

Best Value Review of ICT

Hypothesis 7 Report

Summary sheet

<p>Hypothesis</p> <p>If we move away from course based training and induction in favour of e-learning, we may increase user satisfaction and reduce training costs.</p>	
<p>Summary of recommendations</p> <p>To undertake a low cost pilot study for multimedia computer based training based upon the ECDL standard (assuming Hypothesis 5 being agreed), for a period between 3 to 6 months.</p>	
<p>Service Benefits</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> Cost effective and good quality training <input type="checkbox"/> Delivering more IT training than current level <input type="checkbox"/> Training more accessible <input type="checkbox"/> Will deliver IT competency framework to ECDL level <input type="checkbox"/> Staff have more flexibility in training <input type="checkbox"/> Staff can learn at their own pace
<p>Estimated future costs / savings</p>	<p>Significant up front costs. Existing use of facilities could reduce investment. However an indicative estimate of a ten desktop facility is estimated at £40,000 for software / equipment / hardware / accommodation only. No management costs have been stated as this will largely be dependent of the outcome of the pilot study.</p>
<p>Current costs</p>	<p>See Hypothesis 6.</p>
<p>Risks</p>	<p>The pilot study would be designed to identify the key risks if this training was rolled out to other sites. However briefly these are likely to be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> ECDL - does it meet our needs? <input type="checkbox"/> Buy in by departments / management and staff. <input type="checkbox"/> Availability and location of the facilities. <input type="checkbox"/> Promotion / marketing of the facility as our key means of IT training.

	<input type="checkbox"/> Management and support of the facility.
Volumes	What volumes are the figures you have used based on?
Ease of Implementation	<p>There is already some experience with the council that could be drawn upon to establish the training facility, choose software etc. A small project team would need to be established and managed by Corporate personnel to work out the details of the study. A key obstacle could be the availability of the TA room and Co-ordinator (and funding?) and choosing the best time to undertake the pilot study.</p>
Further information / work required	

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Report

Summary of Hypothesis

If we move away from course based training and induction in favour of e-learning, we may increase user satisfaction and reduce training costs.

Approach taken

Although the definition of e-learning can be quite wide in scope we agreed that, for our purposes, it should be regarded as delivery of training through the use of multimedia training (or CBT) packages. We decided that we would:

- Find out, what if any training, was being undertaken by HCC using the CBT technique.
- Undertake an exercise to seek staff views (pros and cons) on the use of this training method.
- Investigate the various methods of delivering this training (e.g. using the network).
- Make some exploration of potential suppliers and obtain costs for their products.
- Make links with hypothesis five and six.

Observations on current system

The current system of ICT training within the county council is outlined in hypothesis six. Essentially training is usually departmentally based with a variety delivery methods e.g. in house using own facilities or perhaps externally. Departments also undertake training on bespoke systems e.g. SSIS.

Some CBT training was being undertaken in departments, principally in CSCS, Social Services and Community Information. Brief summaries of approaches taken in CSCS and Community Information are described below.

Illustration 1:

CSCS have an established facility at Mount Pleasant (a room with two PCs with a library of CBT packages (supplied by Net G) ranging from the common MS products to non-IT specific). This training facility has been in existence for about two years. Approximately 40 - 50 staff have used it in during this period. No firm data could be produced by CSCS on actual numbers, type of usage etc. However a note throughout CSCS elicited six responses from staff who had used the training facility. CSCS indicate that whilst pleased with the technology and advantages of using this training method, the facility needs to be managed more effectively, to be promoted and embedded into existing performance development staff processes. CSCS have recently been accredited as an examination centre for the European Computer Diving Licence). There is to be a re-launch of the facility when the new personnel officer takes up post shortly.

Illustration 2:

Community Information have been allocated funds (over three years) from the National Opportunities Fund "to train (653) staff in the ICT skills required to develop and deliver the fast-growing range of ICT services in our libraries. The department decided to use the European Computer Driving Licence as the foundation for this approach. Two supplier products were piloted (Electric paper and Net G). After extensive tendering exercise Electric Paper has been chosen as the supplier. Community Information have decided that the training will be delivered at desktops (not using the network for technical reasons), in the staff areas, of libraries. Staff will use headphones for the training. A key concern the time staff took to undertake this training, Electric Paper on average took around 30 hours to complete (Net G estimate 60 hours completion time). Training is to be done in small chunks of 30 - 60 minutes and at least twice per week. Staff will be given up to four months to complete the course. Community Information will pay approximately £75 per officer for the ECDL examination to be taken (around 75% of staff are expected to take the ECDL).

