

# **Skilled to go evaluation**

Researching the effectiveness of the Skilled to go further education toolkit

Prepared for the Office of Fair Trading by LLU + ,  
London South Bank University

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The executive summary below includes a brief overview of the research project report and a sample of findings and recommendations. This work was undertaken by LLU+, London South Bank University for the Office of Fair Trading (OFT). The views expressed in the publication are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the OFT.

## Introduction

1.2 This report outlines the results of a research project which LLU+, London South Bank University undertook on behalf of the OFT from August 2007 to April 2008. Its main aims were firstly, to test the appropriacy and effectiveness of two modules of the OFT 'Skilled to go' toolkit - a free, online consumer education learning resource with embedded literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy (LLN) – and secondly, to suggest adaptations to the toolkit before it went live.

1.3 The aim of 'Skilled to go' is to develop consumer skills, confidence and knowledge alongside literacy and numeracy skills. Developing the toolkit supports the OFT's consumer education strategic aim to 'give consumers the skills and knowledge to function confidently, effectively and responsibly when buying goods and services'.

## Research

1.4 The research consisted of:

- The pilot programme which involved trialling two modules of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit in a range of contexts and settings with 16-18 year old and adult learners.
- Data collection which was undertaken at the beginning and end of the pilot programme to evaluate the effectiveness of the toolkit by benchmarking learners' consumer confidence and knowledge, their perception of their consumer, LLN and IT skills and their ability to

handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills. Data to suggest adaptations was collected through learners' and teachers' feedback on the modules throughout the pilot programme.

- 1.5 The pilot programme took place with learners and teachers in two large further education institutions: City and Islington College, London, England, and Glasgow College of Nautical Studies, Glasgow, Scotland.
- 1.6 Over a six week period, a total of 135 learners in 11 different learning contexts spent over 500 hours trialling materials from the 'Buying and selling' and 'Technology' modules of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit. Of these, 78 learners participated in the profiling and benchmarking data gathering activities. A total of 95 learners and 10 teachers took part in the feedback on the resources and the results were outstanding.

## Research findings

- 1.7 The research showed that **the 'Skilled to go' toolkit is an excellent vehicle for raising consumer skills, knowledge and confidence as well as learners' ability to handle consumer scenarios with related LLN skills.**
- 1.8 On average, over the six week pilot period **learners' consumer knowledge improved by 13 per cent, with increases of 14 per cent in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills and eight per cent for handling consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills.** The consumer scenarios included identifying questions to ask before buying a mobile phone, writing a letter of complaint, estimating the cost of items and calculating a discount.
- 1.9 Learners' perceptions of their consumer skills also showed considerable gains. For example:
  - by the end of the pilot programme 24 per cent more learners said that in future they would always or usually think about what features

of a product or service are important to them before buying, compared to at the start

- the proportion of learners who said they would always compare the advantages and disadvantages of goods and services before buying, rose by around 20 per cent during the pilot programme.

1.10 Learners' confidence also developed. Examples include:

- Confidence to research products and services using methods such as newspapers, the telephone or internet grew: over 50 per cent of learners said that they felt very or quite confident doing this by the end of the pilot programme compared to around 30 per cent of learners at the start.
- Learners' confidence in knowing their rights as a consumer also increased. At the beginning, just over 20 per cent said they were very or quite confident in this and around 30 per cent said they were not confident or unsure. After the pilot programme, 64 per cent said they now felt very or quite confident with only four per cent saying that they were not confident.
- The proportion of learners who felt very or quite confident in being able to find out about their rights regarding consumer issues doubled over the course of the pilot programme.

1.11 The 'Skilled to go' toolkit proved to be very effective with learners at Level 1/Intermediate 1 who were the target group. It was also successful above Level 1/Intermediate 1 and at Entry level 3/Access 3 and below, when used with appropriate support. The toolkit was therefore, adaptable and flexible enough to use with learners outside the target group.

1.12 'Skilled to go' was found to have particular appeal to:

- groups of learners who are traditionally harder to reach in an educational setting, such as young males
- learners in a range of learning contexts including discrete literacy and numeracy courses and vocational courses, and
- learners who generally require longer periods to demonstrate progress in their skills such as language (ESOL) learners and learners with learning difficulties such as Asperger's syndrome. There was evidence that these learners were motivated by the link with citizenship skills and by an enhanced feeling of inclusion in society.

## Teachers' views

1.13 Teachers rated the toolkit highly both as an authorable resource and for addressing the needs of their learners, as the quotes below demonstrate:

'There's a definite need for these materials.'

'I think they're fantastic, personally.'

'The less confident have become more confident.'

'This is not just for learners, I've learned a lot too.'

1.14 One teacher managed to get a £100 refund during the pilot programme due to her improved consumer knowledge and confidence.

1.15 All but one teacher said they would be likely to use the 'Skilled to go' toolkit in their future teaching.

1.16 Most of the teachers reported that they found it very easy to find what they needed on the OFT website.

1.17 All teachers said their learners enjoyed using the materials from the toolkit. They highlighted how much their learners really enjoyed the group work and interactive activities: one said,

'my learners absolutely loved them.'

## Behaviour change

1.18 Interviews with learners during and after the trialling of the modules revealed changes in behaviour relating to application of consumer skills, knowledge and confidence.

- One learner said in the final learner interviews that he 'checked price comparison sites and saved £125 on a laptop'.
- One learner had recently travelled abroad and when she told the group the cost of her air fare, they told her it was too expensive. Another learner from the class then showed her how to compare prices and get a cheaper ticket on the internet.

1.19 Learners on ESOL courses were consistently highly positive about their increased skills and confidence:

- They also provided numerous examples of successful application of what they learnt for themselves, their friends and family. This clearly indicates how much they had benefited from even a brief exposure to the modules.
- One learner said they managed to replace a coat.
- Another commented, 'Now I know how important receipts are.'
- Another said they told a friend what they had learned about consumer issues and the friend then took back a faulty heater and got it replaced.
- The class teacher said, 'That's what's nice about it – learners are going home and telling people about it.'

## Recommendations

1.20 The recommendations include suggestions for:

- rolling out and extending the 'Skilled to go' toolkit
- developing an online teacher training module on contextualised LLN for teachers
- a section on the website to collect feedback from teachers on learners' application of consumer skills in their daily lives, and
- using the methodology developed in this research project if further modules are to be evaluated.

## 2 BACKGROUND TO THE RESEARCH PROJECT

2.1 This report outlines the results of the research project which was undertaken to test the appropriacy and effectiveness of two modules of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit - a free, online consumer education learning resource with embedded literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy (LLN).

2.2 LLU+, London South Bank University developed the 'Skilled to go' toolkit for the Office of Fair Trading (OFT) to support the OFT's consumer education strategy, which aims to,  
'Give consumers the skills and knowledge to function confidently, effectively and responsibly when buying goods and services'.

2.3 The OFT's consumer education work supports people to become more confident, assertive consumers who can help to promote competitive markets by demanding high standards from business.

2.4 The 'Skilled to go' toolkit was launched in June 2008 on the OFT website<sup>1</sup>. It currently comprises three modules. It aims to develop consumer skills, knowledge and confidence, together with related literacy, language and numeracy skills. Examples of the type of consumer skills the toolkit aims to develop include the ability to:

- research relevant information to help make consumer choices
- consider personal needs and preferences before making a consumer decision
- analyse the features of consumer goods and services to identify their pros and cons
- compare consumer goods or services to make the best choice for individual circumstances

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<sup>1</sup> See [www.offt.gov.uk/skilledtogo](http://www.offt.gov.uk/skilledtogo).

- communicate effectively in a wide range of consumer situations
- identify sources of help to deal with consumer problems, and
- handle consumer problems effectively.

2.5 The importance of the relationship between consumer education and literacy and numeracy skills is recognised by the OFT in its consumer education strategy<sup>2</sup>, which explains that 'the confidence and skills that consumer education aims to develop depend on sound levels of literacy and numeracy'. The OFT also states that its 'strategy for consumer education will benefit from, and complement' the Government's Skills for Life strategy which aims in the long term to eliminate poor literacy and numeracy'.

