



## Meeting your Government Connect GSCx training needs with e-learning

- How Plymouth CC created training resources for £3 per head
- Your Questions Answered
- How Blaenau Gwent CBC evidenced its GCSx training

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A Learning Pool White Paper

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Introduction .....	2
Speaker's Profiles .....	3
Plymouth CC creates GCSx training for £3 per head .....	4
Learning Pool GCSx event panel Q&A's .....	5
Blaenau Gwent proves learner compliance to GCSx training .....	7
About Learning Pool .....	8

## Introduction

Government Connect is a pan-government programme providing an accredited and secure network between central government and every local authority in England and Wales. The network is known as GCSx (Government Connect Secure Extranet).

Whilst it is not mandatory for Local Authorities to engage with the Government Connect programme GCSx is the preferred common secure method for electronic transfer of data between DWP, DCSF and local authorities.

From April 2009 the three departments will begin phasing out internet and postal based solutions, so creating a major training requirement in local authorities.

Learning Pool hosted a free Government Connect event in Bristol on Tuesday 10th March to talk about the GCSx training needs and how e-learning can help train lots of people with consistent messages in a short time period.

The event showcased the e-learning course created by Plymouth CC using the Learning Pool authoring tool. At a cost of £3 per head the e-learning has proved a cost effective way of training over 1,000 learners to date.

Further cost efficiencies have since been created by other councils who have repurposed Plymouth's e-learning for their own GCSx training purposes.

All Learning Pool subscribers know that they can repurpose the courses shared back in to the Learning Pool catalogue using the Learning Pool authoring tool, thereby creating their own further efficiencies.

Speakers at the Bristol event included Simon Fisher, Government Connect, Loraine Slinn, Plymouth CC, Jos Tama, Essex Online Partnership and Simon Green, Blaenau Gwent.

This white paper details two case studies featuring Government Connect training activity from Plymouth CC and Blaenau Gwent CBC, together with the questions and answers from the panel session at the event in March.

### **Simon Fisher, Government Connect**

Simon's role is to engage with local authorities and central government departments and to explore new ways of working using the secure GCSx network.

In a nutshell Simon works hard to find the opportunities where local and central government can work closer together.

### **Loraine Slinn, Plymouth City Council**

A professional IT trainer, Loraine has worked at Plymouth for over 4 years and has pioneered e-learning as a training delivery method during that time, extolling its virtues and demonstrating how quick it is to create and roll out e-learning across the organisation.

Loraine has created a two part e-learning course on to train over 1,000 colleagues at Plymouth on the Government Connect programme using the Learning Pool authoring tool. And because Loraine is a member of the Learning Pool club she has shared her courses back into the Learning Pool course catalogue for other members to download and repurpose.

### **Jos Tama, Essex Online Partnership**

Jos has worked in local government for 20 years, concentrating on partnership working in the last 5 years. As the Essex Online Partnership (EOLP) project manager for Government Connect Jos has repurposed the Plymouth courses for use by 15 local authorities in Essex.

### **Sam Barbee, Learning Pool**

A native of sunny California, Sam is Learning Pool's Business Development Manager who spends most of his working day talking with potential customers and letting them know about the Learning Pool club.

As well as touching on the sharing and collaborative nature of the Learning Pool community where subscribers share the e-learning they've created for others to repurpose, Sam also gave a demonstration of Learning Pool's DLE.

Sam outlined how the DLE tracks, monitors and reports on what learners have completed, much like any other LMS. He also talked about the additional Web 2.0 features that set the DLE apart from standard LMS', such as wikis, podcasts and discussion forums plus the quiz and assessment functionality.

### **Simon Green, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council**

As one of the first to start using the Learning Pool DLE Simon has trail blazed a path that other DLE users are keen to follow.

An organisational development professional of many years experience, Simon is an enthusiastic and energetic user of Learning Pool's services, often pushing the boundaries and being the first to use the many different modules available on the DLE.

At the Learning Pool Government Connect event in Bristol Simon talked about how he is using the DLE to evidence the take up of his ICT policy and Government Connect e-learning.



