

CASPA WHITEPAPER

Digital Learning & Learning Management
Systems within Care Organisations



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1. INTRODUCTION

If you are reading this whitepaper you are likely considering online, digital learning. You may be choosing a Learning Management System to move some of your training and compliance reporting online for the first time. Or, you've adopted online learning previously, but your current system/provider is no longer delivering your desired outcomes.

If you are a first time adopter, implementing digital learning and a Learning Management System can deliver significant efficiencies and cost savings for your care organisation. If implemented and adopted well it can significantly increase engagement in learning which will have a direct impact on staff engagement, long term staff retention and ultimately the quality of support provided. Given the importance of such a system, selecting the right supplier for online learning is critical.

This document provides guidelines derived from best practice compiled by suppliers of over 2500 registered services, including what works best, what risks to consider and how to avoid them, as well as what to look for in a supplier so that you get the product and service that is best for you and your care teams. Other industry bodies, such as Skills for Care, have also published similar guidance.



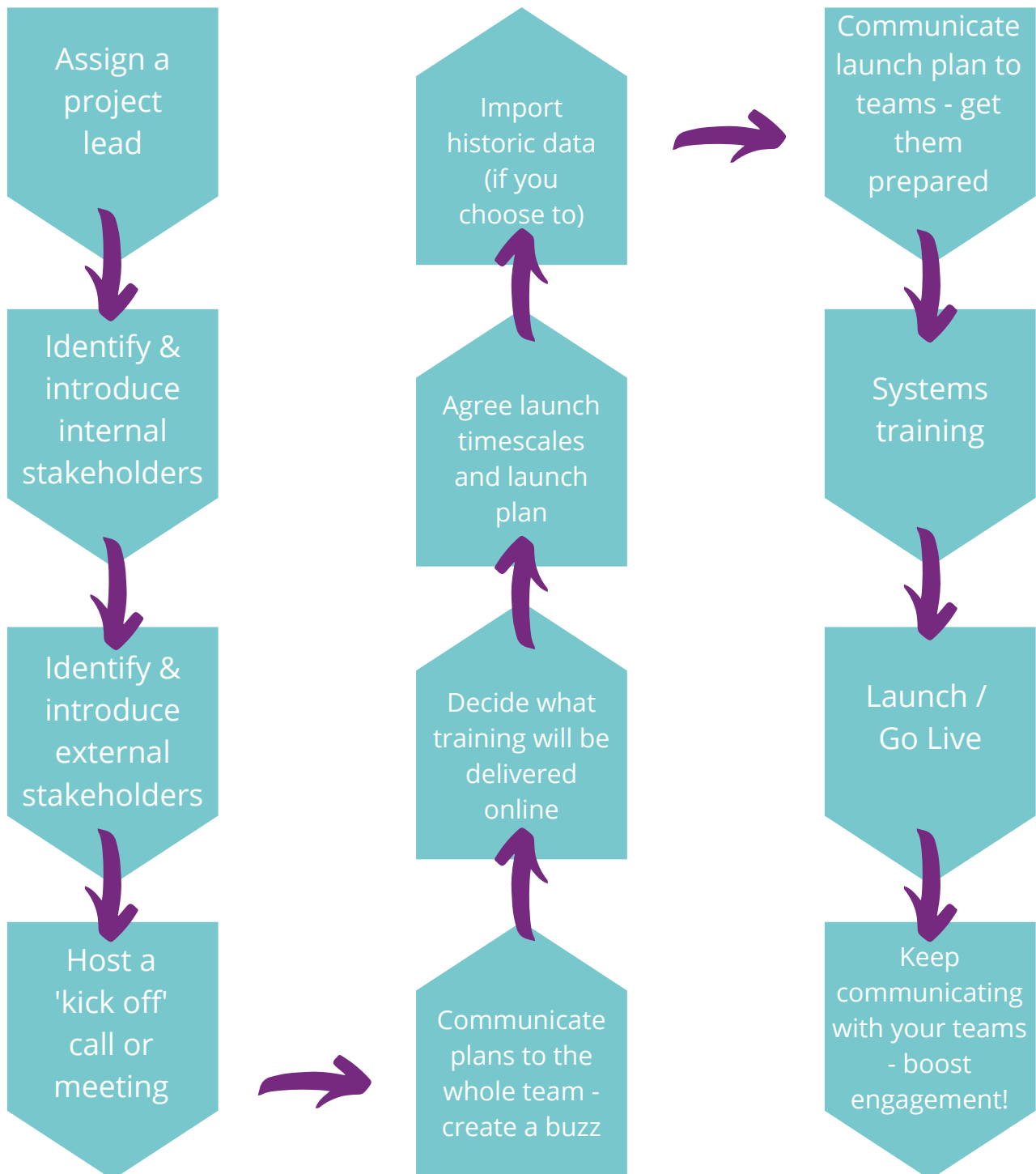
2. THE OPPORTUNITY OF ONLINE LEARNING

Digital transformation of learning is entering a new phase, moving on from a purely 'tick box' exercise to ensure compliance, towards a tool that engages staff teams in learning journeys. This presents an opportunity for care providers to differentiate themselves from other employers, whilst ensuring they build a team who grow and stay with your organisation whilst delivering excellent levels of care. Successful implementation of high quality online, digital learning is known to result in:

- Improved service provision and care for the people you support;
- Safer care;
- Time and money savings due to staff spending less time off the floor, and less need to hire venues, pay external trainers or book hotels;
- Improved evidencing of training levels and compliance;
- Consistent learning across the board with all staff completing high quality training;
- Flexible learning that is accessible anytime and anywhere, increasing engagement;
- Lower turnover of staff - According to [Skills for Care](#), care sector employers with a turnover of less than 10% believed that investing in learning and development was one of the four main reasons their turnover was so low;
- Positive change in culture resulting from a highly educated and engaged workforce - Celebrating the organisation's and individual achievements is one of the four reasons given by care employers with a turnover of less than 10%;
