager can see your scores. However, they are not meant to be read as formal ‘pass or fail’ marks. You are told which answers if any were wrong and which pages you need to revise. You can also re-take the quiz any number of times.

**Participants’ tips**

“Make sure you have a quiet few minutes to complete the review questions so you can give them your full attention”

**Course review: case studies**

Spend time on the case studies; they require careful thought and attention. They test your knowledge and understanding of the course content in the most comprehensive way. Reflecting properly on the
different situations that the tenants in the case study find themselves in, and considering seriously how
you would intervene and what action you would take, will help prepare you for difficult cases in real life,
and help you to avoid making costly or harmful mistakes.

Talk to others

Using Housing Management e-Learning doesn’t have to be a solitary activity. Try working with other
team members, discussing the topics, the activities or the case studies. In fact, it is particularly useful to
discuss the case studies. Some organisations use the case studies in team meetings to review their
procedures and prepare for difficult cases they might encounter in the future.

Plan your time

You can start and finish the material any time you like. You can use the e-learning anywhere you have
access to the internet. However, it is best to plan and set aside time in your schedule. Each subject takes
between 30-60 minutes, depending on your level of previous knowledge or experience. If you try and
fit it in whenever you have a few minutes, you may find you never find the time. Or even if you do find a
few minutes here and there it will be too disjointed and fragmented for you to really absorb the
information and knowledge. It’s also a good idea to set yourself a deadline by when you are going to
have completed each course and the whole e-learning suite. You should also agree the deadline with
your manager so they know when you are aiming for and you have an incentive to meet the deadline!

Remember to take regular breaks during study and don’t try to complete too many subjects in one day
or one sitting.

Participants’ tips

“Remember to click ‘save’ if you need to take a break or when the phone rings, for example!”

Working with your manager

As your manager has access to your workbook notes and to your scores from the review quizzes, it’s
best to keep in close touch with them as you work through the material, discussing your progress with
them regularly, at least once a week. They will be able to see how you are getting on, answer any
questions, identify sources of information you might need and help you to solve any other problems
that you might encounter.

(c) Lemos&Crane 2010