

A powerful replacement for DVD: a quality solution for Friends of the Elderly



Client: Friends of the Elderly

Activities: Residential and Community Care Services

Location: Across southern England

Courses: Safeguarding, Care Act

About Friends of the Elderly

Friends of the Elderly is an organisation that runs care homes and community services in Bedfordshire, Dorset, Essex, Greater London, Hampshire, Oxfordshire, Surrey and Worcestershire. Their ten care homes offer residential and respite services, as well as home care and day care services operated by their sister organisation, Triangle Community Services, across seven locations. Their focus is to provide the best possible care whilst supporting independence and engagement in community life. Friends of the Elderly is also a charitable organisation that runs a range of activities to support older people

to live fulfilled lives. These include a financial grants service for older people living on low incomes, as well as various community projects such as their befriending service and their 'Football Friends' programme, which connects older people together over a shared love of football.

Online training was a clear winner for course delivery

Learning and Development Advisor John Randles is based at Friends of the Elderly's office in Victoria, London. John says: "Our previous training course was DVD-based: staff would watch DVDs and complete printed copies of comprehension tests to assess their knowledge. Problems with this method included administering the training, organising the viewing of material and making sure that the content was up to date. As registered care providers, it is crucial that our staff are aware of the most recent legislation and working practices, so we wanted to change our training package to make sure it was as effective as possible.

"Our research suggested that e-learning would better fit our needs and enable us to effectively deliver training to an estimated 1,000 learners, so we went out to tender. We met with seven providers and chose three to trial."

While the central office for Friends of the Elderly is based in London, John emphasises that staff and volunteers are widely dispersed. To get a clear picture of how the courses on trial would perform in real-life situations, John enlisted a selection of actual users for assessment.

Feedback from the user trial was overwhelmingly in favour of Me Learning. "We were told that the system was very easy to use," says John, "and it did exactly what we wanted it to do. On that basis, Me Learning emerged as the clear winner."

Flexibility and future-proofing within the package

Friends of the Elderly's key requirement was for the mandatory regulatory and compliance courses, such as safeguarding, to be the focus of the package. They also wanted to provide staff with the option to take additional clinical and people skills courses. John says: "Our licence gives us unlimited use within the package, so up to 1,000 people have full and free access to as many of the 90 available courses as they wish. This means that the deal is future-proofed as there is something for everyone, irrespective of their length of service and role."

One of the key requirements was that staff should be able to use e-learning as part of a varied learning package. John says: "We are developing a more blended learning approach, which combines face-to-face training and e-learning, based on the training needs that have been identified for key groups. Me Learning was an excellent fit within this holistic approach."

Friends of the Elderly also benefits from the straightforward and seamless way in which Me Learning was incorporated into its existing training activities. John says: "I work as the administrator for the portal. When someone joins or leaves the organisation, I can simply add or remove them without any fuss. It is low-maintenance and means we are fully in control. It's a vast improvement on our old system, which was admin-heavy."

"We found course content varied and suitable for all levels of learners, thanks to a tiered approach; we also really liked the simplicity of design – it's user-friendly and intuitive to use"

Quality without compromise, great value too

Cost was, of course, an important factor in purchasing an online system, along with other criteria such as the quality of the off-the-shelf content, and the ability to customise.

John said: "We were won over by the course content and delivery. We found the content varied and suitable for all levels of learners, thanks to a tiered approach. We also valued the ease of administration and liked the simplicity of design that made it very user-friendly and intuitive to use."

The trial clearly found Me Learning to be the best provider for their needs; it was also considerably better value than the nearest rival. John notes, "There was no trade-off or compromise between quality and value, so that was a great bonus. We really liked that we could personalise the portal – which we have called *Aspire*, send out personalised messages to new users, include our name in the URL and add our logo to the pages. To have access to all of these features at such a competitive price was really the icing on the cake."

Why Me Learning?

For Friends of the Elderly, Me Learning was the right choice for:

- Simplicity of use
- Tiered learning
- Administrative control

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