2.6 The serious consequences of low levels of literacy and numeracy were described by the then DfES in their 2003 'Skills for Life' impact survey<sup>3</sup> as leading 'to social exclusion, denying people the opportunity to get the most out of what is available to the rest of society'. This is certainly true in relation to people's opportunities as consumers. The OFT's consumer education strategy outlines that improved basic skills would allow consumers 'to make better choices'. Underpinning the ability to make better consumer choices are a range of consumer skills which people with improved basic skills would also be able to access. Low levels of literacy and numeracy can make it difficult for people to, for example, get the best deals, avoid being pressurised into making buying decisions, lower the risk of making unsuitable purchases by being able to ask the right questions or read a contract before buying, make product or service comparisons, complain effectively or know where to get help if things go wrong.

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<sup>2</sup> OFT/753 *Consumer education: a strategy and framework, November 2004*  
[www.oft.gov.uk/shared\\_oft/consumer\\_education/oft753.pdf](http://www.oft.gov.uk/shared_oft/consumer_education/oft753.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> *The Skills for Life Survey: A national needs and impact survey of literacy, numeracy and ICT skills, DFES Research Report 490, 2003*  
[www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR490.pdf](http://www.dcsf.gov.uk/research/data/uploadfiles/RR490.pdf).

- 2.7 The 'Skilled to go' toolkit aims to develop learners' consumer skills and knowledge and their confidence in consumer situations, alongside developing their LLN skills. By strengthening learners' skills in these complementary areas, the OFT aims to support people to become more effective consumers who can transfer their learning between different consumer situations and thereby gain access to a wider range of consumer opportunities. Armed with skills, knowledge and confidence, people can make the most appropriate consumer choices for their circumstances and in some instances the most appropriate choice may be not to make a purchase at all.
- 2.8 The 'Skilled to go' toolkit has significant potential for further development. Further modules will be added and there are plans to repackage the existing content for different audiences or different course offerings. There is an ongoing programme to review and update the modules to keep the content current.
- 2.9 The OFT commissioned LLU+, London South Bank University, not only to develop the first three modules of the toolkit, but also to undertake research into the effectiveness of two of the modules with learners and teachers in two large further education institutions in the United Kingdom.
- 2.10 LLU+ is a teacher training and consultancy centre based at London South Bank University. Its aim is 'to help organisations improve the quality of education and training so that individuals with a wide range of language and learning needs can achieve success'. It does this through pioneering and disseminating innovative approaches and good practice in teaching and learning. These approaches informed not only the development of the toolkit but also the research methodology.

### **3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH**

3.1 The overall aims of the research were to:

- measure the effectiveness of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit in developing consumer skills, knowledge and confidence and related LLN skills, and
- evaluate how suitable the 'Buying and selling' and 'Technology' modules of the toolkit were for use in a teaching and learning setting.

3.2 The main objectives were to:

- produce and administer high quality benchmarking and evaluation tools
- administer and quality assure a pilot programme to trial two modules of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit with learners in a range of learning contexts
- measure the effectiveness of these modules in developing consumer skills, confidence, knowledge and ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills, and
- make recommendations for adaptations to the modules based on analysis of the qualitative and quantitative data.

3.3 The five key research questions were:

- What level of consumer confidence, knowledge, skills, and ability to apply these do learners have at the start and end of the pilot programme?
- What are the LLN skills of learners at a range of levels and ages at the start and end of the pilot programme?

- What progress have learners made in consumer skills, confidence, knowledge and in ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills through engaging with the modules?
- To what extent do the trialled modules of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit appropriately address all target groups, contexts and settings?
- To what extent are the trialled modules of the toolkit accessible to teachers and learners in different contexts and settings?

## **4 METHODOLOGY**

### **The research**

4.1 The research consisted of:

- The pilot programme which involved trialling two modules of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit in a range of contexts and settings over a six week period to evaluate the effectiveness of the resources and document suggested adaptations to the toolkit before it went live.
- The data collection which was undertaken to evaluate the effectiveness of the toolkit by benchmarking learners' consumer confidence and knowledge, their perception of their consumer, IT and LLN skills and their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills at the beginning and end of the pilot programme. Data to suggest adaptations was collected through learners' and teachers' feedback on the modules throughout the pilot programme.

### **The pilot programme**

4.2 The pilot programme took place with learners and teachers in two large further education institutions, City and Islington College, London, England, and Glasgow College of Nautical Studies, Glasgow, Scotland.

4.3 A total of 135 learners in 11 different learning contexts spent over 500 hours trialling materials from the 'Buying and selling' and 'Technology' modules. Of these, 78 learners participated in the profiling and benchmarking. A total of 95 learners and 10 teachers took part in the feedback on the resources themselves.

4.4 For details of the selection criteria for the pilot programme sites and a breakdown of participation see Annexe A.

4.5 For background information on how the pilot programme operated in practice see Annexe B. This includes:

- the range of materials teachers had access to during the pilot programme
- how the teachers used the 'Skilled to go' toolkit
- the support offered to teachers by LLU + project team, and
- the process for collecting learner and teacher feedback on the materials and activities.

#### **Data collection**

4.6 Data was gathered through:

- Profiling learners at the start of the pilot programme. Questionnaires were designed to gather personal information including socio-economic background, information about education and experience of learning.
- For the content of the profiling questionnaire see Annexe C.
- Benchmarking. This involved establishing learners' consumer skills, knowledge, confidence and ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills at the start and end of the pilot programme.
- Criteria for the benchmarking tools included:
  - content and context to be based on the content and context of the modules to be trialled
  - appropriacy for use in FE colleges, community and voluntary provision, prisons, etc

- relevancy to learners from different age groups and learning contexts
- provision of interesting and real-life, authentic activities
- learner-centred activities
- the need to ensure the tools developed provided robust evidence and were also usable within the limited time teachers and learners could give to the pilot programme - which was additional to their allotted timetables and syllabi
- accommodating national variations in England and Scotland.

For more details of the benchmarking tools see Annexe D.

- **Evaluating** the effectiveness of the materials. The evaluation tools were designed to measure learners' and teachers' reactions to the trialled modules:
  - immediately after completion of an activity
  - at the mid point of the pilot programme
  - at the end point of the pilot programme.

The evaluation tools included activity tasks, paper-based questionnaires, and face-to-face group interviews with both learners and teachers.

For more details of the evaluation tools see Annexe E.

## Factors affecting the research

### The research brief

4.7 Factors from the brief which influenced the design of the tools and process were the need:

- for the benchmarking and evaluation tools to be used with learners in their usual learning environment without requiring any specialist equipment or technology
- to ensure standardisation of the process
- for straightforward systems and procedures for data collection
- for a robust measure of how effective the 'Skilled to go' toolkit is in developing learners' consumer skills, knowledge and confidence and related LLN
- to complete the pilot programmes over a six week period, and
- to measure learners' ability to handle simulated consumer scenarios, as it was not possible to measure consumer skills in real life situations.

### LLU + philosophy

4.8 The development of the benchmarking, evaluation tools and the pilot programme was underpinned by the LLU + philosophy of learner-empowerment.

4.9 Therefore, the methodology needed to be learner-centred. To fulfil this aim, the benchmarking and evaluation tools were designed to:

- accommodate different learners' learning styles and preferences

- provide meaningful and relevant contexts in which learners' skills, interests, enthusiasm and confidence could be benchmarked and measured in a non-threatening and learner-friendly environment
- enable learners to recognise their own consumer knowledge, skills and confidence and their LLN skills, and
- encourage candid feedback from learners and teachers about the trialled modules and their experience of taking part in the pilot programme.

### **The Kirkpatrick model of evaluation**

4.10 The Kirkpatrick model of evaluation was followed because it is recognised as an effective method to ensure a full and significant evaluation of learning. It has four stages: reaction, learning, behaviour and results. The approaches and principles of this model were adopted as far as was possible within the parameters of the project. For example, measurement of behaviour change according to the Kirkpatrick model is best conducted three to six months after learning as this allows time for individuals to implement new learning and for retention of new knowledge and skills to be checked. However, this timescale was obviously not possible within the six week period of the pilot programme therefore, it was immediate impact that was measured.

