

How Skilled to go is used in practice

Stage two: Researching the usage of the Skilled to go toolkit and web pages

OFT 1310

March 2011

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1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 Skilled to go aims to develop transferable consumer skills, knowledge and confidence through the provision of learning resources for teachers of adults.
- 1.2 ORC International was commissioned in October 2010 to conduct research into teachers' usage of Skilled to go resources. The overarching objective was to provide a deeper understanding of how teachers in the 14-19 and adult learning sectors use the resources. A secondary requirement was to explore the experience of navigating, accessing and downloading resources from the Skilled to go website.
- 1.3 Twenty teachers who use the resources took part in in-depth interviews and focus groups: three users and six non-users (who had registered on the website but had no or very limited experience of using the resources) took part in accompanied web-surfs between November 2010 and January 2011.
- 1.4 Participants were representative of the target audience of Skilled to go: teachers of literacy, numeracy and English for speakers of other languages (ESOL) to adult learners in England, and teachers of Social and Vocational Skills (SVS) in Scottish secondary schools.
- 1.5 The resources themselves were highly regarded. Nearly all participants commented on the attractive design and how they were flexible and adaptable for use with learners. Several participants were teaching disengaged learners and noted how well the resources allowed them to teach literacy and numeracy in an engaging way because they linked to real-life situations.

Three key challenges

- 1.6 The research with users and non-users identified three key challenges:
 - low awareness of Skilled to go resources
 - barriers created by website design and structure

- limited use of resources among users.
- 1.7 Participants typically became **aware** of Skilled to go by word-of-mouth (colleagues and networking events). Others came across the web pages “by accident” when using a search engine to find teaching resources. No participants became aware of Skilled to go via a marketing campaign, which may explain the low awareness thought to exist across the sector.
- 1.8 The main barriers created by the **website design and structure** were the need to register (which was not visually obvious on the Landing page), the amount of text on the Landing page and Choose module page, and the number of clicks required to get to downloadable resources.
- 1.9 **Limited use** of resources among users was also a key finding from the research even though participants were very positive about the design of the resources. Participants used Skilled to go on a “pick and mix” approach alongside teaching resources from other sources. No participants had used a whole module mainly due to lack of lesson time or lack of fit with the curriculum. The majority also did not use the Teachers’ notes or User guide due to lack of awareness or lack of time.

Suggested improvements

- 1.10 Participants gave suggestions for how resources could be better organised to increase usage, how the website structure and design could be improved and how Skilled to go could be publicised to increase awareness.

Increasing usage of resources

- 1.11 The main suggestions to increase usage were differentiating the resources for lower level learners (Entry level one and two), providing suggestions for ‘ready-to-go’ lessons and providing curriculum references on the documents.

Improving website design and structure

- 1.12 Suggestions for improving the website included removing the need to register or allowing users to stay logged in. If registering is necessary then a suggestion was to make the register/login button more prominent on the landing page. It was also thought that teachers would be more likely to register if there were 'tasters' of the resources that could be seen before registering.
- 1.13 Further suggestions for improving the website were increasing the visibility of the email address to contact if users are having login problems and renaming documents in zip files to something more meaningful.

Improving awareness of Skilled to go

- 1.14 Nearly all participants noted that Skilled to go was not publicised enough. Suggestions for the promotion of the resources included holding more local workshops and networking events, promoting it through established networks and promoting it at national education events such as The Education Show.
- 1.15 Users also suggested that flyers or emails should be sent to decision makers in organisations (senior managers and curriculum leads) to get buy-in for holding workshops and building Skilled to go units into schemes of work.

Prioritisation for recommended changes

- 1.16 The following changes are 'quick wins' meaning that they are fairly easy to introduce and are likely to have positive impact on the use of the Skilled to go web pages:
- Enhance the position of the registration/login button on the landing page.
 - Provide tasters of the resources on the landing page that visitors can see before they register/login.

- Consider how to enhance the position of 'Skilled to go' in search results in internet search engines.

1.17 The following recommendations are high priority but may require extra investment:

- All users should be able to stay signed-in after logging in once.
- Produce "ready to go" resources that can be used by cover teachers needing to cover a one or two-hour lesson.
- Add links to the website that enable teachers to get a list of resources that are appropriate for teaching literacy, numeracy or ESOL in addition to the current links based on modules.

1.18 The following changes, although important should take a lower priority to those in 1.16 and 1.17:

- Review the website wording to reduce the amount of text. Consider using more bullet points on the Landing page and Choose module page.
- Add more explanation to key documents and links such as the User guide, Teachers' notes, Module overview, Setting the context and Appendices so users know what these contain before clicking on the link.
- Make sure the documents in zip files have clear and meaningful names.
- Make the resources available on CD for teachers working in prisons.
- Enhance the position of the Skilled to go email address for those having problems logging in.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Office of Fair Trading (OFT) launched Skilled to go, a consumer education toolkit, on its website in June 2008. Developed by LLU+ (a learning support consultancy) at London South Bank University, the first toolkit was aimed at teacher delivering adult literacy, numeracy, ESOL, Life skills and ICT courses across the UK. Since then, Skilled to go has been expanded to include versions for staff from local authority Trading Standards Services that deliver talks in schools and the community (January 2010) and for secondary schools teachers in Scotland (February 2010).

2.2 The resources for Scottish secondary school learners cover three thematic modules: Buying and selling, Technology and Utilities. In addition to these modules, resources on Scams and Buying and running a car also exist for use in adult education. Modules are broken down into Units, which each contain a series of activities as downloadable Word documents (which can be adapted). To support teachers when using the resources there are the following administrative documents:

- Teachers' notes: summary of module, summary of activities, links to relevant organisations and suggested approaches to using activities.
- User guide (adult learners): summary of Skilled to go, mapping of learning objectives to curricula in literacy, numeracy, ESOL and Key/Functional Skills.
- Curriculum mapping guide (Scottish Secondary).

2.3 The resources are designed to be used at level one (young adult and adult learners) and S3 or S4 in Scottish Secondary schools, but there are suggestions on how to differentiate for lower or higher level learners.

2.4 The aims of Skilled to go are to:

- develop learners' consumer skills
- develop learners' consumer knowledge

- increase learners' confidence to make consumer choices and decisions
 - develop learners' literacy or numeracy skills in line with the relevant adult literacy or numeracy curriculum.
- 2.5 To support teachers to use Skilled to go the OFT offers free workshops and has a Cascade pack that teachers can use to introduce the toolkits to colleagues.
- 2.6 To access the toolkits online via the OFT website, users must first register, and then log in each time they access the web pages. More than 7000 users have registered since June 2008.
- 2.7 Throughout the development process, research and evaluation was undertaken to ensure the appropriateness of the content, style and tone of toolkits. In early 2010, a short online survey was carried out with registered users to find out how teaching staff were using the resources and reasons why the toolkits had not been used.
- 2.8 The online survey achieved 363 responses from the 5486 registered users in March 2010¹. These registered users were largely from the further education (FE) sector but a small number were from secondary schools.
- Less than half of the participants (43 per cent) had used the Skilled to go resources with learners.
 - The majority of resource users had used them between two and five times (60 per cent) while 14 per cent had used them 11 times or more.

¹ The full survey report is available on the OFT website as publication OFT 1281: www.offt.gov.uk/shared_offt/consumer_education/research/Nov2010/OFT_1281_Skilled_to_go_Stage1.pdf

- The main reason for not using resources among the 57 per cent that had no done so was lack of time to download or review.

2.9 Following this online survey, this qualitative research programme was commissioned to provide depth to the online survey findings.

3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH

3.1 The OFT commissioned ORC International in October 2010 to undertake a qualitative research project with teachers about using Skilled to go resources and the Skilled to go web pages.

3.2 The broad aims of this qualitative project were to:

- understand how teaching and learning practitioners (teachers and tutors) use Skilled to go in practice
- assess experiences of navigating, accessing and downloading Skilled to go resources.

3.3 The objectives of the research within these broad aims were to find out:

- the ways that teachers use Skilled to go. For example do they use isolated activities or a sequence of activities
- how, if at all, teachers use the supporting documents (User guide, Teachers' notes, Curriculum mapping guide)
- how often teachers use Skilled to go resources with learners
- why teachers use the resources in a particular way, including what the triggers to use them and what the barriers are to using them in other ways
- what subjects teachers use the resources to support and at what learner level
- what would influence teachers to use Skilled to go in a different way or more often
- how users would encourage others to use resources to support future marketing of Skilled to go
- how the website 'user experience' can be improved

- what content teachers use/ don't use and why
- the stumbling blocks for new users
- what, if anything, is missing from the web pages.

3.4 In addition to these aims the research explored differences between key audience groups (literacy, numeracy, ESOL and Scottish teachers) and by experience of using Skilled to go (experienced vs. inexperienced users).