- Reduced carbon footprint for training with staff spending less time travelling to training venues.

You will be able to quickly identify training requirements, automate refreshment schedules and build learning pathways based on the skill set required for your care teams roles. In the medium to longer term if you invest in quality digital learning you will see a more engaged workforce, higher quality care and recognition from commissioners and the regulator that you provide high quality education for your team, via a modern, intuitive medium.

3. SELECTING, BUYING & ADOPTING ONLINE LEARNING



The Process

The selection of a Learning Management System starts with the internal definition of what the care provider wants to achieve. What are your desired outcomes? This can be reactive (due to external factors such as a negative inspection rating) or proactive (to gain a competitive advantage over other providers).

In parallel to this, the provider, the owner, the board or a budget holder, will task a team with consulting software providers, learning about their solutions and their services. Define clearly who will lead on this effort and make sure your teams are given time to be involved in the selection process. The team in charge must have an open mind about what Learning Management Systems and online learning can achieve for you as a provider and your staff team.

Identifying and involving a stakeholder from areas of the business that the Learning Management System will impact will aid engagement and adoption. These may be HR, IT, care managers, care workers, nurses and administrators. The team tasked with consulting suppliers will create a shortlist of suppliers, and from this shortlist, key stakeholders and budget holders will then select the preferred supplier.

How to prepare in advance of shortlisting:

- What outcomes are you looking to achieve from a Learning Management System?
- Conversely, think about any features you do not need. Feature bloat within a system can add levels of complexity that does not add value for your care teams, and may actually create barriers to learning.
- Who will be accessing learning? Purely care staff or ancillary staff also (who may benefit from courses)
- What training needs are you looking to cover with online learning?
- Do you want to integrate with any other software platforms you currently use? This can create efficiencies in user creation, reporting, payroll and improve user experience.
- Is the Learning Management system specifically designed for social care? There are many good generic systems on the market, but only those designed for the sector will likely offer you everything you're looking for.