4.11 For more information on the Kirkpatrick model of evaluation and how it was used see Annexe F.

### **Equality and diversity**

4.12 Equality and diversity were addressed:

- in the format, lay-out, content and methodology of the benchmarking and evaluation tools
- in ensuring the tools were free of bias and presented positive role models rather than stereotypes

- through including differentiation to identify the varying skills, strengths and distance travelled of participating learners
- by ensuring the tools, the process of using them and guidance were user-friendly, accessible and clear to give a positive experience for the learner, and
- by ensuring standardisation of measurement.

### **Sustainability**

4.13 The benchmarking and evaluation tools were designed as prototypes and so can be adapted for future consumer education projects. This brings time, cost and environmental savings.

### **Application of the benchmarking and evaluation tools**

4.14 The benchmarking tools were quality assured prior to their use in the pilot programme and amended in the light of this process.

4.15 LLU+ project team briefed the teachers and managers from the participating colleges on the project prior to the pilot programme and trained the teachers on administering the tools and using the modules.

4.16 Good practice principles and procedures guided the delivery of the pre and post benchmarking and a mark scheme was drawn up and administered by LLU+ project team.

4.17 For further details see Annexe G.

4.18 A series of paper-based consumer scenario tasks were designed to measure the distance travelled by learners during the pilot programme. Completion of these tasks required a combination of consumer skills and knowledge and related LLN skills. The scenarios included:

- identifying questions to ask before buying a mobile phone

- writing a dialogue to negotiate a refund on a consumer item
- writing a letter of complaint
- estimating the cost of a range of items and calculating a discount and the VAT on these.

4.19 These tools were designed to simulate authentic situations as it was not possible to measure changes in consumer skills in situ. Measuring consumer skills changes in situ would have necessitated making a video or audio recording of learners, for example, carrying out consumer-related tasks in everyday life or engaged in classroom-based research and analysis activities, in order to ensure standardised marking. The scenarios chosen reflect the fact that in real life people's ability to read, write, speak, listen and manage numbers effectively can impact on their ability to handle consumer situations effectively. The tools used provided a robust method of measuring whether learners' ability to deal effectively with consumer situations had changed after participating in the pilot programme.

4.20 These scenarios are referred to in the research findings as 'ability to handle consumer scenarios' with either 'related literacy skills' or 'related numeracy skills' depending on the requirements of the scenario. When findings are presented in the form of a chart, the name of the data is shortened, in order to save space, to 'handling consumer scenarios with related literacy skills' or 'handling consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills'.

4.21 Data was gathered at each stage of the evaluation.

- The first stage (reaction)
  - captured teachers' and the learners' immediate responses to the materials (also referred to by Kirkpatrick as the 'happiness rating') using activity feedback sheets for teachers and learners

- responses from specialist focus groups, networks and representative sample groups of learners were also recorded.
- The second stage (learning)
  - captured any change in learners' consumer skills, knowledge and confidence and in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills.
- The third stage (behaviour)
  - measured behaviour change, that is, as a result of taking part in the pilot programme, what, if any, learning had been retained and used outside of the classroom. This was measured using observation as well as semi-structured interviews half-way through and at the end of the pilot programme.
- The fourth stage (results)
  - measured the overall impact of the pilot programme on teachers and learners through group discussions and a final evaluation questionnaire.

## 5 RESEARCH FINDINGS

### Introduction

5.1 The findings relate to the two main strands of research conducted in the pilot programme. These were to:

- measure the effectiveness of the modules in developing learners' consumer skills, knowledge, confidence and ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills
- gather responses and recommendations from teachers and learners in order to adapt the 'Skilled to go' toolkit prior to its launch in June 2008.

5.2 This chapter focuses firstly on the effectiveness of the toolkit, before outlining the feedback from teachers and learners about 'Skilled to go' and finally presents examples of adaptations that were made prior to launch as a result of the feedback.

### Effectiveness of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit

5.3 The findings about the effectiveness of the toolkit are organised into two parts. The overall findings are outlined from **5.4** to **5.31**. While the findings are broken down into various factors which may have an effect on learning from **5.32** to **5.53**.

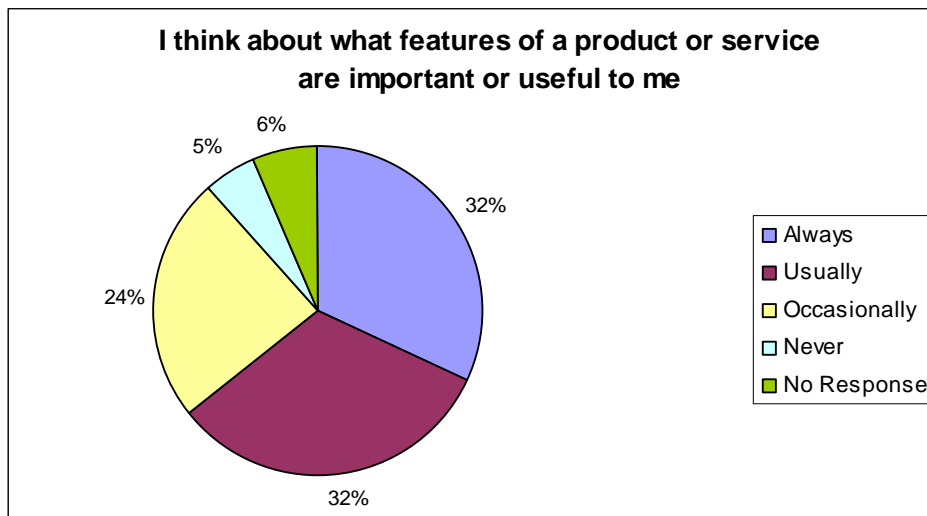
### Overall findings

5.4 The summary of findings is based on an analysis of data which has been gathered from teachers and learners in the pilot programme sites. These findings focus on the key aspects of the OFT aims and objectives for this research project as outlined in Chapter three of this report.

## Learners' perceptions of their consumer skills

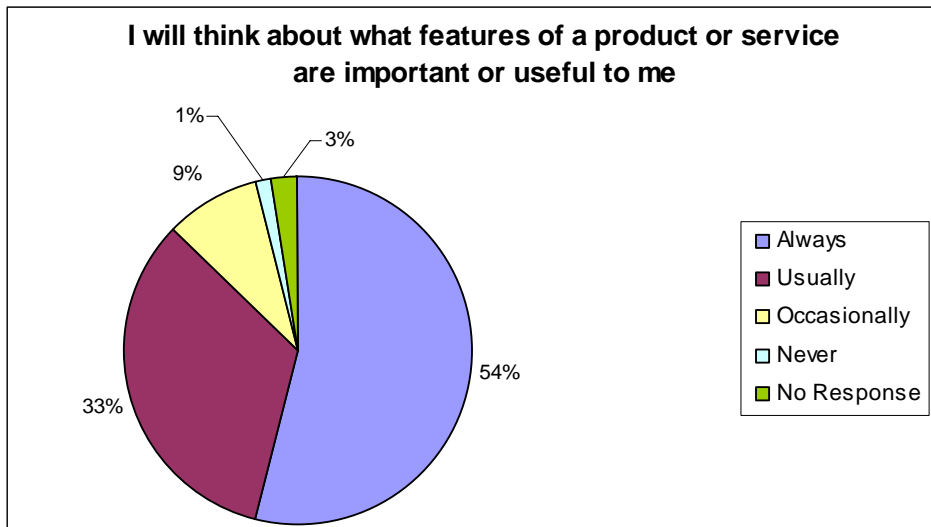
- 5.5 At the start of the pilot programme, learners were asked what their current practices were regarding buying products and services. At the end, they were asked about their intentions regarding those same practices.
- 5.6 An example of responses from the cohort of learners is shown below. For more charts showing responses to a selection of questions see Annexe I.

**Chart 1 Pre pilot programme**



Total number of learners: 78

**Chart 2 Post pilot programme**



Total number of learners: 78

- 5.7 The pie charts above show a substantial increase in the percentage of learners who intend to consider the important features of products or services before buying them. After the pilot programme only 1.3 per cent, which represents one person, said they would still not consider these features before buying.
- 5.8 Learners were also asked at the start and end of the pilot programme about whether they compared the advantages and disadvantages of different goods and services before making a choice. At the end of the pilot programme, almost 50 per cent of the respondents to this question said that they would always do this in future compared with less than 30 per cent who did this at the start of the pilot programme. Similarly, at the end of the pilot programme, over 33 per cent of respondents said that from now on they would always check for terms and conditions, small print and so on compared with 20 per cent who said they always did this before.
- 5.9 At the end of the pilot programme, data was gathered from learners about the ways in which they find the best product for their needs. In every case, there was an increase in the percentage of learners who

would always or usually do research first to help them with their decision compared to responses at the start. Responses to some questions showed a particularly large improvement, such as the questions about going to several shops or different companies and doing research on the internet to find the best product. At the start of the pilot programme, only just over 30 per cent of the learners said that they always or usually researched the best product for their needs on the internet. At the end, almost 70 per cent of learners said that in future they would always or usually do this.