Potential changes / proposals

Hypothesis 5 indicates that the council should adopt an IT competency framework and "to be effective, the framework should adopt external standards". It also suggests that for the competency framework to be effective "all departments" would "adopt" the framework. Hypothesis 5 raises the possibility of the European Computer Driving Licence, ECDL, being adopted by the council although care would need to be taken about "how much of the syllabus would need to be covered".

If ECDL were to be adopted as one of the key competency standards within the council there would need to be a way of identifying whether all or part of the course was appropriate for each member of staff (there are some 5,200 APT&C staff excluding those in Community Information and Schools. See below). In addition there would need to be a consistent and managed process for delivering the training over a reasonable period of time.

ECDL provides a thorough and basic to intermediate grounding in ICT skills (it covers using the following main areas - using computer, computer equipment and security, word processing, spreadsheets, databases, presentation and drawing).

Skills Audit

An ICT skills audit would need to establish the demand for this training so that a view could be taken on the number of training facilities that may be required across the county. Community Information have developed and used an ICT training and skills questionnaire however it is anticipated that the form would be redesigned to map more closely with the ECDL standard. Depending upon the nature of the job requirements staff may not need to undertake all the modules within ECDL although some modules may well be regarded as core to all staff e.g. word processing. Managers would be required to sign off the skills audit form with each individual member of staff. Where an individual does not need to undertake a particular module they should indicate why this was the case on the form (e.g. job does not require or already competent).

Multimedia Based Training

Investigations, both internally and externally, have revealed that the use of multimedia training can be a very effective way of delivering IT training, for most people (e.g. training 653 staff in Community Information to ECDL standard). There is a plethora of products available in the market and choice will be important (note council departments already using multimedia have chosen different products). It is suggested that multimedia based training (an agreed corporate product) be used to deliver the training identified through the skills audit.

It is important to note that the council will need, as a matter of the "Putting People First" policy, to consider how it might meet the training needs of those staff who may not be able to take full advantage of multimedia based training.

Delivery

Training packages can be delivered directly from the Internet, across Intranets and also on local area networks or on individual machines. Video technology is used in most training packages available on the market. Currently the council's network, although able to allow "low grade" video may not, at present, be able to handle the "high grade" video footage that is used in some training packages. Another constraining factor is that many of our desktops do not have sound cards, which is necessary for the training. As part of the council's PC replacement programme these devices are being installed as standard equipment as a result of an initiative of the Best Value Review Team. This information indicates that consideration of the establishment of a number training facilities be made available for such training (Local Resource Centres) where the software could be delivered on a LAN or on each desktop within the facility.

- The training facilities need to be local so that staff can take advantage of the flexible nature of the training. Information from Community Information suggests that the training should take place on a regular basis, in small chunks, over a fixed time scale. It is therefore likely that a number of facilities would need to be available and located in the major centres of staff population

The number of facilities (and desktop machines) will be a factor of the demand for the training and the location of those staff, which will not be known until the skills audit takes place. Potentially there could be up to 5,200 APT&C staff (excluding APT&C staff in Schools and Community Information) to be trained. It is therefore suggested that a pilot programme for multimedia training, used to deliver up to ECDL standard, be established for a limited period. The pilot programme, would be used to assess the following areas:

- Develop and test the skills audit processes.
- Trial the skills audit process and multimedia based training across a range of staff (approximately 50) in departments.
- Test the multimedia based model and evaluate the claimed benefits.
- To inform the plan for rolling out this method of training should be pilot be successful.
- There are other issues such as the use of the appropriate software and booking arrangements, which could also be considered at this time.

If successful the concept of Local Resource Centres could then be rolled out to other locations within the county having identified budgets, resources and accommodation.