4 METHODOLOGY

Overview

- 4.1 The OFT's aim was to gain an in-depth understanding of how the resources are used and how the website is navigated. A qualitative approach was therefore most appropriate. ORC conducted a series of focus groups and in-depth interviews to understand how resources are used and a number of web-surfs with individual teachers to observe how they navigated the website.

Topic guide design

- 4.2 ORC International designed the topic guides, based on the research objectives provided by the OFT. Participants for the in-depth interviews and focus groups were also asked to complete a pre-task questionnaire about their most recent experience of using Skilled to go resources with learners. The report Annexe² includes copies of these research materials (Annexes 5 and 6).

Sample source and recruitment

- 4.3 The sample source was a database of teachers who had registered to access Skilled to go resources on the OFT website. Due to data protection issues the OFT was not able to pass the full contact list to ORC International. Instead ORC International was provided with a listing including job titles and local authority information from which contacts were selected to be invited to take part in the research. The OFT then sent invitation emails to these contacts.
- 4.4 The target participants for the research about using the toolkits were teachers in adult education in England³ (literacy, numeracy, ESOL, ICT

² See OFT1311 How Skilled to go is being used in practice -Annexes

³ The adult education toolkit is also relevant for Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales. Users in Northern Ireland and Wales were not included for logistical reasons (fieldwork was originally

and Life skills) and secondary school teachers in Scotland who had used the toolkits with learners.

- 4.5 The target participants for the accompanied web-surfs were a) teachers who had used the website and used the toolkits with learners and b) teachers who had not used the website/toolkits previously but who taught a relevant subject (literacy/ numeracy/ ESOL/ ICT/ Life skills).
- 4.6 Contact details of those teachers who opted into the research programme were received via a bespoke inbox and ORC researchers contacted all opt-ins by phone to determine their eligibility for the research.
- 4.7 The number of participants opting in was lower than expected, as was the number of opt-ins that had used the resources with learners⁴. The approach - in terms of the mix of focus groups, in-depth interviews and accompanied web-surfs - was therefore revised to ensure that the research objectives could be met.

Fieldwork

- 4.8 The fieldwork was undertaken between 16 November 2010 and 19 January 2011. The breakdown of participants is as follows:

Summary of fieldwork

Project component	Number completed
Accompanied web-surfs with users of the resources	3
Accompanied web-surfs with non-users of the resources	6

going to be face-to-face) or because no suitable participants opted in to the research (in Scotland)

⁴ Though researchers have no definitive explanation for the low number of people opting in, possible reasons could be low usage of resources meaning people did not think they could take part, incorrect email addresses (because these are not validated when people register) and lack of time (teachers are busy professionals)

Focus groups with users of the resources	2
Face to face interviews with users of the resources	5
Tele-depths with users of the resources	4

- 4.9 Due to recruitment difficulties, the data collection method was adapted to make best use of those willing to take part. For example, in-depth interviews were undertaken instead of focus groups when there were recruitment difficulties in certain areas.
- 4.10 Focus groups lasted around two hours each and were held in central locations in London, Manchester and Birmingham. Participants were paid £30 incentive and their travel expenses were reimbursed up to £10.
- 4.11 Individual in-depth interviews were either held at the participants' workplace or took place over the phone. They lasted one hour and participants were paid a £15 incentive.
- 4.12 Accompanied web-surfs were held at the participants' home/ workplace and lasted up to one hour. Participants were paid a £15 incentive.
- 4.13 There is further information on subjects taught and locations in sections five and six.

Analysis

- 4.14 All focus groups, interviews and accompanied web-surfs were tape recorded with participants' permission. These recordings were transcribed. Responses were plotted on an Excel grid to aid analysis and viewed with key measures in mind: users vs. non users, experienced vs. non-experienced teachers and subject area (literacy, numeracy, ESOL and other subjects).

Reading this report

- 4.15 The report outline is as follows:

- Chapter 5 presents the findings relating to use of Skilled to go resources
- Chapter 6 presents feedback regarding the Skilled to go web pages
- Chapter 7 presents participants' suggestions for improving the Skilled to go web pages, how to reorganise the resources to increase usage and how to raise awareness of the Skilled to go web pages and resources
- Chapter 8 presents the conclusions from the research, drawing together the findings from chapters 5-7.
- Chapter 9 presents the recommendations which build on participants suggested improvements in chapter 7 and prioritises these based on anticipated impact and ease of implementation.

4.16 Chapters 5-7 include quotes from respondents to support the points made. Only one quote per point is used within the report but additional quotes included in the report Annexe provide further supporting evidence (Annexe 1).

5 KEY FINDINGS: HOW SKILLED TO GO RESOURCES ARE USED IN PRACTICE

Overview of participants' backgrounds

5.1 In total, 23 Skilled to go users (including three Skilled to go users that took part in a web-surf) gave feedback on how they had used Skilled to go in practice. All participants taught subjects that Skilled to go was designed to support as detailed below:

- Three taught literacy only
- Four taught numeracy only
- Three taught ESOL only
- One taught ICT
- Seven participants taught a combination of the above including:
 - three taught literacy and numeracy
 - two taught literacy, numeracy and Functional skills
 - two taught literacy, numeracy and Entry to employment
- Two taught Social and Vocational Skills (SVS) in Scottish secondary schools
- Three taught in offender learning which included literacy, numeracy and financial learning

Overall strengths

5.2 There was a very positive response to the activities within the toolkits. All participants were extremely complimentary about the resources and compared them favourably with other similar resources aimed at teachers.

'A programme of work that I may or may not use exactly as it's there, but it is hugely beneficial to be able to dip into a programme of work knowing it will move forward in a coherent fashion. It is also extremely beneficial to give me ideas for additional activities and tasks.' (SVS, Scotland)

5.3 Participants liked the following aspects of the resources:

- They were very up to date.
- The resources were flexible and adaptable, that is they can be adapted but are also 'ready-to-use' in lessons if teachers do not have time to adapt them (for example when covering a class).

'I can't think of any improvements. The graphics are brilliant, the activity sheets are very clearly presented, they are adaptable, I can change whatever I wish, I can pinch some of the pictures should I wish. I think it is very good, I really quite like it' (SVS, Scotland)

- The design was eye-catching and appealing

'And it's nice and bright and cheerful, it's clear, so it's attractive to learners, so they are going to want to use it.' (Numeracy, West Midlands)

- There is credibility associated with design by LLU+.
- The materials are particularly good for engaging learners aged 16-19 because other literacy/ numeracy resources tend to be aimed at either older or younger learners. Mobile phones, buying and selling and buying and running a car were all topics that interested this age group.

'It's pertinent to them, almost everybody can relate to it to some extent, there are not many materials that are quite the same in terms of everybody being able to relate to them.' (Participant at Birmingham group)

- The subjects resonate with all types of learners, including those who were disengaged or resistant to other types of learning, because they deal with 'everyday life' situations.

'And also they don't say "Literacy" and "Numeracy" on them, it's just a generic thing, it gets rid of the labels, you can pick and choose the topics that you think might engage them and bring it round to suit their lifestyles.' (Participant at Manchester group)

- It was easy to introduce the resources to groups of learners. Some teachers used them in the form of games as a fun way to ease learners into a subject or used case studies and scenarios as a way to start a discussion about a particular consumer-related topic.

'I might introduce a scenario or something, like "Oh, I bought a pair of straighteners the other day and they broke and I took them back to the shop and they wouldn't give me a refund", or something like that.' (Participant at Manchester group)

- The resources enhance personal and social development as well as literacy and numeracy skills.

'So there's two ways really, it's the personal and social development side of it, and the numeracy side as well, the adding up, have you got enough money to buy it and if you buy it there, will it actually work when you get it home?' (Participant at Manchester group)

- The applicability to the teaching of Functional Skills. It was felt that teachers had to 'think outside the box' in terms of lesson preparation in this area, and Skilled to go was a useful addition to this.

'[Skilled to go] bring in a little bit of functionality as well and we're trying to gear the staff and everyone to go down the Functional Skills route.' (Literacy and numeracy, North East)

- In Scotland, the Skilled to go modules map well to the SVS course.

'[Skilled to go] materials give us firm links between materials and the curriculum for social and vocational skills, so I can use them with confidence knowing they are appropriate within the subject context because they match up to the criteria.' (SVS, Scotland)

Low levels of awareness of Skilled to go

- 5.4 Many participants indicated they had only recently become aware of the site. They also believed their colleagues were not aware of the website.

'I thought it was new, if I'd have known about it I would have been using it a lot longer' (Participant at Birmingham group).

- 5.5 They expressed surprise that the OFT would provide resources for teachers.

'It was just unusual to find so much information on the OFT site, it wasn't where we were expecting to find it.' (Literacy, East Midlands)

- 5.6 Most participants had heard about Skilled to go through word-of-mouth either from a colleague, a professional network (for example, Skills for Life Network) or LLU+. It was also common for participants to have found Skilled to go via a search engine when looking for teaching resources.