- 5.10 It is therefore clear that sizeable proportions of learners intended to change their behaviour as a result of taking part in the pilot programme.

### **Behaviour change**

- 5.11 Interviews with learners during and after the trialling of the modules revealed some changes in behaviour relating to application of consumer skills, knowledge and confidence. **One learner said in the final learner interviews that during the pilot programme he 'checked price comparison sites and saved £125 on a laptop'.**
- 5.12 Yet another learner recently travelled abroad and when she told the group the cost of her air fare, they told her it was too expensive. One learner from the class then showed her how to compare prices and get a cheaper ticket on the internet.
- 5.13 One learner working at about Entry 2/Access 2 said that it was very challenging but he felt he had learnt something from it. He said, 'I am a lot calmer now when it comes to dealing with people selling.' **Another learner from this group said that they returned a faulty item to their local pound shop because they had the confidence to do this now.** The class teacher agreed, saying 'confidence has improved on the consumer education side – they feel more included in society.'

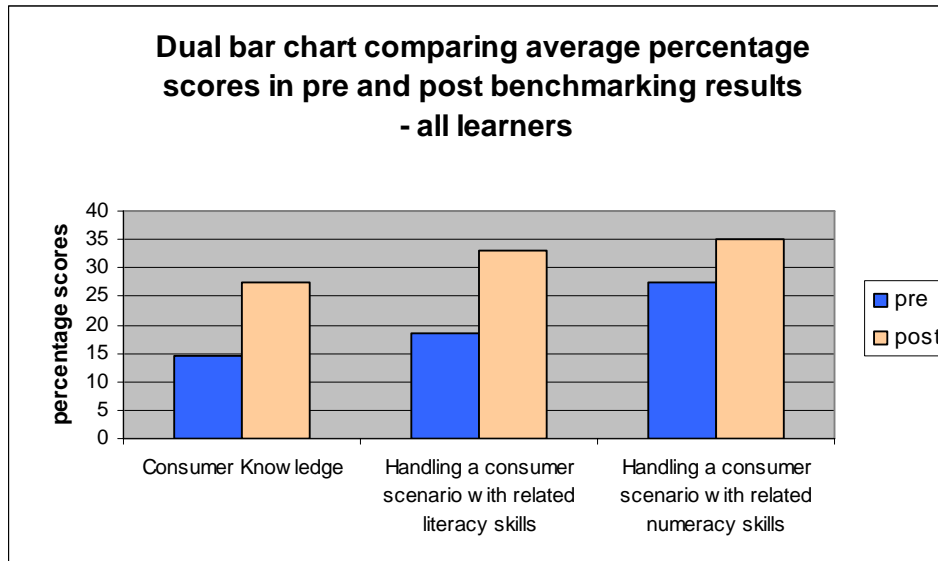
- 5.14 One group of 16-18 year old learners said 'now we know more words about technology we can explain problems.' Another learner said, 'If they say no in a shop I can talk to the CAB.'
- 5.15 Several learners from one of the literacy with numeracy groups appeared to be very enthusiastic about what they had learned. One learner from this group said that she now 'checks receipts for correct prices,' whereas 'before I didn't care.' Another learner said that they 'check prices at different supermarkets to get the best value'.
- 5.16 In whole class interviews ESOL learners were consistently highly positive about their participation in the pilot programme and their increased skills and confidence. For example, one learner said that the toolkit was 'very useful for ESOL learners' and 'very helpful for English'. **They also provided numerous examples of real life application of this for themselves, their friends and family and so clearly benefited significantly from even a fairly brief exposure to the materials.** For example, one learner said they managed to replace a coat. Another learner commented, 'Now I know how important receipts are.' One more said they told a friend what they had learned about consumer issues and the friend then took back a faulty heater and got it replaced. The class teacher said, '**That's what's nice about it – learners are going home and telling people about it.**'
- 5.17 One Entry 3/Access 3 learner studying in a numeracy class found learning about consumer issues really helpful as she was able to 'phone BT about a very high bill which BT agreed to check'. She also found out about some free calls that she could have after 6pm. Another Entry 3/Access 3 numeracy learner said he has 'found cheaper prices' since being involved with the pilot programme. The group generally said that being involved 'gave confidence' and they unanimously agreed that it was relevant to them.
- 5.18 Behaviour change wasn't restricted to learners. Teachers also reported improvements. For example, one teacher managed to get a £100 refund due to her improved consumer knowledge and confidence.

## Benchmarking results

### Consumer knowledge and the ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills

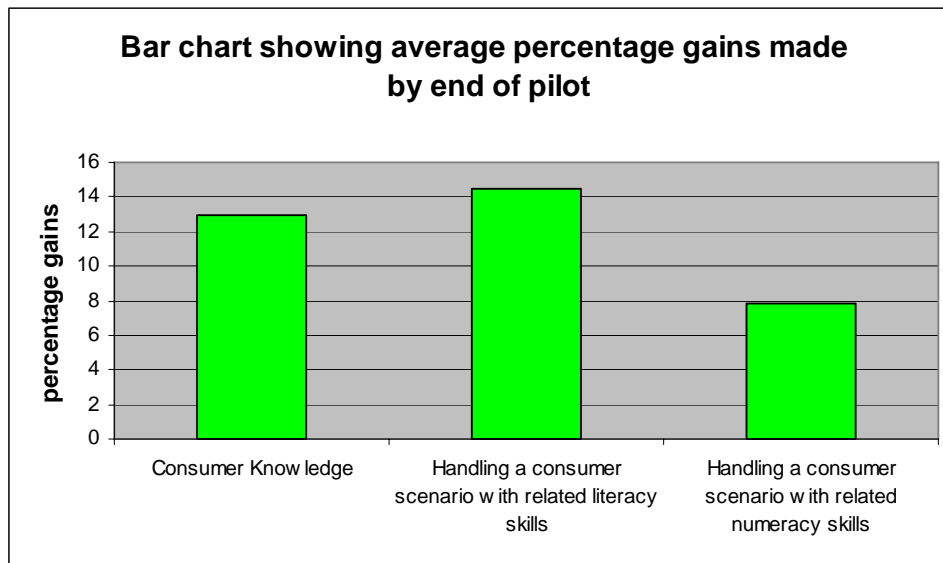
5.19 Taking learners who completed both the pre and post benchmarking as a whole, it can be seen that there was an improvement in the average percentage scores in consumer knowledge, and in learners' ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills. **The greatest gains were made in learners' ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills: just over a 14 per cent improvement** in the average scores from the pre and post assessments. **There was an improvement of 13 per cent in learners' scores for consumer knowledge and around an eight per cent improvement for their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills.**

Chart 3



Total number of learners: 68

**Chart 4**



Total number of learners: 68

### **Confidence in consumer skills and knowledge**

5.20 Learners were asked questions before and after the pilot programme about their confidence in their knowledge of consumer rights and their consumer skills. Below are learners' responses to some of the questions that were asked.

