Report

Report to:	**Clyde Valley Learning and Development Joint Committee**
Date of Meeting:	**11 June 2018**
Report by:	**Chair of Clyde Valley Learning and Development Project Implementation Steering Group**

Subject:	**Clyde Valley Learning and Development Project – Update on e-Learning Group Developments**

1.   Purpose of Report

1.1.   The purpose of the report is to:-

♦   update the Joint Committee on plans and priorities proposed by the e-Learning Sub Group to be addressed during the next year

2.   Recommendation(s)

2.1.   The Joint Committee is asked to approve the following recommendation(s):-

(1)   that it be noted that a review of activities and priorities of the e-Learning Sub Group has been undertaken;

(2)   that it be noted that the challenges facing the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Group require to be addressed and opportunities exploited in order to continue to realise the benefits of collaborative working in this field; and

(3)   that it be noted that the recommendations made by the e-Learning Sub Group have been approved by the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Project Implementation Steering Group and will now be addressed and implemented.

3.   Background

3.1.   E-learning is at the forefront of the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Group's (CVLDG) activities.   E-learning activities are co-ordinated and managed through the e-Learning Sub Group, which is led by representatives from the Full Member Councils, but also attended by Associate Members.

3.2.   The purpose of the CVLDG is to maximise the opportunities to share resources and develop best practice. Whilst it has always been a networking group, it has achieved much more through problem solving, driving e-learning innovation and creating a genuine desire to improve the learning experience for all employees across the Clyde Valley Councils (including both full and associate members).

4.   Current Position

4.1.   The primary benefit of the Clyde Valley contract with its e-learning supplier Brightwave, is the ability to easily share content between partners. Content created and branded in one local authority can be shared and rebranded with one or all members of the Clyde Valley at no extra cost to the host authority or recipients.

4.2.   Central management of the Brightwave contract has provided a unique opportunity through economies of scale and strength in numbers that an individual local authority would not have achieved. Clyde Valley Members enjoy a continually improving and prioritised support system from Brightwave. In no small part, this is attributable to the value of the Clyde Valley contract, which makes the Clyde Valley Group a key client to Brightwave.

4.3.   Quarterly technical developments allow members to shape the development of Brightwave tools through a consensus of needs and by subsequently prioritising what is important rather than what the supplier is able to deliver.

4.4.   Regular workshops facilitated by Brightwave professionals allow the Group to get a real insight into the wider e-learning industry and work together on how this can be utilised within local government. With a culture of sharing being the norm within the Sub Group, it has embedded a genuine philosophy of developing best practice and continual improvement.

5.   Challenges Facing the Group

5.1.   The whole face of e-learning, like most technology, has evolved greatly since the e-Learning Sub Group was first established in 2008. The focus and challenges facing local government requirement for efficiencies and savings during this time has resulted in e-learning no longer being an "add on" to other traditional learning methods but rather an essential tool for delivering efficiencies.

5.2.   The cost benefit of e-learning has been proven many times over. However, it is essential the CVLDG continues to ensure that the Member Councils are moving with the times by maximising opportunities presented through digital technology. It is therefore appropriate to take stock and review the priorities for the CVLDG in relation to the work of the e-Learning Sub Group. Additional and changing remits have also had a significant impact on the time that lead members can contribute to continuing to drive the e-Learning Sub Group agenda.

5.3.   It is evident that many of the CVLDG members are now contributing less to the Group in terms of content, workshop ideas or resources. Whilst it is recognised that there are similar pressures across all local authorities, recent experience has resulted in a change of emphasis in some quarters away from the strength of partnership-working to focusing internally on individual council requirements (e.g. developing own content on new tools).

5.4.   Another challenge facing the Group is the proliferation of other learning content authoring tools which cannot be shared, modified or customised as easily as content built on the Brightwave tool (BILD). Whilst sharing content is less straightforward using this approach, it also provides a potential opportunity for building capacity. There is now a wealth of knowledge and experience being built up on a number of different authoring tools and, as a result, the group is proposing to tap into the existing sharing culture to transfer knowledge to and develop skills for other members of the group.

5.5.   Local Government is, however, constantly changing and with this there remain a number of further opportunities for collaborative working to take place. Examples include the implementation of General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR), Equal Partners in Care (EPIC) and a variety of continuous-improvement initiatives. If councils choose to go their own way they are potentially missing out on the expertise and resources from other Clyde Valley partners. However, if the toolkit or courses are shared once developed, they can save other partners' duplication of work. This principle, well established since the beginning of the Clyde Valley Project, could be threatened.

5.6.   Other challenges include a lack of engagement in the Group's information sharing tools such as the Improvement Service's Knowledge Hub and Brightwave's Tessello learning platform, which have the potential to further aid collaboration through sharing of content, ideas and other resources including videos, articles and presentations.