'[A colleague] gave me the website address and said "have a look, it's good."' (Numeracy, West Midlands)

'It was a Functional Skills networking session. ... They gave us the web address and they had a few resources there which we used in the session, then we went away and had a look at the website.' (Literacy and Numeracy, North East)

'When you Google search it that's how I came across it, I don't think I had an email about it previously, I kind of fell onto it by accident more than anything.' (Literacy/ Numeracy/ Essential Skills, North East)

Using the resources

- 5.7 The key aim of this research is to understand more about how teachers have used the Skilled to go resources with learners. The findings are split by positive and negative findings for ease of reading.

Positive findings

- 5.8 The majority of participants had used the resources in very limited ways in spite of being very positive about the resources themselves. This limited use was described as a 'pick and mix' approach with activities being taken from one or several modules.

'We've been using it in the main as a resource bank, rather than going through the whole programme, using it as a full programme, but 'What can we do with this particular group to develop these particular literacy or numeracy skills?'' (Participant at Manchester group)

- 5.9 Participants who were in a Teaching and learning management role were less involved in teaching and more involved in lesson planning. They tended to spend more time looking for resources and then training teachers/tutors to use resources with learners.

Negative findings

- 5.10 Literacy teachers using resources on a limited basis tended to use only the formal complaint letter writing activity. For numeracy teachers, the mobile phone tariff was particularly popular.

'The one that seemed to go down the best was the mobile phone one, just because it seemed relevant to a lot of the people that were in the group, ... it provoked a lot of discussion and reflection.' (Numeracy, North East)

5.11 No participants had delivered a whole module, while only a small number had used Skilled to go in a series of lessons.

5.12 The main reason for limited use was a lack of time to spend investigating what else was on the website. Other reasons included:

- limited lesson time (often as little as two hours per week) with other content taking priority over using Skilled to go such as preparing learners for exams

'It's always going to be a problem fitting things in, each group is only there for two hours a week and they have so much to learn' (ESOL, East Midlands)

- linking the activities to the curriculum

'Unless it really fits in with what you want to do, I think you dip in and you select bits that are most useful for your class.' (ESOL/Literacy, London)

- teachers in prisons were restricted by their lack of internet access in the workplace.

Adapting the resources

Positive findings

5.13 Nearly all participants were aware that the resources could be adapted if needed.

5.14 The majority of learner resources were used with Level one or Entry level three, meaning the resources were already suitable for this group.

- 5.15 Skilled to go was also likely to be used for consolidation of skills rather than initial teaching in numeracy lessons.

'I have so far done the initial teaching of say percentages or how to do comparisons, etc, then using the resources from [Skilled to go] as consolidation.' (Numeracy, West Midlands)

Negative findings

- 5.16 Although the flexibility of the resources was identified as a key "selling" point, many participants indicated they had either used the resources as they were or made minimal adaptations to the font size (for visually impaired learners) or amount of text (for lower level learners). A small number of participants had changed the subject of the activity, for example from mobile phones to televisions.

'A lot of our clients have visual problems, so it would be changing the font size or colour or different things like that.' (Participant at Birmingham group)

- 5.17 Skilled to go resources tended to be used alongside other resources, either from other websites or that teachers had created themselves. This suggests that on the occasions when Skilled to go is used, the activity does not last a full lesson.

'We created other resources that we could use [and used them alongside Skilled to go]' (Numeracy, London)

Using audio, video and interactive content

- 5.18 There was low usage of the audio and video content, mainly due to lack of equipment in classrooms. Where this content was used, it was valued for being short and useful for introducing a topic.

'The listening and the video stuff is dead handy too ... Dodgy Dealers, and the Bargain Buy at the Car Boot Sale, that went down terrifically well, it was hilarious.' (SVS, Scotland)

- 5.19 Of the two teachers interviewed in Scotland, neither had used the interactive content because they lacked the necessary equipment in classrooms.

Examples of using Skilled to go

- 5.20 Below are some examples of how the resources have been used in practice. The first example is an extensive user that mapped the resources to the curriculum, the second used just one activity on a limited basis, the third used the resources for financial learning and the fourth used several activities over a series of lessons alongside other resources to recap on skills already learnt.

'I've used it for the overarching theme of the home and using it for purchasing things, like hire purchase, percentages, shopping. I love the price comparison sheets, they're excellent, and I've been able to adapt those and copy the ideas but then make up ones that are specific to what we're doing. The objectives have really been to get the kids to really understand what they have to think about if they are buying a large item or smaller items.' (SVS, Scotland)

'I used a isolated activity, it was about buying and running a car, I did the pictures of cars and the labelling the car ... they had to read a story about a car and people driving cars, a lot of vocabulary relating to that. Then they did brainstorming in two groups ... and they wrote down as many words as they could think of to do with cars and then we did the matching activity from Skilled to go.' (ESOL, East Midlands)

'This was part of official letters and also a session on saving money. The session explored the language used with bills and aimed to familiarise the students with the terms used on bills leading to the ability to interpret bills. There was also some work on interpreting newspaper articles'. (Literacy and numeracy, Participant in Manchester group)

'I used Unit two, Activity three with an Entry level three and Level one numeracy group with a number of ESOL learners. In previous weeks we'd practiced measuring and discussed language issues (height, width, depth, etc). I used the dimension matching cards as an introduction/ recap to a following session with learners working in pairs to match the cards and then discussing results. It worked extremely well for recapping the language involved and getting them to apply the idea of the measurements involved. I then followed on with the extension idea with the floor plan - getting layouts from online estate agents. We ended up with scaled 2D drawings of the settee, coffee table, sideboard and bookcase for them to place in scaled floor plans. Learners had a lot of fun, learnt a lot of skills and as a closing task worked as a full group making cut-out scale drawings of the furniture in the classroom and rearranging it on paper. One of the learners is planning to redo her kitchen in the new year, so she was really pleased to feel she'll be able to have a go for real in her house.' (Numeracy, West Midlands)

Using the User guide and Teachers' notes

5.21 In addition to the activity resources, teachers can download:

- a User guide, which includes background information and curriculum mapping
- Teachers' notes for each module, which include general consumer information and instructions for delivering activities.

In this section the points are grouped into positive and negative points for ease of reading.

Positive

5.22 Those who had used the Teachers' notes were positive about the style and tone and the fact they were not too prescriptive. They were also seen as useful if a teacher wanted to extend an activity.

'I personally find the Teachers' notes very good. It's one of those things of why reinvent the wheel if it's already there.' (Literacy/ Numeracy, North East)

- 5.23 The Curriculum mapping guide was used by both participants in Scotland⁵.

'We started from the Curriculum reference guide, I certainly looked at the Teachers' notes and then used the materials without adaptation ... just select the ones that are appropriate and fit them into the other materials that we use.' (SVS, Scotland)

Negative

- 5.24 There was relatively low awareness of the User guide and extremely low usage. Most participants were aware of the Teachers' notes but had not made use of them.

- 5.25 The main reasons for not using Teachers' notes or User guide was having insufficient time to read them and, among experienced teachers, the prevalent perception that they knew their subject and learners well enough to best judge how to use the resources. They were also not used by teachers that were using Skilled to go as a supporting activity rather than the main focus of the lesson.

'I think if you are a new tutor, then yeah, but I have all those core curriculum levels in my head so I don't even have to refer to them because I kind of know what they are.' (Participant at Manchester group)

- 5.26 There were mixed views on the value of a document that references each activity to the curriculum. More experienced teachers reported that they knew the curriculum well enough to identify how to make sure the

⁵ A separate Curriculum mapping guide is available in the Scottish secondary toolkit. In the adult learner toolkit, the curriculum referencing information is held within the User guide

resources fitted. The guide was considered more useful for less experienced teachers.

'All our learners would do an initial assessment so we had a fairly clear idea of each student's strengths and weaknesses so we could address those that way [using the curriculum references] ... it was a timesaver, I think we could have worked it out ourselves.' (Numeracy, London)

Triggers and barriers to use

Triggers for using resources

5.27 Participants were asked what triggered them to use Skilled to go with learners. There were a variety of responses which mainly related to how participants valued the resources and therefore wanted to use them in lessons.

- Resources seen as well written and easily accessible.
- How the resources related literacy and numeracy to the real world in areas of interest for younger learners (cars, shopping, mobile phones) and older learners (utilities and saving money when managing a home).

'This fitted in because we wanted the skills to take it out into the real world.' (Numeracy, North East)

- ESOL teachers used the resources because they helped learners use appropriate language (written and verbal) in situations they were likely to find themselves in, for example returning faulty goods, writing letters of complaint and buying a car.

'Quite a few people in the class are learning to drive so I really wanted the vocabulary about driving so when they are talking about driving or doing any paperwork they have got that vocabulary ... they are interested in cars so I knew that they would be motivated to do the language work.' (ESOL, East Midlands)

- The resources help build consumer skills which empowers learners.

'A lot of it is focused on "back to work" and how can they afford it, anything relating to money and budgeting ... looking at utilities and how to change them, and if you're having problems with them.' (Literacy/ Numeracy/ Essential Skills, North East)

Barriers to using resources

5.28 Participants identified several barriers that prevented them from using Skilled to go more frequently or with other groups of learners. They also identified barriers that inhibited use by their colleagues.