5.21 For more charts showing responses to the questions see Annexe I.

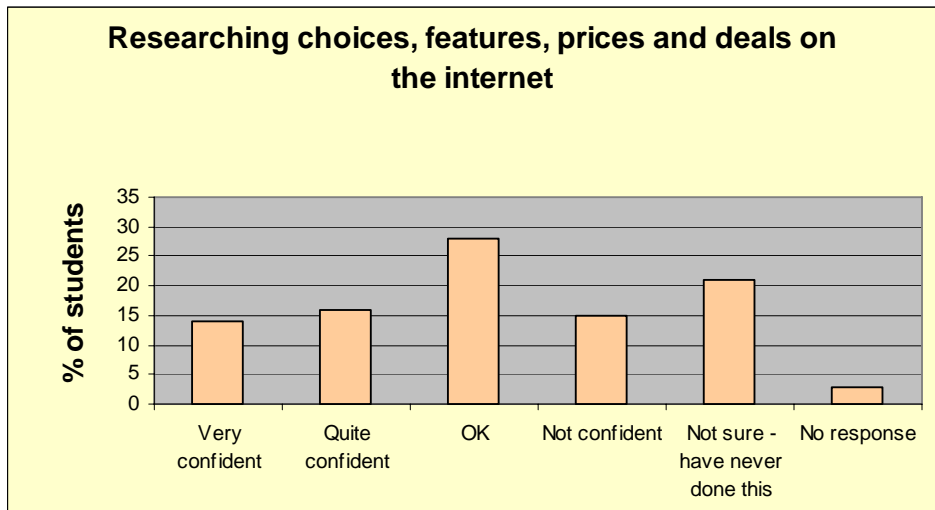
### **Researching choices, features, prices and deals/buying something on the internet and getting a good deal**

5.22 There were also significant improvements in confidence relating to researching choices and prices through different types of media such as newspapers, telephone and the internet. Before the pilot programme around 30 per cent of learners said that they already felt confident in doing this. This had improved by the end of the pilot programme, with over 50 per cent of learners saying they now felt very or quite confident in doing this. Only just over five per cent of learners said that they were

not confident in researching choices and prices through paper-based media and on the telephone. The figure was slightly higher for the internet - this may be because some classes did not have internet access.

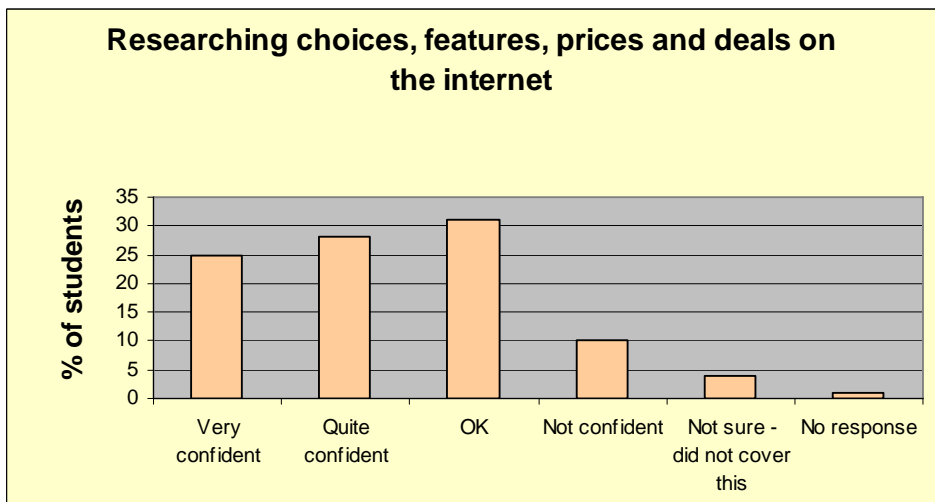
- 5.23 This may also help to explain why around 35 per cent of learners were still not confident in making purchases on the internet by the end of the pilot programme. However, there had been improvements here also as at the beginning around half of the learners were not confident about this activity. Additionally, approximately 40 per cent of learners felt very or quite confident in this skill as opposed to only 25 per cent who felt this way at the start of the pilot programme.
- 5.24 With regard to getting a good deal, almost a quarter of the learners already felt very confident about this at the start, and this proportion remained the same at the end of the pilot programme. However, there was a big improvement in the proportion of learners feeling quite confident by the end – just over 30 per cent felt quite confident about getting a good deal by the end, compared with 18 per cent of learners who felt this way before. Also, about 20 per cent of learners were not confident, or unsure, about getting a good deal before taking part in the pilot programme. This percentage had dropped to around seven per cent by the end.

**Chart 5 Pre pilot programme**



Total number of learners: 117

**Chart 6 Post pilot programme**

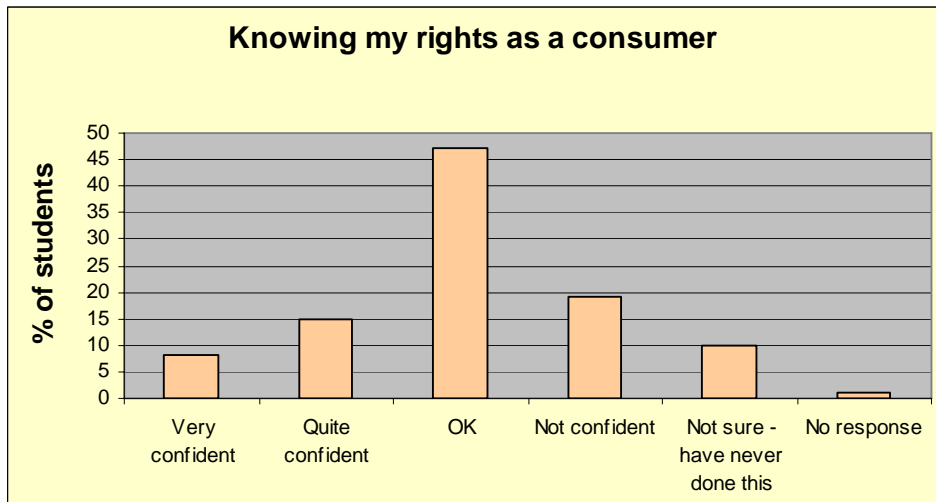


Total number of learners: 92

## Knowing/finding out rights as a consumer

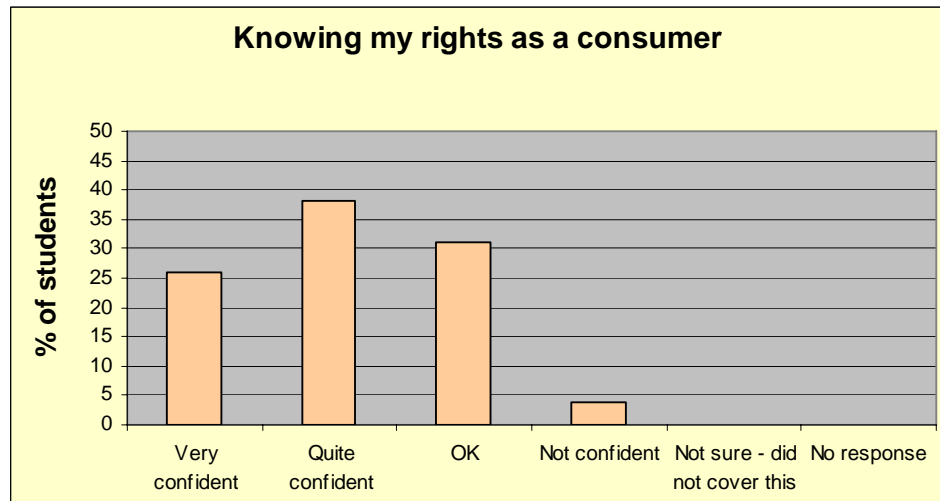
- 5.25 When the learners were asked how confident they felt about knowing their rights as a consumer at the beginning of the pilot programme, only just over 20 per cent said they were very or quite confident with around 30 per cent saying that they were not confident or not sure. After the pilot programme, 64 per cent of the learners said that they now felt very or quite confident, with only four per cent saying they were not confident.
- 5.26 A significant improvement in confidence could also be seen regarding learners' ability to find out their rights regarding particular consumer issues. The percentage who felt very or quite confident with this more than doubled, going from 23 per cent to 52 per cent. At the start of the pilot programme, around 40 per cent of the learners were not confident or not sure as they had never looked into their consumer rights. This improved to approximately only 12 per cent of the learners saying that they were not confident or not sure by the end.

**Chart 7 Pre pilot programme**



Total number of learner: 117

**Chart 8 Post pilot programme**



Total number of learners: 92

### **Returning items to shops/making complaints**

5.27 There was around a 10 per cent rise in the percentage of learners who felt very confident about returning faulty goods. The proportion of people who did not feel confident or were unsure about this had also halved by the end of the pilot programme. In addition, females were already confident in this aspect, but males reported a significant improvement in their confidence by the end of the pilot programme.

