

# A tailored approach to volunteer learning and development

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## Background

Children's Hospice Association Scotland (CHAS) provides the only hospice service for babies, children and young people with life-shortening conditions in Scotland.

As an organisation we have a strong learning culture. A well-informed, engaged, skilled and safe volunteer force is central to the success of our service delivery and income generation.



## Results

The volunteer core learning matrix and e-learning platform were developed by Voluntary Services in conjunction with volunteers. Volunteers now complete a short learning package that is accessible, tailored and proportional to the level of risk attached to their role.

Statutory and mandatory training was rebranded as core learning and assessments that had in the past provoked anxiety were removed. Learning is instead validated by a box checked by volunteers confirming that they have understood the learning.

A communications plan shared with staff ensured consistent positive messaging to volunteers, and volunteer communications clearly sold the benefits of the new system to volunteers.

The matrix and e-learning platform were launched in April 2016 and feedback to date has been excellent. The number of volunteers completing their learning has increased significantly.

## Aims

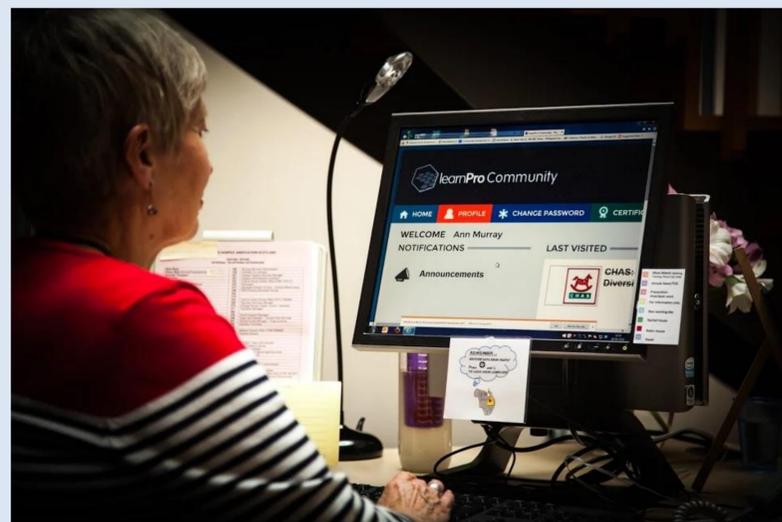
The aims of this project were to develop a robust core learning programme for volunteers, distinct from the staff statutory and mandatory training, to ensure volunteers receive learning appropriate to their role in a format that is cost-effective accessible and scalable.

A key aim was to achieve a tailored and inclusive approach to volunteer learning and development in order to balance legislative requirements with the volunteer engagement and inclusion agenda.

## Methods/approach

Volunteer feedback about the former approach to core learning informed this new model. Areas for improvement identified by volunteers included length and volume of modules and testing of knowledge (this was anxiety-provoking for many volunteers who had not had positive experiences of education).

The volunteer learning and development group, comprised of both staff and volunteers, supported the development of the new core learning matrix, testing new materials so that they could be improved before sharing with the wider volunteer base.



"I found the e-learning system easy to use and managed to navigate the site without difficulty – no mean feat for a computer illiterate! I actually enjoyed the experience"  
(Janette, Fundraising Volunteer)

## Conclusion

CHAS now has an approach to core learning that complements our commitment to nurturing volunteer engagement. Bureaucracy and lack of time are well-documented barriers to volunteering and both barriers have been overcome by this project. Volunteers have welcomed the new, inclusive approach to learning and development. Since launching the matrix and e-learning system in April 2016 we have developed paper and face-to-face learning to meet the needs of those who are unable to use a computer.