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DEVELOPING E-LEARNING IN A HOSPICE SETTING: BENEFITS, CHALLENGES AND OUTCOMESSue Foster *Northern Ireland Hospice, Belfast, Northern Ireland*

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Aim To establish a virtual learning environment (Moodle) within Hospice

Background On line teaching and learning is making a significant impact on education. In recent years the use of e-learning has increased rapidly, enriching the teaching and learning experiences for many, due in part to the convenient and flexible nature of this delivery option. Following a successful outcome to a business case submitted to senior management, a project was undertaken within the hospice education department to establish a VLE using 'Moodle'. It was hoped the outcome of this initiative would have a significant impact on the costs, resources and time taken to provide mandatory training and to maximise opportunities for continuous professional development. To achieve this the project team worked with key partners from each directorate to ensure the VLE met the needs of all its users.

Method The pilot for the e-learning project consisted of four mandatory training sessions, Vulnerable Adults and Child Protection, Infection Control, COSHH and Fire Safety, with 10 participants for each. Guidelines were developed and training was facilitated prior to undertaking the pilot. At the end of each session participants were asked to complete an on line

evaluation and on completion of the pilot project, focus groups were held to capture their thoughts and experiences.

Findings Both challenges and rewards were part of the experience. Most of the challenges seemed to be a consequence of the lack of face-to-face interaction in the on line environment, lack of IT skills and feelings of isolation. The flexibility of e-learning offered a solution to many of the challenges inherent in providing education and training within the healthcare setting. Advantages included a learner-centric, easily accessible, cost effective and measurable means of providing staff training and educational opportunities.