5.28 Improvements in confidence were made regarding making complaints such as by letter and on the phone or directly to sales assistants or managers. The biggest improvement was made with writing a letter of complaint where originally only about 17 per cent of learners had felt very or quite confident. **This had risen to approximately 40 per cent by the end, and the percentage who felt unsure or not confident had dropped from over 50 per cent to just over 20 per cent.**

## **Checking bills and invoices and following up errors**

- 5.29 Extremely good improvements were made relating to confidence in checking bills and invoices. Before the pilot programme approximately 30 per cent of learners were not confident about doing this or had never tried to check bills or invoices. This figure fell to just under eight per cent by the end of the pilot programme. In addition, by the end, over 60 per cent of learners felt very or quite confident that they could check their bills or invoices. Similar, but slightly smaller improvements were made with regard to having the confidence to follow up errors on bills. This is as expected because confidence in this element of consumer competence usually takes longer to develop.

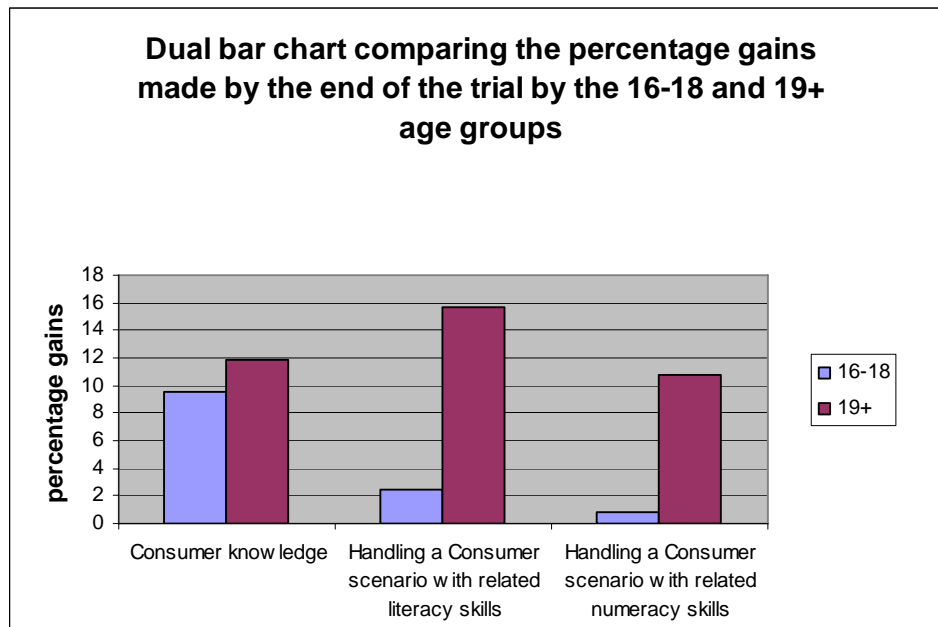
## **Learners' perceptions of their LLN and IT skills**

- 5.30 Evidence from the learners' self assessments indicates an improvement in their speaking, listening, reading, writing, maths and IT skills. There were higher percentages of learners saying that they felt very strong or good for all of these skills and lower percentages saying that they did not feel good about them at the end of the pilot programme than at the start.
- 5.31 As learners often underestimate their abilities and skills in assessments it is very positive to note that over 80 per cent of learners felt that they had made at least a little progress in their literacy and language skills. Learners working below Entry 3/Access 3 and those working at Level1/Intermediate 1 and above assessed themselves as making most progress in their speaking and listening skills, with around 80 per cent reporting that they had made a lot or quite a lot of progress in these skills. Learners working at Entry 3/Access 3 reacted differently. The best results were seen in their reading skills, with 80 per cent of learners saying that they had improved a lot or quite a lot in these skills.

## Breakdown of findings by category

5.32 This section includes a discussion about how effective the two trialled modules of the toolkit were in relation to the following key factors that may have an effect on learning. These were age, gender, context, levels of LLN.

### Chart 9 Age



Total number of learners: 78

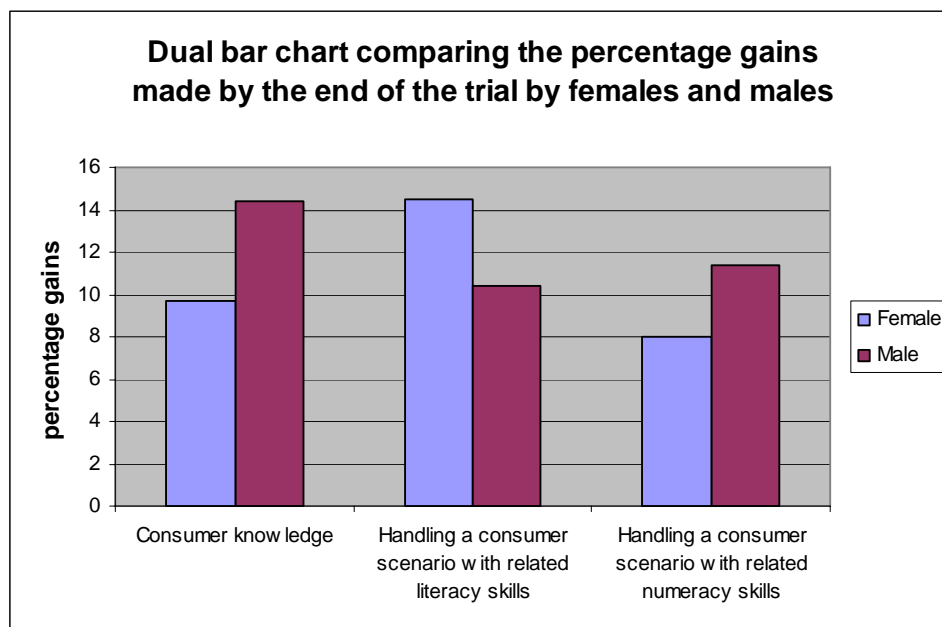
5.33 Learners aged 19+ (19+) started off with higher average scores in consumer knowledge, as might be expected from people who have more life experience, but both age groups made similar levels of progress in this area. Learners aged 16-18 (16-18) gained on average nearly 10 per cent in the consumer knowledge part of the assessment by the end of the pilot programme, and 19+ learners gained approximately 12 per cent.

5.34 While 16-18 learners made greatest progress in their consumer knowledge, 19+ learners made greatest progress in their ability to

handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills, on average a 16 per cent gain. This is particularly noteworthy in such a brief period of learning. **They also made good progress in handling consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills - nearly 11 per cent was gained on average by the 19+ group.**

- 5.35 This may be partly due to greater exposure to the toolkit. Teachers reported better attendance and lower dropout rates among older learners. Seventy five per cent of these completed the whole pilot programme compared with only 46 per cent of 16-18 learners. It could also be due to a greater intrinsic motivation within the 19+ age group to improve their literacy and numeracy skills as generally these learners have chosen to join such classes.

**Chart 10 Gender**



Total number of learners: 76

- 5.36 Overall, males made the greatest improvement in consumer knowledge, with 19+ males making the greatest gains of all. However, when the gender groups are split into learners aged 16-18 and 19+, there are some interesting differences in improvement in consumer knowledge.

The 16-18 females made greater average gains in consumer knowledge than all males and 19+ females. If the inclusion of 'Technology' has made a difference it may be connected with a change in the way that the different genders engage with technology, with younger females being much more interested and actively engaged compared with some older females.

- 5.37 Females made their greatest progress in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills, with an average percentage gain approaching 15 per cent, compared with almost 11 per cent for males. It may be that females were more interested in the communication aspect of the modules and also more motivated by being able to communicate effectively on consumer issues. Males on the other hand, could be more interested in gaining knowledge and skills relating to consumer issues. A recent YouGov<sup>4</sup> survey of over 800 employers found that female bosses value communication skills (73 per cent) more than male bosses (58 per cent).
- 5.38 When overall progress across the whole benchmarking exercise is compared, there is no significant difference in the progress demonstrated by males and females. Both groups made average gains of between 11 per cent and 12 per cent with males demonstrating marginally higher gains on average. This fact in itself is significant however, as males are currently faring less well than females in educational settings. Boys fall behind after just two years of compulsory schooling and girls stretch their lead at the age of 11, 14, 16 and even degree level<sup>5</sup>. With the results of this pilot programme showing a similar outcome for males and females, **it could indicate that the 'Skilled to go' toolkit has effectively engaged males in learning where other resources have failed.**
- 5.39 It can be seen that the gains made by males are due to progress made by 19+ males, as progress made by younger males in their consumer

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<sup>4</sup> YouGov 30.05.2006 [www.trainingreference.co.uk/news/td060530.htm](http://www.trainingreference.co.uk/news/td060530.htm).