Commercial vetting before buying

Ensure that terms and conditions are aligned with your requirements. Areas to consider include:

- Term of contract: contracts that lock you in for long periods may be disadvantageous for you as a business but may attract higher discounts;
- How well does the system integrate with complimentary systems. You will increasingly want to integrate Learning Management Systems with software such as HR systems, Payroll, Compliance Systems & Care Planning Systems. Even if you have no desire to integrate at the point of purchase, future proof your ability to do so (especially if committing for a longer term). It is also vital that you check with the provider how much potential integrations will cost since this can vary;
- Get clear understanding of data ownership, as well as retention periods the supplier is committed to providing;
- Understand the processes for offboarding – should you wish to change supplier in the future you should know what the terms and processes are - especially around learning records and if/how they can be transferred to a new provider;
- Check the ownership of any bespoke content you may create on the Learning Management System;
- Check the support levels provided and any associated service level agreements. Who can access system support from your teams?

Technology vetting before buying

Get a clear understanding of how the product is designed, basic building blocks, security and resilience:

- How will your staff access the system? What will the login credentials be? Do you have the hardware in place to facilitate access to the system within your service or will further investment be required?

- How is the system accessed i.e. via App, Internet Browser? Does it support all common internet browsers (especially the ones used by your organisation). Does it support Single Sign On if required?
- How will staff receive notifications from the system when learning is required? Do all your staff need email addresses in the system? Do you need to whitelist domains so to ensure all staff receive notifications from the system?
- If learning content includes video and/or animation with sound, do your current systems support this?
- Can you create your own online content, host 3rd party content or adapt the courses delivered by the provider?
- Does the product rely on a well-established cloud infrastructure (as this is likely to maximise availability and security assurance)?
- Can the supplier give you assurances of where the data is hosted and, if this data is shared outside the EEA, are appropriate protections in place?
- Is the product future proof? Does the provider publish regular updates/releases of the product, how often?
- Should you wish to import your existing training records, can the provider deliver an effective historical data migration?

Rolling out and adopting online learning

Working with the preferred supplier you will then agree:

- Project Management. Who will drive and project manage the system implementation within your organisation?
- Identify stakeholders. Who needs to be involved from the wider team? IT? HR? Ops? Early engagement of relevant stakeholders will surface any issues that may hinder the roll out;
- Preparation: ensure you communicate with your staff teams in a way that is clear, reassuring and conveys the reasons for adopting digital learning or transitioning to a new learning environment. Does the provider have communications templates to support you with this?;
- Training plan: you need to agree whether the supplier trains all your staff, or trains your internal training team which then delivers training;

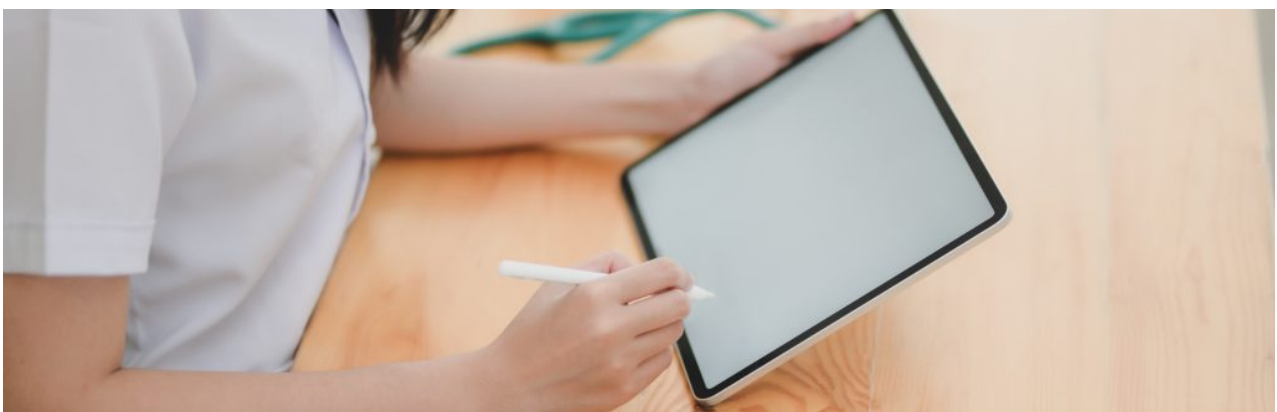
- Roll-out plan: you will need to agree how the system will be rolled out and timescales. This is something many companies forget. Make sure you plan the whole journey, not just to the point where you get your system up and running;
- Historic Data Import: If you have chosen to import existing learning records, what format does the provider require these in?;
- Staff Data Import: What data do you need to provide to the provider in order to set up learners within the system?;
- Systems Integration: If you are integrating with complimentary systems, who do you need to introduce the learning provider to? This could be from within your organisation, but also from existing software providers.