## Plymouth CC creates GCSx training for £3 per head

Like many IT and HR managers in local authorities Loraine Slinn, Senior ICT Trainer at Plymouth City Council, was challenged by the Government Connect programme.

She needed to train an estimated 1,000 colleagues on the benefits and changes required by the programme by 30<sup>th</sup> March 2009. The obvious solution, she thought, was e-learning.

The benefits of e-learning are well known to Loraine, Senior ICT Trainer at Plymouth City Council. A professional IT trainer, Loraine has worked at Plymouth for over 4 years and has pioneered e-learning as a training delivery method during that time, extolling its virtues and demonstrating how quick it is to create and roll out e-learning across the organisation.

To meet the Gov Connect training challenge head on Loraine created a two part e-learning course to train the planned 1,000 colleagues at Plymouth using the Learning Pool authoring tool. And because Loraine is a member of the Learning Pool club she has shared her courses back into the Learning Pool course catalogue for other members to download and repurpose.

The course Loraine created covers the importance of IT security when using a computer, understanding the background to Government Connect and how to use the secure Government Connect email system. These modules take about an hour to complete and are a practical alternative to delivering the same training face to face, not least because they can be done in bite sized chunks.

Plymouth has used Learning Pool's Dynamic Learning Environment (DLE) to track completion of the modules, which staff must complete before they can get access to the new secure Gov Connect email system. The DLE also produces reports to keep track of learner progress and has the ability to turn on Web 2.0 features like discussion forums, glossaries, blogs and podcasts at any time in the future.

The case for e-learning has long been made on the benefits it returns, such as it being a cost effective way to deliver consistent training to a large number of users in a short space of time. Estimated costs of delivering a half a day classroom course on the Government Connect programme have been calculated at £85 per delegate compared to £3 per delegate for the e-learning course.

In Plymouth's case further efficiency savings are also being realised by other Learning Pool subscribers who are able to use these modules and make changes where appropriate, for example the branding, before rolling out to their learner base. This saves them time and money because they don't have to create their own e-learning from scratch.

As Mary McKenna, Learning Pool's director says "At the heart of the Learning Pool service is our community of public sector learning and development professionals, like Loraine, who want to work collaboratively with others in the community; they don't want to reinvent the wheel.

Plymouth's Government Connect e-learning is a perfect example of how the public sector is grabbing e-learning with both hands and improving its staff training programmes, whilst making efficiency savings at the same time. No mean feat."

### **How long should it take me to re-purpose the Government Connect module?**

Jos Tama "I spent between 10 to 12 hours repurposing part 1 of the Plymouth course on Information Technology and then a further 6 hours on part 2, Government Connect. These timings include creating detailed instructions for other local authorities to carry out their own branding, pinpointing those vanilla areas to focus on for changes and where to insert their hyperlinks."

Lorraine Slinn "I think you should plan to spend up to 8 hours amending my existing content, with a possible further 2 hours put aside for any technical help you might need from Learning Pool. That might sound a lot but remember that if you created this course from scratch, like I did, you might spend anything up to 160 hours."

Simon Fisher "I think the courses Plymouth and Essex have produced for training staff on GCSx are very good and we're planning to make them available to all local authorities soon, as part of Plymouth's benefit realisation bid. We're working on the finer details of this with Learning Pool but expect an announcement soon!"

### **What format would the information on the site take?**

Simon Fisher "It would have a vanilla format. We're still working out the details of who would host the course but will have that finalised very soon."

Mary McKenna "We'd ensure that all Learning Pool customers could amend the content using the Learning Pool Authoring Tool, in the same way Jos has done with Plymouth's original course."

Sam Barbee "Learning Pool customers will need to provide a link from their existing LMS to where this course will eventually be located."

### **In terms of the website format, what should I expect from a vanilla format?**

Jos Tama "The term vanilla means that it is a non-specific format which can then be easily modified to reflect the specific needs of your Authority using the Learning Pool Authoring Tool."

### **Where can I find more information for CIS users?**

Simon Fisher "CIS users should already be trained to use the system and should not require any additional training on CIS as they will just be receiving the data through a different pipe, so to speak."