- They lacked time to review the content of the website.

'I only use the formal letter ... but that doesn't mean there isn't other stuff on there, I just haven't had a chance to go through it.' (Literacy, East Midlands)

- There was a tendency not to review the website and documents systematically, which meant users did not have a clear idea of the content coverage, for example reading the User guide first to obtain the curriculum reference and then using the Teachers' notes alongside the activities/resources. Using an activity without the administrative documents resulted in short activities.
- Participants reported that colleagues may lack confidence in delivering consumer content, and therefore this a barrier for the colleagues (rather than the participant).

'I would imagine there would be people out there that don't have the confidence, because I didn't know any of that, I had to check all the answers because I don't know some of them.' (Participant at Manchester group)

- They lacked inspiration about how to use resources (when not referring to the User guide and Teachers' notes).
- There was resistance to new ways of doing things. It was mentioned that teachers have a preference for using their 'tried and tested' resources.

'Some tutors they have got their own set way of doing things and unfortunately some will not change.' (Participant at Manchester group)

- Resources were not felt to be applicable to lower level learners (Entry level one or two).

'I've only just taken on this advanced class, so I haven't really explored [Skilled to go] ... I didn't think it worked so well for beginners, and historically, before I came to this job, I was working with Entry one and two, so it didn't really fit that'. (ESOL, South East)

- There was limited lesson time with other content taking priority. Furthermore, this is likely to be out of the control of classroom teachers where lessons are planned by curriculum managers.

'With literacy and numeracy learners on vocational courses, if you don't tend to have much time with them, an hour or two a week, you're not going to get through a lot of this, that's why you need to dip in and dip out of it.' (Numeracy, London)

- Limited use of audio and video content was linked to lack of suitable equipment in lessons. Some teachers were hopeful this equipment may become available either within that centre or elsewhere.

'We haven't got the facilities I'm afraid' [for AV content]' (Participant at Birmingham group)

- There was difficulty identifying resources from the file names in zip files.

'The main problem that I have is downloading [whole] units and opening the units. ... The names of the files aren't identifiable almost in any way: I just have to rename them for my own purposes. Even if they had the names that they have as a title on the document, that would be brilliant because it would mean then that they are instantly identifiable ... And [renaming] takes too long, and that has on occasion put me off using the resource, because I really haven't got the time to go through it all' (SVS Scotland)

Barriers specific to ESOL teachers

5.29 ESOL teachers identified other barriers more specific to them.

5.30 First, there were fewer resources relevant to teaching listening and speaking, and second, 'game' activities were not suitable for ESOL learners because some learners, particularly at Level 1, prefer serious activities and some were not used to playing games.

'When you're working with ESOL learners [at a higher level] they don't want to do fun activities, they actually want to be writing something ... they don't struggle with the process of writing, they just struggle with fine tuning their language and formality level'. (ESOL, South East)

Intentions for future use

5.31 Given that participants were so positive about the resources, they all expressed an intention to use the resources again in the future. However, a common caveat was the need to find a suitable class or a point in the curriculum to use them.

- 5.32 Attending a group or taking part in an interview did allow participants to find out more about the content of the website. Most indicated they intended to review the content of the website more thoroughly and use more of the resources. Some of the group participants were inspired by other participants' description of how they had used the resources.

'I'm going to go back and look at Scams because people who don't have English as their first language, some are prone to [scams].' (ESOL, South East)

- 5.33 Participants who had used the resources in a limited way reported they intended to use resources to help structure planning in a more systematic way and would integrate the resources into their schemes of work for the forthcoming year.

'I think that probably next I would look at doing a sequence because I've only just really discovered it, I think this year I'm just going to be cherry picking and I think that next year there is some really good stuff there that I can just sequence.' (Participant at Birmingham group)

- 5.34 There was also some interest in organising a Skilled to go workshop, but participants would need to liaise with colleagues and other centres to get enough staff together and 'sell' the benefits of continuing professional development (CPD) to managers.

'I gave the Cascade stuff to my boss on the back of saying that we need to have more CPD for staff, ... so it's just convincing the new manager that it's out there and we should be using it, and it's free.' (Literacy/ Numeracy/ Essential Skills, North East)

- 5.35 Two participants indicated they were developing Money matters/management course and will include Skilled to go in this planning.

6 KEY FINDINGS: ACCOMPANIED WEB-SURFS

6.1 This chapter presents the feedback from the nine web-surfs that took place (three users and six non-users). It also includes feedback from Skilled to go users (described in Section Five) on using the website.

Overview of participants' backgrounds

6.2 Three of the accompanied web-surfs were conducted with teachers who had used Skilled to go resources with learners. However, all three had only used one resource and only used it once or twice. Six accompanied web-surfs were with teachers of literacy/ numeracy/ ESOL that had registered, but not used the resources or returned to the website since registering.

6.3 The majority of web-surfs (six) took place in London. There was one accompanied web-surf in each of the South East, East Midlands and West Midlands.

6.4 The web-surfs took users through the different pages of the website: the Landing page (including the registration process), Choose toolkit page, Choose Module page, Inside a module page and Inside a unit page.

Overall strengths and weaknesses

Strengths

- 6.5 The website was perceived to have the following strengths:
- It was easy to find via a search engine when 'Skilled to go' was typed in. The link went to the landing page.
 - Having documents in Word and PDF was regarded as useful.
 - It was easy to download and edit documents.

'I find it just fab that they are adaptable, it's an excellent facility because some of the kids I have ... are fairly far below the standard of Literacy and Numeracy that I had last year.' (SVS, Scotland, user)

- It was easy to save documents to the computer.
- The use of words like 'download' helped instruct users what to do next.
- A few participants liked the way they could access individual documents rather than having several parts of an activity within a longer single document. This made it easier to print out the pages needed.

'I like the way it's all individualised too, within the folders, so that if you just want, for instance, the mobile phone/bingo cards, you can just simply print off the mobile phone/bingo cards, you're not having to remember that you only want pages two and three out of 64.'
(Participant at Manchester group)

- The Choose module page was favourably rated because of the use of colour and images.

'Photographic images, you have got colour to differentiate the different topics, which is much more useful, you've got picture reference, you're not necessarily having to read.' (Literacy, London, non-user)

Weaknesses

6.6 There were also a number of negative points raised. The main points were as follows:

- Some participants had difficulties with the registration process because they clicked on the OFT email alerts button rather than the Skilled to go login.
- The amount of text on the website, particularly the landing page, was regarded as off-putting.

- There were too many clicks needed to get to the downloadable resources.

'You keep going and going ... you never go to what you want instantly. One day I lost my patience but I was determined to get to the bottom of what was going on.' (ESOL, London, user)

- There was a lack of guidance on how to navigate the website.
- They experienced difficulty finding the key documents (for example, the User guide and the Teachers' notes). On finding these documents they were then unclear what the documents contained.
- Identifying whether an activity was literacy or numeracy was difficult with users having to open documents to find out what subject they were aimed at.
- The names of files in zip files of whole units/modules were not meaningful which made it difficult to identify specific activities.

Attitudes to registration

- 6.7 The majority of web-surf participants experienced some difficulty logging in (all had previously registered). It was questioned why it was necessary to register for a free resource. They had passwords for several other websites and found it difficult to remember which one they had used. An alternative suggestion was allowing users to stay signed-in after logging in once.

'Is it really necessary for ... for what is essentially a free resource ... to have us sign in?' (Participant at Manchester group)

- 6.8 The main problem logging in was the lack of prominence of the login link on the landing page, which appears below a description of Skilled to go in a separate box with other links. It was felt that the instruction to register/ log in should be further up the page and displayed in a way that made it stand out from the other page content.

'I think it's not as good as it could be because it's not obvious how to log in. If the login was linked to the picture, because that's what my expectation was, you would click on the [link] and it would take you to the Skilled to go website.' (Literacy/ Numeracy/ Essential Skills, North East, user)

6.9 Two participants selected the 'Register for the OFT alerts' by mistake.

6.10 It was noted that other similar websites allowed users to see a preview of resources before they registered. They reported that 'tasters' allowed them to judge whether the resources were suitable and whether to explore further.

Perceptions of the Landing page

Figure 6.1 screen shot of Landing page

The screenshot shows the 'Skilled to go' landing page. At the top is a navigation bar with links for Home, OFT's work, News and updates, Business advice, Consumer advice, and About the OFT. Below this is a breadcrumb trail: Home » About the OFT » Partnership working » Further information » Consumer education » Resources » Skilled to go.

The main content area is titled 'Skilled to go' and features a sub-heading 'Learning everyday consumer skills – a teachers' toolkit'. The text describes the toolkit as developed by the Office of Fair Trading and LLU+ at London South Bank University, designed to help develop transferable consumer skills through everyday situations like using a mobile phone. It also mentions that there are versions for adult education, secondary education, and local authority Trading Standards Services.

