

‘The e-portfolio is central to so much. You cannot have lifelong learning or improved professionalism amongst staff without e-portfolios.’

Geoff Rebbeck, e-Learning Coordinator, Thanet College

The project team found that for the first small cohort of staff undergoing appraisal via e-portfolio, the transition from a familiar paper-based model to an electronic one led to a deeper analysis of the nature of appraisal itself – a valuable by-product of the use of e-portfolios.

Staff initially questioned the privacy and security of the process – the virtual nature of the appraisal documentation appeared less secure to some. In time the e-portfolio route to appraisal will, however, benefit practitioners by reducing the intensity of one-off annual reviews.



“ Dr Jean Kelly Professional Development Manager, The Institute for Learning

“ We chose to offer practitioners an electronic route to CPD because it offers some unique advantages: a personal and private space which is entirely under your control and which is easily accessed from home and from the workplace. Multimedia can be used creatively to record evidence and reflect on what has been learnt – for example, illustrating achievement through digital photos, videos or podcasts. You can also extract items for purposes such as job interviews as well as providing evidence of CPD.

But collaborative reflection on practice is what is important in my vision for CPD. That is why it is important to have a tool that is more than a digital filing cabinet. Although there are clear advantages in undertaking CPD online, it is the communication tools within the system that offer the greatest potential for profound learning. Others can offer constructive advice, but it is only by articulating your thoughts to someone that you really hear how far you have come and understand how to overcome outstanding issues.

Time for considered reflection in further education is at a premium. Face-to-face CPD events occur infrequently, and practitioners working in small organisations do not have the luxury of regular contact with other colleagues. To help all practitioners develop the reflective and self-evaluative skills that underpin effective CPD, we have to ensure no one is working alone. Online communication tools embedded in the system can add real value in these circumstances.

For me, dialogue with others is the best way to consolidate thinking. However, I do not think that use of an e-portfolio should be compulsory. As yet, not all practitioners have easy access to a computer, nor does everyone have the confidence to use ICT in this way. But it is still important for practitioners in the learning and skills sector to keep pace with their learners in using digital skills – it’s a new age that we are in, and we have to be at the cutting edge. ”

Insight: The view of a professional body