



Workforce Unit Briefing 2: E-Learning tools and resources

What is e-learning and how can it support the development of the voluntary sector social services workforce?

The use of **e-Learning**¹ and online technology has been promoted extensively in recent years. ‘**Changing Lives**’² (2006) highlighted the potential of e-learning to “provide a way of sharing learning and expertise” throughout the social services sector, while ‘**Skills for Scotland**’³ (2007) offered a wider vision where the increased use of technology and e-learning ensures that “barriers of geography and rurality have been reduced.” E-learning can be used to:

- Share information and study at your own time or pace;
- Open new opportunities for voluntary sector providers and individuals to access learning and development resources, irrespective of their geographical location or size;
- Undertake Continuous Professional Development – it could contribute towards an individual’s ‘Post-Registration Training and Learning’ (PRTL) for example.

This briefing provides an introduction to some e-learning resources that support the development of the voluntary sector social services sector workforce. The briefing also provides information about generic e-learning or workforce development resources. Many of the footnotes in this briefing are complex and have been ‘hyperlinked’ (i.e. the purple links ‘click through’ to the relevant website) in the online version of this document, available at www.ccpscotland.org/workforceunit If you know of any other useful e-learning tools please contact Laura Weir at vswu.admin@ccpscotland.org and we’ll highlight them in future publications and on our website.

Learning Exchange

The **Learning Exchange**⁴ is a digital library containing publications, video and audio files. The project is managed by the ‘Institute for Research and Innovation in Social Services’ (IRISS) and is highlighted in the **Changing Lives Implementation Plan**⁵, which noted the potential that it has to “underpin continuing professional development of the social services workforce.”

The vast majority of the Learning Exchange’s resources can be freely accessed using the Learning Exchange’s ‘**Open Search**’ facility⁶. For licensing reasons some of the Learning Exchange’s resources are only available for individuals with ‘Athens Passwords’ and must be accessed through the NHS Scotland e-library. Athens passwords can be obtained by anyone employed in the social services workforce or by staff and students at many of Scotland’s universities – a leaflet explaining how to obtain an **Athens Password**⁷ is available from the IRISS’ website.

¹ <http://www.swap.ac.uk/elearning/introduction.asp>

² <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/91931/0021949.pdf>

³ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/197204/0052752.pdf>

⁴ <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/learnx>

⁵ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/133149/0031727.pdf>

⁶ <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/openlx/>

⁷ <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/files/LearningExchangeNHSeLib070323.pdf>

NHS Scotland e-Library.

The **NHS Scotland e-Library**⁸ aims to “empower the healthcare family and benefit patient care by providing high quality knowledge support throughout the patient journey.” The NHS e-library provides access to thousands of journals and books. The e-library is open to all NHS and social services staff. Many of the resources can be accessed by the general public. More information about access privileges for the NHS Scotland e-library can be found from the **help section**⁹ of the e-library’s website.

NHS Social Services Knowledge Portal

NHS Education Knowledge Services is currently developing a ‘Social Services Knowledge Portal’ (due for completion in April 2008) which will provide a “dedicated point of access to information resources and knowledge management tools offered by NHS Education to support social services staff in accessing, sharing and using knowledge in practice.” The portal will be hosted by the NHS Scotland e-library. More information about the portal is available from the **Workforce Unit’s website**.¹⁰

SSSC Workforce Development tools

The SSSC has developed a suite of ‘organisational and workforce development tools’, many of which are available on CD ROM format. These include:

- National Occupational Standard (NOS) Navigators;
- ‘Preparing for Practice’ Induction guidance;
- Skills and Learning Auditor;
- Job Description Generator.

Many of these resources can be downloaded from the **SSSC’s website**¹¹. Alternatively, copies are available by contacting the SSSC at **enquiries@sssc.uk.com** or call 0845 60 30 891.

Social Services Learning Network (North) Portal

The Scottish Social Services Learning Network (North) has developed an **online portal**¹² which aims to provide access to learning opportunities and to share examples of practice.

‘Connect in Care’

‘Connect in Care’¹³ is an online network for staff involved in caring for older people. The network offers an online environment where individuals can share practice and ideas.

⁸ <http://www.elib.scot.nhs.uk>

⁹ <http://www.elib.scot.nhs.uk/elibraryhelp/Index.html>

¹⁰ http://www.ccpotland.org/workforceunit/info/news.php#New_NHS_Portal_for_social_services_staff

¹¹ www.sssc.uk.com

¹² <http://www.learningnetworks.org.uk/north-lnnportal.php>

¹³ <http://www.connect-in-care.net/>

Open University Modules

The Open University's '**Open Learn**'¹⁴ scheme provides free access to a range of online resources. The 'Learning Space' contains an extensive directory where courses can be browsed by topic. Particularly relevant courses that may be of interest include the '**Understanding Health and Social Care course**' (K100)¹⁵ in the 'Health and Lifestyle' section.