Pilot products

Most providers will be able to facilitate low risk evaluations of the product to ensure compatibility and suitability. You should aim to compare a shortlist of providers to ensure that the system and learning content are a good fit for your organisation.

When evaluating a learning management system consider:

- Ensure you evaluate the whole product, which will comprise both system and course quality. To ensure effective engagement and realise the full benefits of online learning in 2020, it is imperative that you have a strong blend of system and course content quality;
- Ensure you engage all stakeholders in the evaluation process. Your identified key stakeholders will have differing goals and objectives, alongside differing measurements of success;
- Consider having a trial access to the system. This should always follow a full demo so that you have a base knowledge of functionality.



4. THE RISKS, AND HOW TO MANAGE THEM

Learning Management Systems for training delivery have been proven to create efficiencies within training delivery and recruitment processes, whilst also providing the option for distance learning in a post COVID-19 world. However, there are risks, predominantly related to change which must be acknowledged and managed during the procurement process. These include:

Risk

Risk Avoidance Actions & Mitigation

Staff resistance to change

Involving key staff in the selection process is likely to decrease the likelihood of staffing dissatisfaction; ensure staff are briefed in advance of roll-out, listen to concerns and address them – some providers may have brochures or other items to help with raising awareness and internal communication;

Low staff engagement

Effective and regular communications to staff teams that clearly share the benefits to them of the Learning Management System are key; Consider other initiatives that may boost engagement, put posters up with the browser address, run a competition to name the platform, run a learner of the year award. Consider running group training sessions where everyone completes a course at the same time, allowing them a chance to share experiences;

Poor adoption, worsening of compliance rates

Ensure that you are checking compliance regularly and working with individuals/teams who are lagging behind the average, consider mentoring poor performers with star performers. Insist that all services report compliance stats on at least a monthly cadence and include in monthly board reporting;

Risk

Risk Avoidance Actions & Mitigation

Risk of CQC seeing the use of online learning in a negative light

Managers can keep a crib sheet, detailing how your organisation goes above and beyond tick box training. Provide managers with details of the provider you chose and why you chose them, so they can share the quality decision making process and due diligence that you followed with inspectors. Suppliers will be able to provide evidence of how CQC endorses the use of digital tools and some suppliers may be able to provide evidence of their systems in place at CQC Outstanding services or referenced in Outstanding reports;

Poor governance around password management

Integrate basic IT security into your internal training plans – as a minimum explain to people in your teams that they must not share passwords, and passwords must remain confidential. You must also ensure accounts for care workers are deactivated when they cease working for you. Decide if you will allow care workers to take learning records and certificates with them if they leave.



5. WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A SUPPLIER OF ONLINE LEARNING/LEARNING MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

When choosing a supplier for digital learning systems, you may want to consider the following aspects of evaluation. Different care providers will take each aspect as more or less critical. You may want to consider aspects of evaluation as well as aspects of culture fit. Here are some examples of aspects you may want to consider as part of your evaluation:

- Supplier reputation: can you talk to providers who use the product and service? What do they say?
- Have any of your staff teams used the provider in previous employment?;
- Does the provider partner with any sector bodies who can offer guidance to you?
- Skills for Care Endorsement: A key reference for selecting the right learning provider for your organisation is the Skills for Care Endorsement Framework. The framework recognises learning providers who deliver high quality learning and development to the social care sector. Access it here: [**Skills for Care - Endorsed Providers.**](#)
- Does the provider hold any further accreditations which can provide reassurance that you are sourcing a high quality product and service?;
- How is the learning content created? Does it involve industry experts? Experts by experience? What is the process for content creation?;
- How does the provider ensure their content is up to date at all times?;
- How is Learning Assessed? How does the provider ensure that learning is embedded?;
- How well does the provider evidence their understanding of your service and the learning requirements of the social/healthcare sector? What is their experience of delivering learning into the UK social care sector?