Service benefits

Arising from the research undertaken, multimedia based training appears to have the following benefits:

- ❑ **Cost effective** - evidence suggests that the costs of establishing an LRC is mostly "up front". The costs usually included equipment, software, accommodation, management etc. However with the competency framework, it suggests that more IT training will be undertaken rather than the existing level. Inevitably there will be more expenditure by the council of training although with an expected increase in numbers of staff, the costs per unit will reduce as volume rises.
- ❑ **Training is more accessible** - staff can have access to the training more readily as it will be local to them. They do not have to wait to attend a course.
- ❑ **Staff have more flexibility** - Staff can arrange their training around their work commitments although experience suggests that courses should have an agreed time for completion.
- ❑ **Staff can learn at their preferred pace** - This is important if people are to learn effectively. Courses are designed to enable learners to go over sections more than once if they have not fully grasped the issues first time round. Learners are in control of their own learning and take responsibility for their own learning. This is in line with the council's training and development charter.
- ❑ **Training quality is maintained** - with multimedia, providing we choose the right product, good quality training will be delivered each time it is used.
- ❑ Better trained staff could reduce the number of calls to the ITNet help line.

Current costs

Hypothesis 6 addresses the costs of providing IT training and indicates that they are "very difficult" to identify there has not been a consistent way of recording the details of the expenditure. However details of some departmental records are analysed in the report.

Estimated future costs / efficiencies

If the proposal for the pilot programme were accepted it would allow a low cost trial of a new way of undertaking IT training within the council giving time to work out the details of a programme.

The council would need to arrange for short-term licences of appropriate software (which we understand is possible). Management of the facility could be undertaken for the pilot by the TA Room co-ordinator.

The estimated costs for running pilot programme for 3 months are as follows:

- ❑ TA Room and use of TA Co-ordinator – Nil.
- ❑ Software (Electric paper) for say, 10 desktops, - Concurrent licence £1250 for 3 months (Full year cost £3.5k).

If the pilot project were successful in demonstrating that this was an effective method of delivering IT training to ECDL standards then this concept would need to be delivered to the other centres within the county but determined after the pilot programme. Some existing locations have may have accommodation, equipment which could be used thus reducing the initial outlay. However for illustrative purposes only an indicative estimate, including accommodation and equipment for four rooms with ten desktops in each, at county hall would cost around. This also includes the cost of the management of the facility (see Hypothesis 6, Appendix B for the ongoing costs of this).

Implementation issues (PILOT)

The following may be issues needed to be resolved to ensure smooth running of the pilot programme: -

- ❑ Availability of the TA room / Co-ordinator.
- ❑ Budget to fund short-term software licences and installation costs.
- ❑ Staff availability over the trial period to undertake the training.

Potential risks

Moving to a multimedia based training system would involve significant up front investment. It is therefore prudent to ensure that the council trial a low cost pilot programme run for about three months, using existing facilities and staff, to identify the key risks to this project. A thorough evaluation of the pilot will improve the likelihood of success if the decision is given to roll out these facilities. However there are potential "hazards": -

- ❑ Experience suggests that support by managers at all levels and effective promotion are areas where if not in place can lead to the risk of the facilities not being used.
- ❑ Achieving "buy in" from departments to adopt the competency framework and to use the training facilities.
- ❑ Acceptance by staff of this training method. It will not suit every one.
- ❑ ECDL may be too basic level for some staff.
- ❑ Adequate budgets and resources being made available.

Volume information used

Assumptions made in this report: -

- ❑ ECDL is adopted as the basic to intermediate ICT competency level that HCC staff are expected to meet.

- ❑ The Technology Awareness Room and Co-ordinator would be made available at nil cost whilst the pilot was being undertaken (or that budget is made available).
- ❑ The project is corporately managed (e.g. by Corporate Personnel) - See Hypothesis 5 for justification.
- ❑ Estimates of costs are "ball park" figures based upon previous computer installations and also supplier estimates for the ECDL package.

Extra skills / training required

None.

IT development / investment

The pilot programme would not need any additional IT development or investment (other than the software) as the TA room has all the appropriate equipment based upon the assumption that software is loaded on each desktop.

Further information / work required

Before committing to large scale training using multimedia and adopting the ECDL standard a low cost pilot study should be undertaken.

Recommendations

- ❑ To undertake a low cost pilot study for multimedia computer based training based upon the ECDL standard (assuming Hypothesis 5 being agreed) for three months.
- ❑ The pilot programme being run using the TA room and the facility managed by the TA Co-ordinator.
- ❑ To undertake an evaluation of the project and identify criteria for success.
- ❑ If successful establish appropriate number of training facilities within the county.