5.7.   One example of this is the 'wiki' document which contains the definitive list of e-learning courses produced by the Clyde Valley Councils and which are available for sharing. The success of this approach is entirely founded on everyone in the group refreshing and updating the document as new courses are developed. Similarly, this should be the route for councils to check what is available and to pro-actively check this as the first port of call before developing something new. This process is no longer being used effectively.

6.   Opportunities for Development
6.1.   The Clyde Valley e-learning Sub Group is continually looking for opportunities to improve and evolve. Potential updates in the new Brightwave contract are an excellent step forward with an improved look and feel, and most importantly potential for responsive delivery which will adapt content to the type of device being used to access it, rather than restricted to PCs and tablets. This update is a direct result of Brightwave responding to the needs of the Clyde Valley e-Learning Sub Group.

6.2.   The Sub Group must respond to developments in the wider Learning and Development and Organisational Development community. This is likely to entail further embedding of online learning into the organisational culture and making closer links to strategy where 'digital by default' is becoming the new mantra.

6.3.   The agenda for Digital Transformation through mobile and flexible working within councils is growing rapidly and the ability to reach and communicate with non PC facing staff is improving all the time. Potentially opening up social media channels and delivering content that is independent of the receiving device will afford an opportunity to engage with even more staff as they develop greater digital skills and adopt a just-in-time approach to learning when and where they need it.

6.4.   The e-Learning Sub Group should lead innovation and embrace different ways of working. It is suggested that this might be achieved by moving away from the traditional diet of regular scheduled meetings that require a high degree of commitment from members to attend from all over Scotland and to provide more opportunities to host virtual meetings and webinars, when the context and subject matter is appropriate.

6.5.   In addition to this approach, the Sub Group aims to establish a series of structured project groups with clear commitment and project management processes that will work on specific topics while maintaining the flexibility to utilise the resources and strength of the wider membership, if required.

6.6.   The Sub Group has taken on board that the Course Sharing Wiki on the Knowledge Hub has become out of date and cumbersome to navigate.   This is due to the amount of courses it now contains and the loss of the resource to keep this updated regularly. An audit of shared courses should be looked at as a priority, with inclusion of course descriptions and notes for developing localised materials.   This approach will help the group maintain the habit of good practice that exists through further increased usage.

6.7.   The experience and knowledge of other content authoring tools can allow the group to become less reliant on purchasing external content, particularly around system simulation IT courses and fully responsive design materials. Open source tools exist (e.g. Adapt) which have no cost to purchase, and which could be explored within the group with a view to developing a common approach to development for the future.

6.8.   The potential benefits of this approach would be to lead the way in removing the reliance on purchased content, whilst maintaining the ability to share freely. If carefully managed, this approach could also lead to a library of content that is available on any learning management system regardless of supplier (platform agnostic). This should be seen as a medium to long term goal for the CVLDG.

7.   Conclusions

7.1.   As the structure and Membership of the CVLDG is currently under review, similarly the role, responsibilities and strategic impact of e-learning and the e-Learning Sub Group is also under consideration.

7.2.   The following recommendations have been made by the leaders of the e-Learning Sub Group and these have subsequently been approved by the Clyde Valley Learning and Development Project Implementation Steering Group.

7.3.   The recommendations are as follows:-

♦   establish the ground rules of membership based on the revised structure of membership within the wider CVLDG, e.g. how decisions are reached within the group
♦   complete a course sharing audit and improve the process for accessing available content
♦   develop a clear strategy and timeline for the e-Learning Sub Group
♦   examine different ways of engaging with individual members and the group as a whole
♦   seek to encourage greater input from the group members on workshop, with a wider range of individuals taking the lead on delivery
♦   encourage opportunities for greater networking with similar groups such as the Digital Partnership for Scottish Local Government/Improvement Service/NHS/ Education Scotland (NES)
♦   explore a common approach to create a library of courses to remove the reliance on purchased content

8. Employee Implications

8.1. The continued success of the e-Learning Sub Group is contingent on participating Councils continuing to nominate appropriate representatives to attend meetings, events, development activities and contribute to the delivery of the strategy and agenda.

9. Financial Implications

9.1. There are no immediate financial implications.

10. Other Implications

10.1. Clarity regarding roles and responsibilities of members is essential to ensure the project operates efficiently.

10.2 There are no implications for sustainability in terms of the information contained in this report.

11. Equality Impact Assessment and Consultation Arrangements

11.1. This report does not introduce a new policy, function or strategy or recommend a change to an existing policy, function or strategy and therefore no impact assessment is required.

11.2. The proposals contained in this report have previously been consulted upon and approved by the Clyde Valley Project Implementation Steering Group.

Gill Bhatti
Chair, Clyde Valley Learning and Development Project Implementation Steering Group

18 May 2018

Previous References
♦ None

List of Background Papers
♦ Clyde Valley Learning and Development Joint Committee Minute of Agreement

Contact for Further Information
If you would like to inspect the background papers or want further information, please contact:-
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