Below the main text is a 'News' section with three bullet points:

- Welsh language content now available to download for Skilled to go for TSS - register or log in to Skilled to go and view the new Welsh language content.
- Skilled to go research report - How skilled to go is used in practice - Stage one of a two-part research project, published 30 November 2010. Visit the Research reports page for more information.
- Curriculum mapping guide for Skilled to go for Scottish secondary education - updated guide published 27 October 2010. Find it in the Module overview section in any module.

At the bottom of the main content area is an 'In this section' box with four links:

- Register or log in to Skilled to go
- Book a Skilled to go training workshop
- Order a Cascade Skilled to go resource
- Forthcoming Skilled to go events near you
- Research reports

On the left side, there is a sidebar menu for 'About the OFT' with categories like OVERVIEW, What we do, Accessing OFT information, Annual plan and report, FAQs, Legal powers, OFT structure, Partnership working, Further information (with sub-links for The OFT and CCP, Compliance partnerships, and Consumer education), Supplying the OFT, and Working at the OFT. There is also a 'Feedback' section.

On the right side, there are several utility boxes:

- 'Bookmark this page' and 'Send this page' buttons.
- 'See also' section with 'On this site...' and links to 'Choose a toolkit', 'What people think of Skilled to go', 'Updates to Skilled to go', 'Index of Skilled to go module content', and 'More about Skilled to go'.
- 'Recently viewed pages' section.
- 'Email alerts' section with a 'Register / Login' button and a link for 'Forgotten your password?'.

- 6.11 Many participants were critical of the quantity of text on the landing page. The information about the Skilled to go toolkit was described as too wordy, which made navigating to the next page more difficult.
- 6.12 Some participants mentioned that the OFT needed to be clear and concise about the objectives of the toolkits, with the use of the actual word 'resources' because this is what teachers are looking for.

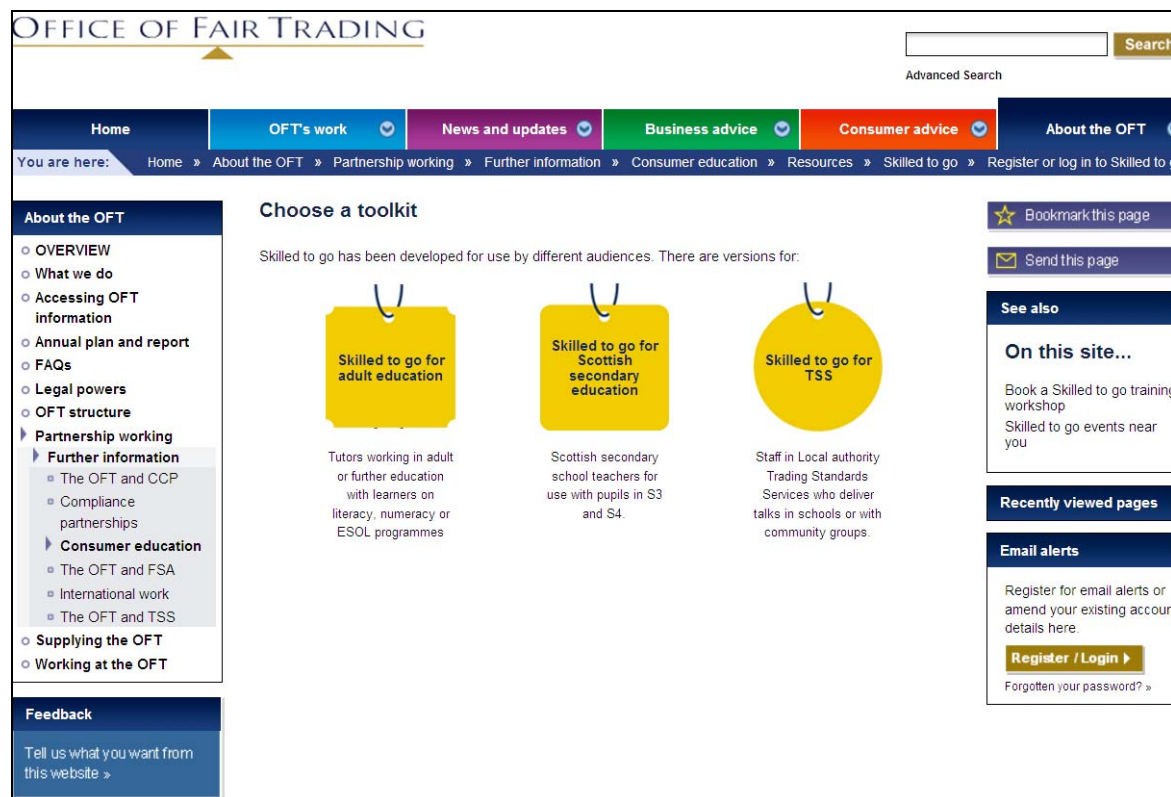
'I think there is too much text, for me just make it simple, if I am looking at Buying and Selling the key things there are consumers in shops, you know, I would just simplify that, if you are planning a lesson and you need it quick, it's quite timely.' ESOL/Literacy, London, user

- 6.13 There was a preference for displaying the text as bullet points and moving 'news' items down the page.
- 6.14 The amount of text and information surrounding the page was also regarded as distracting and some participants went out of the website by mistake. It was suggested that the Skilled to go web pages could be in a different colour scheme to set it apart from the OFT tabs.
- 6.15 There is a link for teachers to click if they would like to book a training workshop. Participants wanted more information about the purpose of the workshops (it was questioned whether these were for teachers or learners).

'I'm assuming [workshops are for] training someone like me to use the resources.' (ESOL, South East, user)

Perceptions of the Choose toolkit page

Figure 6.2 screen shot of Choose toolkit page



6.16 Participants found this page functional and many did not hold any strong views about its layout.

'I like these, I think it is clear, your eye is drawn to the text in the box so you know which one to go for depending on what sort of learners you have ... I found this page the clearest.' (Literacy, East Midlands, user)

6.17 Some suggested improvements were put forward:

- Consider the introduction of a key word search function.
- Use more colour and visuals (photographs and other images).

'I am just comparing it to other stuff that's around and we are on the second page, by now very typically you would have seen some photographic images that relate to the context of learning, some images related to the subject.' (Literacy, London, non-user)

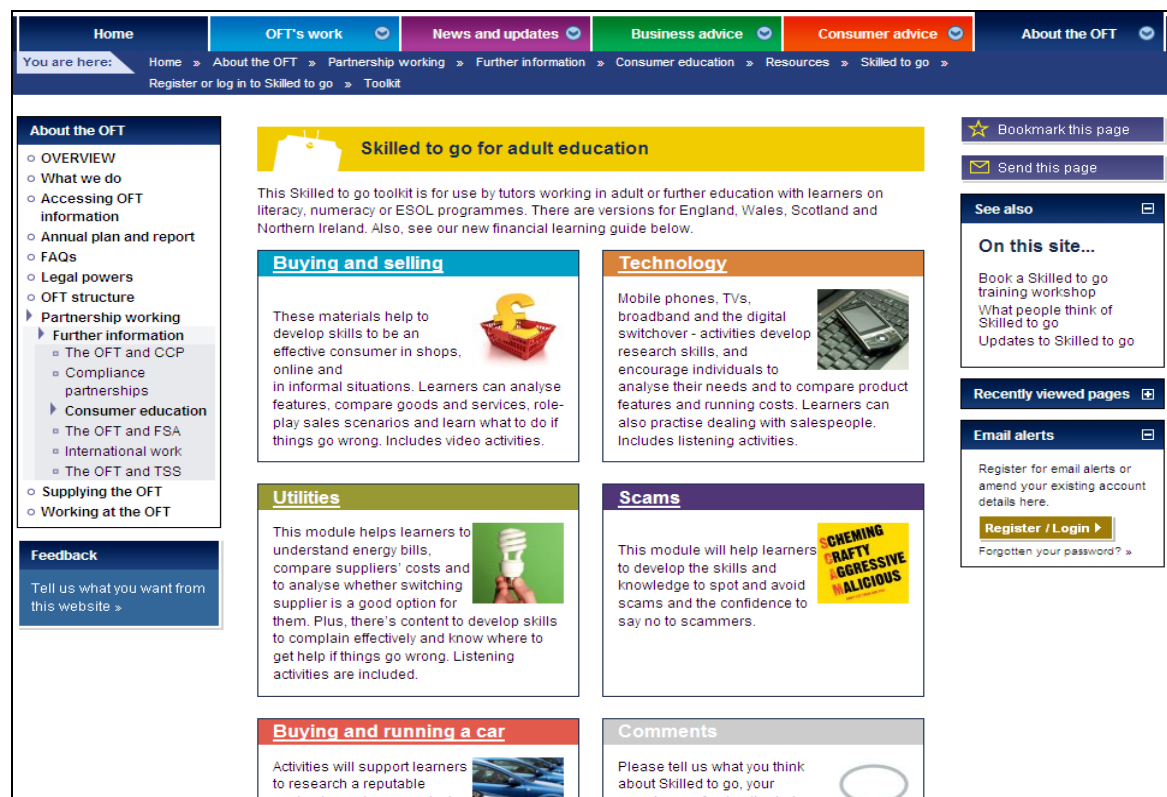
- Consider allowing users to view resources by subject specialism (literacy/ numeracy/ ESOL) on this page or the Choose module page. Teachers generally prefer being able to view all resources relevant to their subject and want to be able link to all literacy, numeracy or ESOL resources on Skilled to go soon after log in. This is a common feature of other websites with resources for these subjects (BBC Skillswise and Skills Workshop)

'It identifies a topic, because I think you don't necessarily think about it, you don't think "Oh I'll teach my learners about mobile phones", I think "Let me teach my learners about reading skills or writing a letter of complaint", and mobile phones might be the context you sit in.'