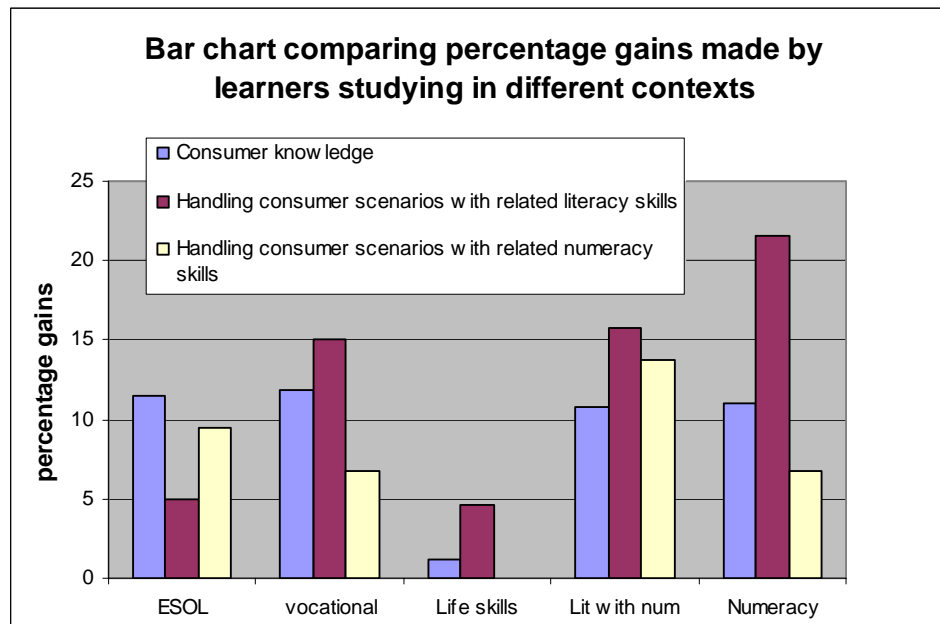
<sup>5</sup> 'Boys: A School Report', Skidmore, C and the Bow Group, August 2007 [www.bowgroup.org/harriercollectionitems/BoysASchoolReport\[1\].doc](http://www.bowgroup.org/harriercollectionitems/BoysASchoolReport[1].doc).

knowledge is not matched by a measurable development in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy or numeracy skills. However, most of them reported that they felt they had improved their LLN at least a little, with over half of them saying that their writing, speaking and language skills had improved a lot. Furthermore, over half of them said that they felt a lot more confident in their reading, writing, speaking, listening and language skills, and a little more confident in their numeracy skills.

## **Context**

- 5.40 A range of different part time and full time main site FE courses were fully involved in all stages of the pilot programme in London and Glasgow. Additionally, some materials were trialled on a range of LLN courses at Holloway women's prison in London, although these learners did not participate in the benchmarking.

Chart 11



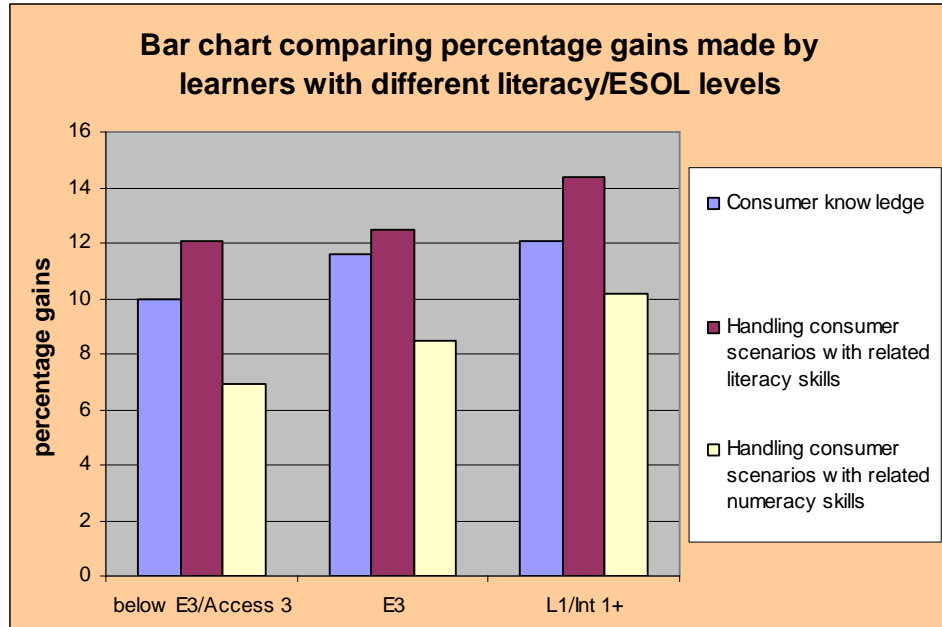
Total number of learners: 75

- 5.41 Regardless of the context of the course, learners made similar gains of approximately 11 per cent - 12 per cent in their consumer knowledge. **This clearly indicates that consumer knowledge can be effectively addressed in a wide range of learning contexts if presented in an accessible way.**
- 5.42 All groups, apart from the two full time ESOL groups, demonstrated their greatest progress in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills. Most notably, numeracy learners demonstrated approximately a 22 per cent on average gain in this area. **This is an outstanding development within a six week period, particularly as these learners only met once a week.** Although the learners in the life skills classes (learners with Asperger's Syndrome) appeared to demonstrate the least progress from the pre and post benchmarking, this group still demonstrated a 5 per cent gain on average in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills.

- 5.43 The results of learners on ESOL courses showed a different trend to learners studying on other courses, with learners' highest gains to be found in consumer knowledge and their lowest gains seen in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills. The gains in consumer knowledge may be connected with learners wanting to feel more capable about buying goods and services and possibly being motivated by the link with citizenship skills and by an enhanced feeling of inclusion in society. The lower percentage progress demonstrated in the ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills section of the benchmarking is to be expected for learners who are still learning a new language. Clearly six weeks is a very short period for measurable progress to be demonstrated. The language (ESOL) awarding bodies use 300 hours as a nominal number of hours study required to achieve a level, thus learners on ESOL courses would normally be expected to take one to two years (30 to 60 weeks, depending on the number of hours they attend per week) to progress from one level to another. **However, learners on ESOL courses in the pilot programme still managed to demonstrate a five per cent increase in their ability to handle consumer scenarios and the related literacy skills involved in doing this effectively.**
- 5.44 Most progress in the ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills, approximately 14 per cent, was made by learners studying on the literacy with numeracy courses. It may be that learners on these courses are more used to this integrated approach or that the teachers focused more on delivering a balance of activities. Numeracy learners made approximately a seven per cent average gain in this area and about an 11 per cent gain in their consumer knowledge.
- 5.45 Vocational learners made the most progress in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills, closely followed by consumer knowledge and then a lower average percentage gain in their handling of consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills. These learners are studying for a national vocational qualification in social care which requires a much greater emphasis on communication than on

numeracy skills, therefore, these learners may have been more motivated by the activities with a greater focus on literacy than on numeracy.