- How does the provider ensure the system is continually assessed and improved?
- How does the provider gather sector/customer feedback?
- Ease of use for care workers: the larger number of users of a learning management system will be care workers who are not necessarily tech native or confident with digital systems. To ensure engagement your chosen product needs to be intuitive and friendly. It should be designed in such a way that ensures access to training is barrier free and system training needs are minimised. Ensure a representative from your care work team is involved in the procurement exercise as a key stakeholder;
- Length of time trading in care sector: how many years has the provider been operating in the care sector?
- Business continuity: probe what mechanisms the supplier has in place to ensure your business will be able to operate in case of disruption of the supplier; also, ensure the supplier has plans in place for disaster recovery – if a catastrophic event brings their servers down, what mechanisms are in place for recovery, including how long will it take for the supplier to bring the service back up;
- Size and robustness of company: connected to the above, and considering that you are likely to rely on this supplier for many years to come, you will want to assess how likely it is they will still be in business in 5 years; you can probe financial robustness as well as trading history;
- Level of customer support: if your care teams work around the clock, ask the provider for their customer support hours and response times, both in office hours and out of hours including weekends and bank holidays;
- CQC reports: can the supplier point to CQC reports that highlight the use of their product and what difference it made in the various KLOEs?
- Does it deliver what's important to you? Different products will be stronger in different aspects – some products are stronger on their course content, compliance reporting, CPD tools – define what's important to you and ensure each supplier demonstrates functionality that is key for how you want to operate. For instance, if compliance is your focus, you'll need a Learning Management System that makes reporting quick and easy for your managers at a service, region and company wide basis. If staff engagement is key, you may wish to focus attention on the quality of the course content;
- Will they provide the courses that are essential to you? Every supplier has a different course catalogue so it's important to ensure that the organisation you choose can provide the courses you require. Otherwise you run the risk of needing to go elsewhere for additional courses.
- What are the courses like? As discussed earlier, one of the things you should look for is CPD-certification. Also, ask who the courses are written by. Are they qualified experts?
- Finally most organisations will offer demos so you can judge the quality of their courses. Are they engaging? Interactive? Varied?

6. WHAT ELSE MUST BE CONSIDERED WHEN CHOOSING DIGITAL LEARNING

Information Governance

Any digital solution will help you to streamline your data governance obligations. GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018, define your responsibilities and obligations for handling and sharing your employee data.

By contracting a learning management system supplier, you need to consider how the supplier is going to fulfil their obligations under the GDPR.

Quality suppliers will be able to provide you with guidance and documentation which ensures you are compliant with relevant legislation.

Information about your obligations can be obtained from the [Information Commissioner's Office](#) or the [National Care Forum](#).

Staff Training

Once the product has been launched, you need to consider how you will engage new team members with online learning. When you choose a product that is easy to use (see earlier guidance), most carers are trained by their peers; but you need to consider how to address this training requirement:

Building online training courses into the recruitment process is a good way to engage new starters in online learning pre-induction. In turn, you will also find your new starters are more engaged and skilled when they arrive on day 1.

Your chosen Learning Management System provider may provide courses/videos for their own products which will aid adoption and that you can build into your recruitment process. Support levels offered by the provider are also key here to ensure your project lead and/or care managers are not embroiled in front line support.

IN SUMMARY

The recommendations and steps contained within this whitepaper should provide the confidence that you are partnering with a high quality learning provider, who will guide you through the process of implementing cutting edge, innovative on demand digital learning, fit for the modern day.

By ensuring rigour in your selection process, you will vastly increase the potential for short, medium and long term return on investment that will benefit your organisation, your staff teams and the people you support. Aim for utopia. Utopia is a highly engaged, highly educated workforce who will stay with your organisation, recommend like minded individuals to join you in your journey, and ultimately ensure you are providing outstanding, person centred care.

CASPA members, as champions of digital excellence, have a host of success stories where care providers have been on similar journeys to the one that you may be considering for your organisation. After all, learning from others' success is the most powerful method of improvement.



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