The only thing that may change for them if is that if they have a shortcut set up on their desktop then that will have to change to point to GCSx rather than the web. That said, to access GCSx they will have to sit GCSx training in the same way as other users."

### **Simon Green mentioned he entered the details of all those users who needed to complete the Government Connect Training into an automated spreadsheet. How do you do this?**

Simon Green "With my DLE I just log onto the DLE homepage with my administrator access and simply upload the names of those who need to complete the training in the site administration box. But I would urge you to contact the Learning Pool help desk if you've got any queries."

### **Will there be any more guidance from Government Connect on the difference between restrict and protected information in relation to local authorities?**

Simon Fisher "It's true that most of the current guidance is aimed at central government and, as part of the Devon Partnerships benefit realisation bid, we hope to redress this by rolling out this information more specifically for local authorities once everyone is signed up to GCSX. However, in the mean time, if you're unsure about the classification of data within an email you're sending choose secure rather than unsecure. Always default to a higher level of security."

Jos Tama "I'd like to emphasise this point too. We've found that, as Government Connect comes into effect, many authorities are sending large amounts of information which could now be categorised as restricted over an unsecured internet connection."

### **What challenges did Plymouth Council overcome in completing their GC training?**

Lorraine Slinn "How GC mail would work in practice in Plymouth wasn't decided upon until very late in the day which was a challenge for us, as was subject matter experts not providing the necessary information in a suitable format for training, for example their interpretation of protective markings."

### **How have the officers at Blaenau Gwent responded to the GC training?**

Simon Green "The numbers speak for themselves. In the first five days since the training has been rolled out over 500 people have completed the training which is 100 people trained each day, which I'm really pleased with. Any calls our support desk have received with regards to difficulties have mostly been people forgetting their site log-in details."

### **How strict is Blaenau Gwent going to be with those people who fail to complete the training by the deadline date of 31 March 09?**

Simon Green "Due to the DLE's reporting function, we'll be able to issue reminders to those people who haven't completed the training, which we will do. Then, if this doesn't have the desired effect we will restrict their network access until they do comply with the training."

### **Councillors in some Authorities are proving the most difficult to come onboard with the training. Does the panel have advice?**

Simon Fisher "Councillors should be treated the same way as all other users. If they are using the network, they need to comply with the regulations. If councillors are still proving problematic then I'm more than happy to re-visit the relevant authorities again and emphasise why they need to comply like everyone to CoCo."

### **What's Plymouth's return on investment with the e-learning compared to classroom based learning to roll out their Government Connect training?**

Lorraine Slinn "Even though it's hard to evaluate the exact costs we've calculated that the e-learning costs £3 per head while a half day classroom based course covering the same material would cost an estimated £85 per head. Bargain!"

### **How did you introduce members to the new classifications?**

Jos Tama "We created and delivered Powerpoint presentations and handouts for them."

Simon Fisher "We've found that the main difficulties people are finding is not due to the new classifications but because everyone uses the word confidential incorrectly."

### **How did you go about classifying historical data under the new guidelines?**

Jos Tama "EOLP applied for a grant from the GC Benefits Realisation Fund to develop an Information Classification scheme in line with the Local Government Classification Scheme, which would help local authorities to deal effectively with the new classifications and the handling of restricted information. The application is still being considered by the IDeA for funding. In Essex we are concentrating on the here and now with regards to classifying data, which means Revenues & Benefits."

Lorraine Slinn "I would advise you to make sure you don't circulate restricted information on to people who have yet to complete their GC training. Don't presume that because you have completed the training that everyone else has."

### **Is the subtlety around what restriction means incorporated into the Code of Conduct?**

Simon Fisher "No, it is only covered as part of the audit trail advice."

Lorraine Slinn "At Plymouth we're implementing a new filing system based on the Confidential Classifications and developing Protective Markers alongside this, but this could take a couple of years to fully complete. I suggest you might also want consider developing a similar filing system within your own authorities too."

When Simon Green, Organisational Development Advisor at Blaenau Gwent CBC, was confronted with the Government Connect programme deadline, he decided to use Learning Pool's Dynamic Learning Environment (DLE) to ensure that all ICT users accessed and agreed to the Authority's ICT acceptable usage policy.