Blogs, Forums and Podcasting

Blogs provide an opportunity to offer commentary on a subject or topic, e.g. IRISS maintained a **blog**¹⁶ in the run-up to the 'Practical learning – achieving excellence in the human services' conference held in Edinburgh in January 2007. Community Care Magazine's website includes links to selected **social service blogs**.¹⁷

Internet Forums host discussions on wide variety of topics and are starting to emerge in the social services sector. The Scottish Government has developed a '**Social Work Scotland Discussion Forum**'¹⁸ for example, which provides an opportunity for online users to discuss a range of topics including Performance Improvement and Practice Governance. Community Care Magazine's website also hosts an **internet forum**.¹⁹

'**Podcasting**' is regularly associated with music, although many websites host speech files which can be downloaded and listened to via a computer or I-pod. The IRISS website is regularly updated with new **Podcasts**²⁰ – recent additions include audio presentations on 'Risk Assessments in Criminal Justice' and the Changing Lives Research Agenda. Many of Radio Four's shows can also be downloaded from the **BBC's website**.²¹

LearnDirect Scotland for Business Learning Packages

LearnDirect Scotland for Business²² "aims to enhance the competitiveness of Scotland's small and medium sized enterprises." The organisation's website hosts an extensive range of free resources, case studies and 'Director's briefings'. Topics covered include Appraisals, Personal Development, Training and Workplace Policies.

LearnDirect Business²³ (the English Equivalent of LearnDirect Scotland for Business) also offers an extensive range of online courses, some of which are free.

¹⁴ <http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/>

¹⁵ <http://openlearn.open.ac.uk/course/search.php?search=K100>

¹⁶ <http://pepe2008.ning.com/>

¹⁷ <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/Articles/2008/01/25/104254/blogs.html>

¹⁸ <http://www.socialworkscotland.org.uk/forum/>

¹⁹ <http://www.communitycare.co.uk/DiscussionForums/List.aspx?SlotPageID=25>

²⁰ <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/rss/podcast/sieswe.xml>

²¹ <http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio4/progs/listenagain.shtml>

²² <http://www.lds4b.com/>

²³ <http://www1.learndirect-business.com/static/welcome.asp>

SCVO E-learning resources

SCVO have recently updated their **e-learning catalogue**²⁴. Many of the courses are free, although registration is required for some of the modules. Courses that may be of interest include:

- Governance modules (e.g. 'Tools for effective board and management committee members')
- Introduction to Project Management;
- Introduction to web usability and accessibility.

Adult Literacy Awareness Raising CD ROM

Glasgow's Learning' have produced a CD Rom which contains information on how to host an Adult Literacy Awareness Raising Session. The **'Glasgow's Learning' website**²⁵ also contains links to various online tools and resources which support organisations working in the Adult Literacy and Numeracy field.

Individual Learning Accounts

ILA Scotland is a Scottish Government scheme which helps you pay for learning that you can do at "a time, place, pace and in a way to suit you". It may be possible for many individuals to undertake free or subsidised IT Training via an Individual Learning Account. More information is available from **ILA Scotland's website**.²⁶

Workforce Unit Publications and Resources

All of the Workforce Unit's publications, toolkits and guides can be downloaded from our **website**.²⁷

Further reading

- **Ballantyne (2007) Object Lessons: A 'learning object' approach to e-learning for social work education**²⁸
- **Ballantyne and Quinn (2006) 'Informal Learning and the Social Web'**²⁹
- **SCIE (2007) Ongoing e-learning projects**³⁰
- **SCIE (2006) Building the Capacity for e-learning – research study conducted for SCIE**³¹

Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit
neil.macleod@ccpscotland.org
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²⁴ <http://www.scvo.org.uk/scvo/ServiceAndResources/ELearning.aspx>

²⁵ http://www.glasgowlearning.org.uk/learning_providers/staff_development_and_opportunities

²⁶ <http://www.ilascotland.org.uk/ILA+Homepage.htm>

²⁷ www.ccpscotland.org/workforceunit

²⁸ <http://www.iriss.ac.uk/files/Ballantyne2007.pdf>

²⁹ <http://informallearning.pbwiki.com/>

³⁰ <http://www.scie.org.uk/elearning/projects.asp>

³¹ <http://www.scie.org.uk/elearning/files/readiness.pdf>