(Literacy, London, non-user)

Perceptions of the Choose module page

Figure 6.3 screen shot of Choose module page



6.18 This page was regarded positively for its use of colour and images.

'[You have] photographic images and you've got colour to differentiate the different topics, which is much more useful. You've got picture references as well.' (Literacy, London, non-user)

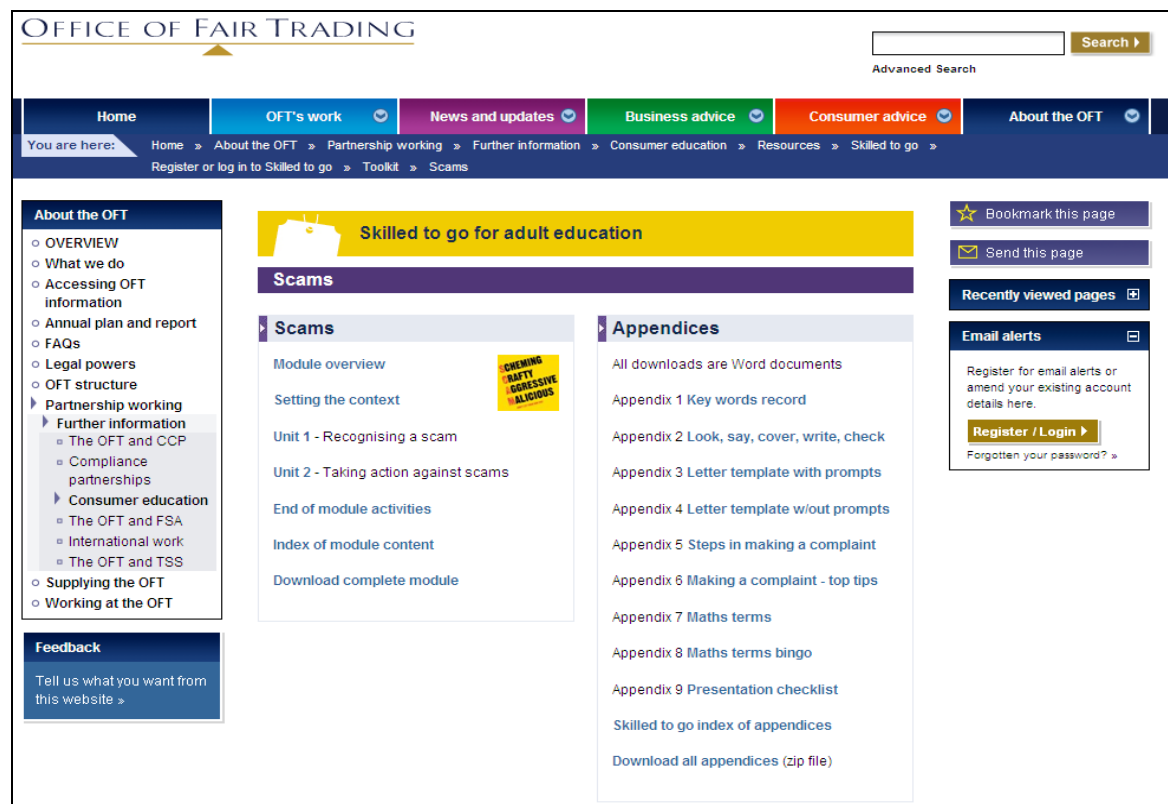
6.19 On a negative note, this page was noted for being too wordy. There was a preference for more bullet points.

'The one thing I used in there [buying and selling], writing formal letters isn't even mentioned in the box ... bullet points make it far easier to read than a whole chunk of text.' (Literacy, East Midlands, user)

6.20 Users also wanted more description of modules to indicate the types of activities either in a succinct description or if by using the mouse to hover over the title.

Perceptions of the Inside a module page

Figure 6.4 screen shot of Inside a module page



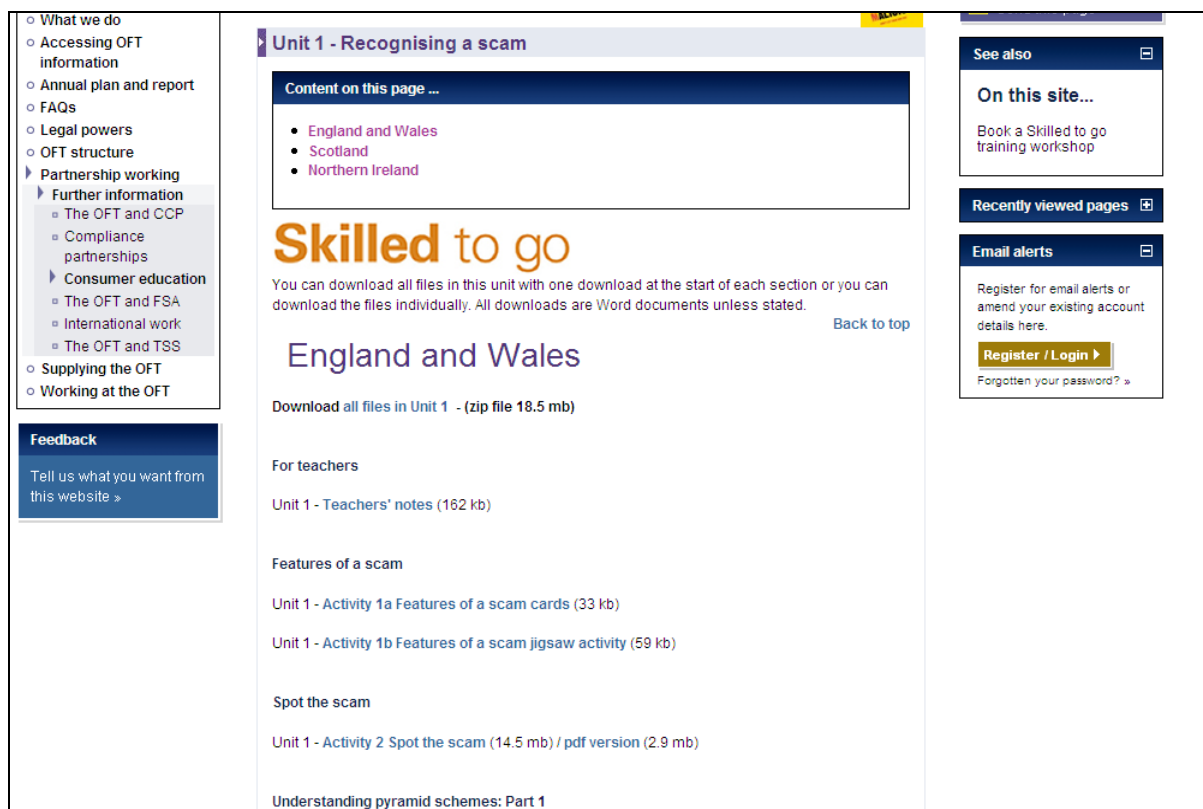
- 6.21 There were mixed views on the Inside a module page. One participant noted 'it gives you a good glance at what you can pick out of this'.
- 6.22 The general consensus was that this page was not particularly intuitive and did not consider the way teachers think when looking for resources. Participants found they had to spend time clicking into things to find appropriate resources.

'What it doesn't give you, as a teacher looking for resources, you have to go into each of the units to see the skills, so for example I might be looking for an informative text to be used in one of my classes and I come into here, and then into here, and I have to go into each unit to be able to see what sort of resources.' (Literacy, London, non-user)

6.23 Participants were critical of the organisation and labelling of appendices. It was reported to be 'quite difficult to know whether these appendices go with which units'. Participants noted that this was something they could work out. However, this makes the whole process more time consuming.

Perceptions of the Inside a unit page

Figure 6.5 screen shot of Inside a unit page



6.24 Participants also had mixed views about the Inside a unit page. Lack of clarity was the main concern. Suggestions to improve clarity included:

'Headings of the topics slightly bigger, and then this repetition of Unit 2, Unit 2, Unit 2 ... I don't think you need that, just what the different activities are.' (Literacy and numeracy, London, user)

6.25 Participants explored further by opening documents because they were unsure what the document would contain from reading the title.