In Simons own words, "The campaign has been a great success. We launched on the 3<sup>rd</sup> March 2009 and within 10 days 548 people had signed the policy and the number of staff registering on our Learning Pool DLE leapt from 383 to 831. We're now track to get all ICT users, approximately 1,500, signed up by the 31<sup>st</sup> March."

The ICT Acceptable Usage policy is hosted on Blaenau Gwent's DLE, which also contains a learning module about information security. The module has been tailored from Plymouth's Government Connect e-learning course and, although it is not mandatory, over 200 Blaenau Gwent staff have chosen to undertake the further training to date. The interactive course features 18 screens and video clips to create realistic scenarios.

Plymouth's Government Connect course is available now in the Learning Pool course catalogue for members to download and repurpose. As part of the Learning Pool membership you have access to over 150 courses in the e-learning catalogue, plus you can create your own e-learning using our Authoring Tool and then share it back to the catalogue for others to repurpose.

Blaenau Gwent's DLE also contains a discussion forum, a FAQ section and links to downloadable Government Connect documents. Once the employee has read the council's own ICT Acceptable Usage policy, each employee indicates their agreement to abide by the policy by simply ticking the appropriate check box, which, thanks to the DLE's functionality, enables the managers to see who has and hasn't "signed up".

The high profile support from the top is credited as being the key reason for success. The initial email sent by the Chief Executive gave an overview on information security and stated that if users haven't read and signed up by the 31<sup>st</sup> March they will be taken off the network. This "gentle threat" emphasises how important it is for everyone to understand the Government Connect programme, ensuring that information is handled effectively and efficiently.

Blaenau Gwent is using the reporting functionality of the DLE to keep track of who has signed up to the policy and Simon is sending out targeted gentle reminders to those that have not signed up yet.

Simon spent just 1.5 hours to create the Blaenau Gwent Information Security page on the DLE and about an hour to repurpose Plymouth's Government Connect Course and he has been very pleased with the uptake.

"Line managers at Blaenau Gwent have been impressed with how quickly and easily the policy sign-up has been rolled out. The programme has been very self-sufficient, as there has been no need for managers to spend time chasing their colleagues. It is also very environmentally friendly as there is not a need to print copies of the policy for staff. In future any changes mean only having to alter one document rather than another round of costly and time-intensive printing and distribution."

The increase in registered users will build awareness of e-learning within the authority and Simon's holding sessions in April with a representative from each directorate to help them build their own DLE pages.

"My aim is to change the mindset of staff and managers. Those who think at all about Learning Pool probably think 'What does it do?' and I want to change that to 'This is what I need to do in my service – how can get Learning Pool to facilitate this?' This would be a major step forward to using the DLE as an integral part of the business, something I believe has enormous potential."

Learning Pool provides e-learning subscription and content services to the UK public sector.

We were set up by the Improvement and Development Agency for local government in 2002 to support and promote the use of e-learning in local government and we are now the only company in the market with a complete focus on the public sector.

Today hundreds of public sector organisations, including nearly 9 out of 10 local councils, use our e-learning services to enable key improvement and change programmes.

We're motivated by helping our customers make use of e-learning to support their improvement processes.

We've created a community of interest around e-learning so that organisations get real value from economies of scale, increased innovation and additional collaborative working opportunities by being part of the "pool".

We believe that e-learning has a strong role to play in learning and development but we understand that effective L&D needs to be a blended approach.

We're passionate about helping our customers meet the challenge of public sector improvement and we believe that e-learning has a key role to play, not least in terms of flexibility and value for money.

We pride ourselves not only on creating and providing e-learning content and tools to customers but then helping our customers to get the best from their learners as a result.

If you'd like guest access to our course catalogue or an online demonstration of our services please contact [elearning@learningpool.com](mailto:elearning@learningpool.com), call 0207 101 9383 or visit [www.learningpool.com](http://www.learningpool.com).

*Learning Pool is the market leader in public sector e-learning.*

*We provide high quality e-learning solutions that are completely fit for purpose and at a low cost.*

*9 out of 10 of our customers regularly recommend us to their colleagues.*