Manager’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 as a manager might make the most out of the resource. A separate guide has been written for staff who are e-learning participants.

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

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

Before starting a course, participants need to complete a pre-course experience 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.

*Summary of learning process*

1. Start a course
2. Complete pre-course experience questionnaire
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
Objectives

The objectives of the housing management e-learning suite are:

For participants

1. To assess their 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
2. To develop a personal learning plan that reflects their level of experience of core housing management functions
3. To understand the legal and good practice requirements of housing management in managing tenancies, housing benefit and rent, and anti-social behaviour
4. To 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
5. To 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
6. To reflect on and learn from their own experiences with tenants to improve their day-to-day practice
7. To develop through their workbook a personal record of their own experiences, their understanding of your policies and procedures, significant points to remember and outstanding questions or issues.

For managers

1. To review and assess team strengths and weaknesses on core housing management competencies
2. To identify individual participants’ learning needs and to support their professional and career development
3. To provide clear and transparent information on individuals’ knowledge and understanding to help in recruitment and selection and during organisational re-structuring
4. To provide a cost-effective alternative to traditional training that demonstrates to staff the organisation’s commitment to improving individual performance on key areas of housing management

For the organisation

1. To improve tenant satisfaction with mainstream landlord services
2. To improve ratings in Audit Commission inspections
Specific resources and approaches for managers

Do it yourself!

The best way to convince staff of the merits of using e-learning is to become a participant yourself. The pre-course experience questionnaire will tell you which subjects you can expect to cover reasonably quickly and not spend too much time on, but we’re sure that even experienced managers would benefit from detailed study of some of the material – particularly the subjects covering legal measures that are featured in each of the courses.

Management information

This section of Housing Management eLearning can only be accessed by designated managers from your organisation and allows you to:

- **Review latest activity** – find out which of your staff 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 your 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 *Housing Management* e-Learning
- **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.

Just some of the potential uses of this information

1. Identify professional development issues to address during 1-2-1 reviews and appraisals
2. Identify topics and themes for discussion at team meetings and service reviews
3. Identify in-depth training needs for individuals or teams
4. Identify ‘star performers’ with the potential to be promoted
5. Clarify and improve policies and procedures where questions and queries have been identified through aggregate analysis of workbook notes
6. Provide transparent assessment criteria for staff recruitment and selection – eg in preparation for an organisational restructure
Supporting your staff in getting the most out of e-learning

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, participants are recommended¹ to:

- Have ready – and, ideally, to have read - key organisational documents such as policies and procedures before starting the relevant course and subject
- ‘Scan read’ subjects where they have a reasonable level of experience
- ‘Focus read’ material that is new to them and requires detailed concentration
- Make regular notes in their workbook to keep a personal record of their learning, to clarify understanding, to aid memory, and to identify questions and queries
- To take regular breaks during study and not aim to complete too many subjects in one day or one sitting
- Spend time on the case studies and think carefully about their suggested response before clicking on ‘reveal answers’
- Discuss and debate with colleagues the activities and case study scenarios.

As a manager you can support your staff by:

- Making sure that all participants know where to find (in electronic format) key documents such as policies and procedures, tenant’s handbooks, tenancy agreements, etc
- Encouraging staff to set aside time during the week for study – allowing 1-2 hours per week on set days for example
- Encouraging staff to study at home and acknowledging their extra efforts when they’ve done so (you can find out the dates and times of use for each participant in the Management Information section – see page 4)
- Acknowledging high scores achieved in the review quizzes by sending an encouraging email
- Paying attention to what participants write in their workbook and responding promptly in the case of a particular question or query
- Using case study materials during team meetings to review and reflect on procedures and approaches and to prepare staff for difficult cases in the future
- Leading by example and becoming an active participant yourself.

¹ See Participant’s Guide for more details

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