- 6.26 One participant suggested that the Teachers' notes should be further broken down from unit level to the activity level because it would be rare that the whole unit would be used.

'Each activity should have its own Teachers' notes, because you have to go through all the notes in order to get to the bit that you want to do with the class.' (Literacy and numeracy, London, user)

- 6.27 This webpage was regarded as quite bland, with one participant stating 'that's a fairly poor contrast, black and blue'.

- 6.28 Another concern was that questions and answers for units were not in the same file, which also resulted in users clicking into different files to find what they wanted.

'Why are they in a different format? Why can't they be in the same format? Normally if you go with, for example, the Skills Workshop, or Super Teacher Worksheets, they have their answers alongside their questions, so once you are in the questions the next one would be your answers, so you would print both off and you would keep one as a master copy. If the answers are separate it would just be one more thing for teachers to do.' (Literacy, East Midlands, user)

- 6.29 Furthermore, participants were surprised that it was not possible to identify the skill and level of an activity either initially as a way to navigate the site, or within the document itself. This is a common feature for other resource website such as BBC Skillswise, Skills Workshop and Talent.

'I was surprised that there isn't any identification of level yet, or skills content' (Literacy, London, non-user)

Understanding of terminology

- 6.30 The terms identified for reviewing were: Toolkit, Module, Unit, Module overview, Setting the context, User guide, Teachers' notes, Curriculum

reference guide (Scotland only), Appendices and Presentation checklist. Participants were asked what they would expect these items to contain.

6.31 There was also uncertainty about the content of Setting the context, User guide and Presentation checklist.

- Setting the context was thought to be background information and not expected to contain teaching resources (which it did).
- The User guide was not an overly familiar term. Participants guessed at the content and no participants thought it would contain curriculum referencing information.

'[User guide] unless you open it you're not too sure what's in there.'
(Literacy, East Midlands, user)

- The Presentation checklist was guessed to be a list for the teacher to make sure they had everything for a lesson. On opening the document they were surprised to see it was a checklist for evaluating learners' presentations.

6.32 There was better understanding of Teachers' notes, Module and Unit.

- All three are terms encountered before and therefore participants found it easier to work out what would be contained within each section.

'I would interpret module as a synonym for chapter ... I wouldn't know what's in Setting the Context' (ESOL, London, non-user)

7 PARTICIPANTS' SUGGESTIONS FOR IMPROVEMENTS

- 7.1 At the end of the focus groups, interviews and accompanied web-surfs, participants were asked how Skilled to go could be improved to encourage further usage. They were initially asked for unprompted responses and were then presented with a list of possible changes that the OFT had previously identified.
- 7.2 Participants who had used the resources were asked to consider their organisation rather than the content.
- 7.3 The accompanied web-surf participants were asked to consider improvements to the website. They were also asked how awareness of Skilled to go could be raised.
- 7.4 The suggestions for improvement have been grouped into the three “key challenges”: limited use of resources, website design and structure creating barriers and low awareness of Skilled to go

Overcoming the barrier: limited use of Skilled to go resources

The four most common suggestions

- 7.5 Increase **differentiation of resources** so they can be used with lower level learners. It was noted that few literacy/numeracy resources at Entry levels one and two exist for adult learners (they tend to be aimed at children).
- 7.6 Provide “**ready to go**” **sessions** for inexperienced teachers who might be daunted by the extensive content and might not have the confidence or experience to identify what might be appropriate for their learners. This would also be useful for teachers covering lessons.

'[ready-to-go sessions] In our organisation we don't have a college year⁶, so you can go on leave and you have to leave your class all prepped for whoever is going to cover it, so something like that would be brilliant, because not only would it be well organised but it would be an interesting topic as well, that was relevant.' (Participant at Birmingham group)

- 7.7 **Organising content by subject specialism** was discussed and was welcomed by those less familiar with the website (accompanied web-surf participants) because this is how other websites are structured, suggesting this could be a useful addition to bring in users that had registered but not explored the website. More experienced teachers and regular users were less in favour of this idea because they were more able to identify which activities were for which subject (as well as learner level and curriculum reference). Those preparing to teach Functional skills also liked being able to see the links between activities rather than having the content organised by subject or curriculum reference.

'[organising by subject specialism] That would be useful ... one of the things that took a lot of time, most of it had a literacy content, but numeracy content was only specific things.' (Numeracy, London)

- 7.8 The suggestion that the **teachers' administration documents could be reorganised** was seen as helpful (in the context that a relatively high proportion were not aware they existed). The preferred solution was to have the resource, Teachers' notes and User guide for that resource in one package. Participants who already had hard copies of the User guide and Teachers' notes were happy with the current set-up.

'You put all the resources and activities in one package so you do not need to spend so much time looking for things in different places.' (ESOL, London)

⁶ This participant was from a private training provider which did not have half term and summer breaks, therefore staff had had to have classes covered if they took annual leave

7.9 Other spontaneously suggested improvements included:

- Create CD of resources and disseminate them for those unable to access online resources in the workplace. This would be particularly useful for those teaching in prisons.

'If they were available on a CD because we have an intranet server that the prisons let us have, and we can only upload on CD, we can't upload on memory stick because we can't take memory sticks into a prison, it's illegal, but we can have CDs sent in.' (Participant at Birmingham group)

- Establish an online community in which tutors are able to share best practice and ideas for using the resources.
- Put the curriculum reference on the units rather than in a separate document (this is currently the User guide and a large number of participants were unaware of this document).
- Participants also suggested some new topic ideas, but some of these were not consumer related. Relevant suggestions included information on selecting insurance products, working out travel costs (comparing train, bus and taxi), looking at the impact of the VAT rate change on prices and buying insurance products.

7.10 There was also some demand for interactive content among adult education tutors (this already exists in the Scottish secondary toolkit) but there were queries how learners would access this without a login. It was felt that if learners needed to register it would deter usage. Furthermore, lack of IT equipment was a barrier to using interactive content for some participants.

Changes not required

7.11 Less well received suggestions for improving the organisation of Skilled to go resources were providing modules of content of varying lengths and putting small images of learner resources in the Teachers' notes.

- 7.12 Teachers tended to not want content grouped into one/two hour sessions because they preferred shorter exercises that could be used as part of a session along side other resources and activities given that their learners generally have short attention spans.
- 7.13 The use of small images received a muted response since many participants had not used the Teachers' notes, and among those that had, this improvement was not seen as a priority.

Overcoming the barrier: Skilled to go web pages design and structure

7.14 Improvements to website mainly related to **navigation**:

- Make it easier for users to identify resources for literacy, numeracy and ESOL. This could be done by providing a link, using symbols and a key or by allowing users to search by subject specialism.

'You could show people that you've got more Literacy on this side and more numeracy on this side, and maybe a little symbol that says which one it's really useful for would be good.' (ESOL, South East)

- Increase the visibility of the email address to contact if users are experiencing problems.

7.15 There were also a number of suggestions relating to **signing into** the website:

- Consider removing the need to sign-in to the website, or allow users to stay signed-in after signing in once.
- Increase the prominence of the sign-in/register link on the landing page.
- Provide tasters on the landing page that new users can see before registering.

‘What you can have is some pictures of some of the tools that are your appendices and say “do you want to access these? Then register” That’s what happens with other resource sites, they’ll show you snippets of resources, but to actually access it you have to register.’ (Literacy, East Midlands, user)

- 7.16 A further improvement in demand was **renaming the file names in zip files** to be meaningful and related to the document contents. Currently users need to open documents and then rename to something more meaningful.

‘That isn’t helpful ... populate the documents inside the Zip file with meaningful file names, now that would be helpful because at the minute if I was looking for a complaint in that section, I wouldn’t be able to tell from this which it is.’ (Literacy, East Midlands, user)

- 7.17 There was less interest in providing a short online film to demonstrate how to navigate the website. However, a few participants wanted tips on how to navigate the website to get the most out of it, for example where to find a curriculum references or ideas for activities.

Overcoming the barrier: low awareness of Skilled to go

- 7.18 Participants in the users’ group/interviews and the accompanied web-surf were specifically prompted to give suggestions relating to how the resources could become more widely known. The majority of participants had already identified lack of awareness among teachers as an issue for Skilled to go and readily put forward suggestions.

‘I said to other teachers “go to the Office of Fair Trading, they do really good resources” ... I couldn’t remember that it was Skilled to go, and we were sharing resources ... we were Googling and nobody came across it because we didn’t know the words “Skilled to go”. (Literacy, East Midlands)

7.19 Suggestions included:

- Run more workshops and local networking events.
- Promote through, well established networks such as the Skills for Life Improvement Programme and Skills for Life Network, the Times Education Supplement and the Education Show.
- Promote the CPD benefits of taking part in a Skilled to go workshop to senior managers in the head office of training providers.
- Ensure there are links to Skilled to go from Department for Education sponsored sites such as the Skills for Life Support Programme, and relevant awarding organisations.
- Find the most appropriate contact in Further Education colleges and other learning providers of relevant qualifications then email or send printed flyers about Skilled to go.

