

Accessible eLearning: The Extended Enterprise



eCom Scotland

Setting the Scene

Sight problems affect over 2 million people throughout the UK. Many professionals and organisations need information on the issues affecting blind and partially sighted people, and help to improve their services for people with sight problems.

The Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) is a charitable organisation which supports thousands of people affected by sight loss. They offer training and consultation to businesses and professionals working in social care, health, education and employment, to help them support people who are blind or partially sighted.

Purpose

RNIB needed to make their training more flexible and meet the high demand for employee development from their business clients. They wanted to diversify their business training offering by incorporating new learning technology while still following accessibility best practice.

The project began in early 2014, with eCom and RNIB working in partnership to define an effective learning strategy. The agreed approach was to build a bespoke learning management system (LMS) and create a series of accessible eLearning courses. The new LMS needed to support both RNIB's and their clients' varying training objectives.

The four areas of focus are:
Public Academy – focusing on personal development and used by anyone supporting a person with sight loss.

Professional Academy – predominately for employers in the third sector, health care, local authorities, education and employment sectors.

Customer Academy – for businesses across financial services, retail, housing and utility providers to help tailor customer service requirements to support people with sight loss.

Internal Academy – for RNIB Group, Action for Blind People and Cardiff Institute for the Blind's staff and volunteers.

“The mutually beneficial partnership between eCom and RNIB has enabled us to pool our combined expertise; to learn and support one another to achieve our aim of creating accessible eLearning.”

Linda Mitchell, Services Manager, RNIB Learning Choices





The Challenge

Social and technological exclusion significantly affects blind and partially sighted people. Therefore it is critical for RNIB that their learning environment is accessible to all, with adaptable resources which work across as many devices as possible.

The project required detailed understanding of web accessibility and incorporates the latest in accessibility technology. Significant research was carried out by eCom on how to structure content to make it accessible using screen reader software and available on most devices.

A wide range of subject matter experts and accessibility advisors assisted with the project. Through regular testing they ensured that Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) standards and regulations were met and best practice applied.

The Benefits

The project has delivered a flexible and cost effective commercial offering for RNIB's business solutions team. It has helped them to deliver information and training to a wider range of clients while still ensuring the highest level of accessibility for people with sight loss.

The bespoke LMS accommodates RNIB's broad range of clients. It supports ongoing employee professional development by delivering easy access to training and full tracking of progress.

Working on the new system and online courses has expanded eCom's knowledge and understanding of web accessibility. This learning will be used to enhance our future projects.

Working Together

This has truly been a mutually beneficial partnership between eCom and RNIB. Our combined expertise has enabled the creation of accessible eLearning which ensures equity of learning experience for blind and partially sighted people.

From the first phase of this successful collaboration we have a new accessible eLearning platform and a suite of eLearning course available to the public on RNIB's website. The first internal RNIB group eLearning course 'Customer service excellence' being available to over 3000+ staff and volunteers across the RNIB group.

Our partnership goes from strength to strength as we move into the next phase of creating more customised eLearning courses for the business sector.



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