'They really need to market themselves a little bit more because I don't think that it's very well known that these resources are there, and most people don't have time to trawl around websites looking for things like this ... spread the word through different networking events.'

(Literacy/Numeracy, North East)

8 CONCLUSIONS

- 8.1 This chapter presents the conclusions of the qualitative research into how education professionals use the Skilled to go resources and website in practice, with an aim of understanding how to increase usage.
- 8.2 Although it was not a focus of the research, it was found that the resources themselves were highly regarded. Nearly all participants commented on the attractive design and how they were flexible and adaptable for use with learners. Several participants were teaching disengaged learners and noted how well the resources allowed them to teach literacy and numeracy in an engaging way because they linked to real-life situations. This finding will provide a basis for publicising the resources.
- 8.3 However, although they were positive about the resources, usage of the resources appears low. The initial recruitment difficulties highlighted the issue of low usage because from almost 1,200 people invited to take part in the research, only 50 indicated an interest in doing so, and only 20 of these had used Skilled to go resources with learners.

Three key challenges

- 8.4 The research with users and non-users identified three challenges: low awareness of Skilled to go resources, website design creating barriers and limited use of resources.

Generally low awareness of the Skilled to go resources

- 8.5 There were three main ways that participants became aware of Skilled to go: through a colleague; through a professional network or support programme (for example, Skills for Life Network); or by searching for teaching resources via a search engine.
- 8.6 No participants became aware through marketing from the OFT.
- 8.7 Many believed that their colleagues were not aware of Skilled to go and were surprised that the OFT produced a series of teaching resources.

Website design and structure creating barriers

- 8.8 Participants were positive about having downloadable resources in both PDF and Word, and the ease of downloading resources. Their favourite page was the Choose module page because of the use of colour and boxes.
- 8.9 The initial problem encountered was the registration process. Participants reported that the instruction to register/ log in was not prominent enough on the landing page. Others questioned the need to log in for free resources.
- 8.10 The landing page and Choose module page were regarded as too wordy because the text was not in bullet points. Furthermore, the words 'teaching resources' were not clear enough on the landing page. The Choose module page did not clearly show which activities were in each module (for example, writing a letter of complaint).
- 8.11 There was thought to be too many clicks needed to get to downloadable documents, combined with a lack of clarity about where certain activities were stored, which resulted in users having to click in and out of units and modules.
- 8.12 Non-users and those making limited use of the resources did not find the website intuitively structured. There was a preference for the website to be structured by subject specialism (for example by literacy, numeracy and ESOL).
- 8.13 While a positive aspect of the design was the ability to download complete modules and units, the documents within the zip files were not found to be named in a meaningful way, which presented a barrier to using more of the resources (users had to open each document and rename it before using it).
- 8.14 When browsing the website none of the six non-users found the User guide or Teachers' notes intuitively, suggesting that they could be better positioned or signposted on the website.

Very limited use of resources among users

- 8.15 Usage among participants was mostly limited to one or a few resources, which were used as one short activity within a lesson on an infrequent basis. Teachers using resources in a limited way tended to use the letter of complaint or the mobile phone tariff activity.
- 8.16 A small number of participants were using the resources more extensively over a series of lessons or as a sequence. These teachers tended to be in non-mainstream settings (prisons or Entry to Employment training providers) or in non-mainstream subjects (Social and Vocational Skills in Scotland).
- 8.17 No participants had taught a whole module, either due to lack of lesson time or lack of fit with the curriculum. Participants preferred to use Skilled to go resources on a 'pick and mix' approach alongside teaching resources from other sources.
- 8.18 Users making limited use of the resources did not use the Teachers' notes or User guide, mainly due to lack of awareness and or lack of time to read them. Both documents were regarded as comprehensive, but perhaps too long making them slightly off-putting for busy teachers.
- 8.19 Those using the resources more extensively tended to print out the User guide and/or Teachers' notes and reference these while looking for resources on the website. Many of these users had previously attended a workshop, so were already aware of these supporting documents, while some were given hard copies at the workshop.
- 8.20 Users were aware that they could adapt the resources if needed. However, they either tended to use the resources as they were (because they were already suitable) or make minimal adaptations, for example to make them suitable for a lower level by removing vocabulary.
- 8.21 Given the small number of participants, the research was not able to find any clear differences by region or by subject specialism regarding how the resources or the website were used. ESOL teachers and numeracy

teachers felt that there were more resources suitable for literacy than for their subjects.

9 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 9.1 These recommendations focus on addressing the three key challenges identified: low awareness of the resources, the website design and structure and low usage of resources once accessed. They are based on participants' suggested improvements (see Chapter 7) and researchers' recommendations. This chapter also includes researchers' suggestions for prioritisation for participants' suggestions.
- 9.2 One additional recommendation relating to facilitating future research with Skilled to go registrants is to gain permission to contact them with regard to market research at the point of registration. This would mean that potential participants could be contacted directly by a research agency, which should mean that it would be easier to recruit for research programmes in future.

Raising the awareness of Skilled to go

- 9.3 Consider the range of suggestions from participants shown in 7.18 to 7.19
- 9.4 Raise awareness of Skilled to go among key decision makers and influencers in the education sector.
- Key staff are those making decisions about curriculum content and professional development. These would include senior managers in smaller training providers and curriculum managers in FE colleges and schools. These key staff could be targeted by sending flyers addressed to the appropriate person.
 - Other key influencers would be teaching and learning managers within smaller training providers due to the amount of time they spend looking for resources and planning curriculum content.
- 9.5 Ensure that links to Skilled to go appear on the Department for Education or Department for Business Innovation and Skills sponsored websites, awarding organisations and other well-known websites for literacy,

numeracy and ESOL teachers. These websites include Excellence Gateway, Skills for Life Network, the National Open College Network (NOCN), Talent (training adult literacy, ESOL and numeracy teachers) and the National Association for Teaching English and other Community Languages to Adults (NATECLA).

- 9.6 If budgets allow, consider promotional activity at national exhibitions and conferences, such as The Education Show. This could involve distributing CDs of selected resources to relevant teachers, while encouraging them to sign up for email alerts or register on the website.
- 9.7 Given that some users find the website 'by accident' through a search engine, the OFT should consider investing in search engine optimisation, that is, using key terms so that Skilled to go is more likely to appear at the top of search results. One key term to use is 'Functional skills' given the importance of this in literacy and numeracy teaching in the future.
- 9.8 Use positive quotes from teachers that demonstrate the high quality of the resources and how they have been used to engage learners with literacy and numeracy.

Enhancing the website design and structure

- 9.9 Consider the range of suggestions from participants shown in 7.14 to 7.17.
- 9.10 As priorities, researchers suggest that the OFT makes the following changes:
 - Enhance the position of the register/ login button.
 - Provide tasters that website visitors can see before registering.
 - Allow users to stay signed in once registered and logged in.
 - Enhance the position of the email address for users if they have problems registering or logging in.

9.11 The following recommendations should take a lower priority, but nevertheless by implementing them should increase usage.

- Review website wording. On the landing page reduce the amount of text, or format as bullet points as well as ensuring that 'teaching resources' is quite prominent. On the Choose module page, again format text as bullet points and ensure key resources/activities are listed.
- Add more explanations to key documents and links such as the User guide, Teachers' notes, Module overview, Setting the context and Appendices so that users know what these contain before clicking on the link. This could be as a short amount of text that is fixed or appears when users hover the mouse over a link.
- Consider changing the placement and organisation of the User guide and Teachers' notes in relation to the resources. There is a preference for each activity to include the relevant information from the Teachers' notes and User guide.
- Rename the documents in zip files with more meaningful names to ensure users can understand what the document contains without having to open it.

Broadening the use of the resources

9.12 The suggestions already provided relating to improving publicity and the website would support further usage of resources. However, some participants did not use the website at all and instead accessed the resources on their internal system (which a colleague had downloaded). Therefore, other changes in addition to those relating to the website need to be considered in order to encourage greater use of resources.

9.13 Consider participants' suggestions detailed in 7.5 to 7.10.

9.14 As a priority, the OFT should develop ready-to-go lessons that teachers can use, for example, when covering a class. These lessons should be

fairly straightforward and require minimal explanation to ensure there is not too much burden on the cover teacher.

- 9.15 Provide additional guidance or redesigned resources suitable for use with Entry level one and two. Participants identified a 'gap in the market' for resources at this level that are suitable for adult learners.
- 9.16 Those making least usage of the resources want Skilled to go content organised by subject specialism, while more extensive users prefer the current modular organisation. In keeping with the aims of Skilled to go the modular organisation should be the default, while organising by subject specialism should be an option available on the Choose toolkit or Choose module page.
- 9.17 Allow users to suggest new topics to the OFT via the website (see 7.9 for suggestions).