**Chart 12 Learners with different literacy/language (ESOL) levels**



Total number of learners: 75

- 5.46 Overall, learners at different literacy levels reported increased confidence in their consumer skills and knowledge by the end of the pilot programme. The improvement in confidence was generally greater with the learners who had higher levels of literacy. Initially none of the learners with literacy levels below Entry 3/Access 3 had been very or quite confident about knowing their rights, but by the end of the pilot programme, several were quite confident.
- 5.47 Comparison between the benchmarking scores of learners with different levels of literacy or language (ESOL) shows progress in all the areas tested – with the greatest progress at each level being made in ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills.
- 5.48 As expected, the general trend with benchmarking scores is for learners with lower levels of literacy/language (ESOL) to score fewer marks in the

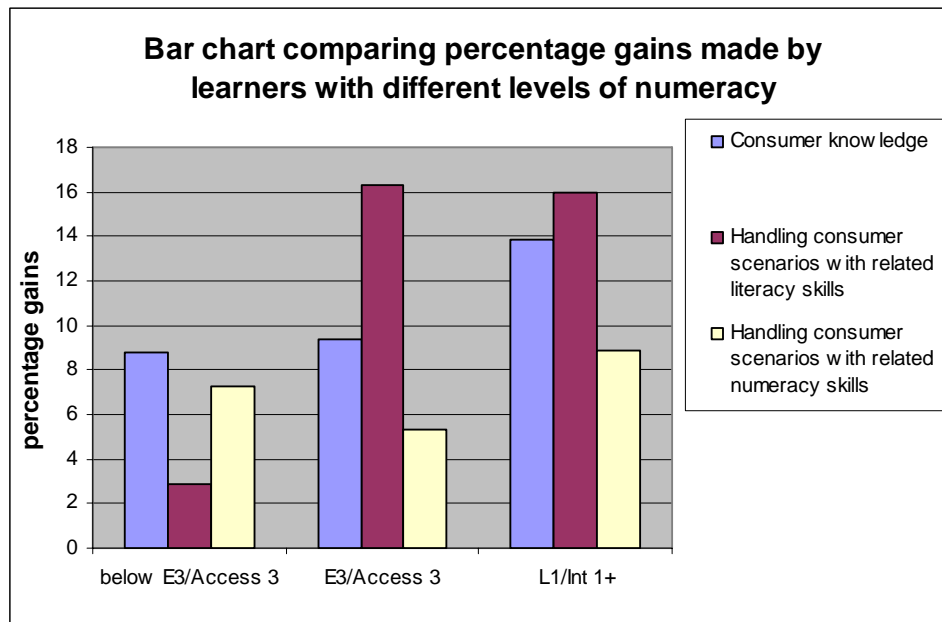
questions about ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills. This trend was also seen with the results from the questions about ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills, where there was quite a difference between the scores achieved by learners with literacy/language (ESOL) levels below Entry 3/ Access 3 and those with higher levels of literacy/language (ESOL). In contrast there was a much smaller difference in the scores for ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills achieved by learners at Entry 3/Access 3 and Level 1/Intermediate 1 and above, in literacy/language (ESOL).

- 5.49 The lower scores for ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills for learners with literacy/language (ESOL) levels below Entry 3/Access 3 were connected to their ability to read and comprehend these questions in the benchmarking. The 'Skilled to go' toolkit is aimed at learners with literacy and numeracy skills levels ranging from Entry 3/Access 3 to Level 2 (including extension work) and therefore, the benchmarking tools were also aimed at these levels.
- 5.50 Learners with literacy levels below Entry 3/Access 3 made measurable progress in all areas tested, with an average progress of 12 per cent in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills, 10 per cent progress in consumer knowledge and approximately 7 per cent progress in ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills. In fact their progress, particularly in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills, was very similar to those made by the Entry 3/Access 3 learners. **This indicates that the toolkit is both accessible and useful for learners with lower literacy levels than the minimum target of Entry 3/Access 3 and can be an effective learning tool with appropriate teaching, support and differentiation.**
- 5.51 One interesting point is that learners with literacy/language (ESOL) levels below Entry 3/Access 3 actually scored higher marks on average in the consumer knowledge questions in both the pre and post benchmarking than the Entry 3/Access 3 learners. They also scored similar marks to the Level 1/Intermediate 1 + learners in this part of the pre

benchmarking. This suggests that there is no direct correlation between the consumer knowledge a person has and their level of literacy (within the bounds of literacy levels of learners in the sample – Entry 2/Access 2 to Levels 1 and 2/Intermediate 1 and 2). This would obviously require further testing as the sample of learners involved in this pilot programme would not be representative of the population as a whole.

- 5.52 Learners with literacy/language (ESOL) levels at Entry 3/Access 3 made progress in all areas tested with similar average percentage gains, approximately 12 per cent, made in both their consumer knowledge and in ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills. There was a slightly lower average gain made in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills: nearly nine per cent. Learners with literacy skills at Level 1/Intermediate 1 and above made greater gains in all areas tested than learners with lower levels of literacy/language (ESOL) skills. The difference in results for consumer knowledge was marginal. These greater gains were to be expected as Level 1/Intermediate 1 learners were the main target group for the 'Skilled to go' toolkit.
- 5.53 The 'Skilled to go' toolkit is aimed at learners at Level 1/Intermediate 1 in their literacy and/or numeracy skills. The results of the benchmarking indicate that the trialled modules were pitched at the right level. It also proved successful with learners above Level 1/Intermediate 1 and at Entry level 3/Access 3 and below, with appropriate support. **The toolkit is therefore, adaptable and flexible enough to use with learners outside the target group.**

**Chart 13 Learners with different numeracy levels**



Total number of learners: 55

- 5.54 Overall, learners reported increased confidence in their consumer skills and knowledge by the end of the pilot programme. The improvement in confidence was generally greater with learners who had higher levels of numeracy, although there were some exceptions. This might be expected after such a short time span as learners working at lower levels generally have lower confidence to start with and may therefore take longer to feel more confident.
- 5.55 The pattern of scores of learners with different levels of numeracy is similar to that found for learners with different literacy/language (ESOL) levels. The general trend is that learners' scores for ability to handle consumer scenarios with both related literacy and numeracy skills improve in direct correlation to their starting point, that is, learners with higher level skills at the beginning of the pilot programme demonstrated more progress.
- 5.56 There are some significant anomalies in learners' results by numeracy level. In the pre benchmarking, learners below Entry 3/Access 3 scored

low marks as might be expected, around five per cent on average. However, learners at Entry 3/Access 3 actually achieved a marginally higher average percentage score in the pre benchmarking than those at Level 1/Intermediate 1 and above.

- 5.57 A further anomaly is that despite scoring much lower average marks in these questions in the pre benchmarking than Entry 3/Access 3 learners, five per cent compared with 30 per cent, learners with numeracy levels below Entry 3/Access 3 actually made greater progress in this area by the end. It may be that the learners in the lower level group were more highly motivated by obtaining life skills relating to consumer issues than the Entry 3/Access 3 learners, or that a greater emphasis was placed on prioritising the acquisition of skills, such as simple mathematical strategies that can be used to solve real life problems related to the themes in the toolkit. Another reason is that there may have been other pressures on the Entry 3/Access 3 classes such as examination preparation. One Entry 3/Access 3 class teacher did mention this when commenting that the timing of the pilot programme was slightly inappropriate due to having to prepare learners for exams.
- 5.58 Progress in consumer knowledge was similar in learners with numeracy levels at Entry 3/Access 3 and those below this level, indicating that the toolkit can be used, with appropriate support and/or adaptations, to improve consumer education of learners below the level of the target group.
- 5.59 However, learners with Level 1/Intermediate 1 and above numeracy levels made noticeably greater average progress in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with both related literacy and numeracy skills and in their consumer knowledge as a whole, which also indicates that the toolkit was appropriate for the target group of learners.
- 5.60 Overall, the average progress increased with learners' increasing levels of numeracy skills, with Level 1/Intermediate 1 and above learners gaining nearly 14 per cent. This was more than twice the average percentage gain made by learners with numeracy levels below Entry 3.

The distinction between the average total gains made by learners with different levels of numeracy was clearer than those made by learners with different levels of literacy.

5.61 Five individual case studies were compiled to reflect the different contexts of learning, age groups, gender and LLN levels of learners participating in the pilot programme. They were based on learners' profiling data, pre and post benchmarking results, feedback from activities and final evaluations.

5.62 For further details of the learner case studies see Annexe H.

### **Feedback from teachers and learners about the '*Skilled to go*' toolkit**

5.63 A total of 10 teachers and 95 learners took part in the feedback on the modules.

#### **Teachers**

5.64 The feedback from teachers about the 'Skilled to go' toolkit was mostly very positive and **all of the teachers rated the toolkit as either great or good**. One teacher commented on the materials saying 'I think they're fantastic personally.' Another said 'there's a definite need for these materials.'

5.65 All but two of the teachers involved said that they gained some knowledge from the toolkit. One of the teachers involved said 'this is not just for learners, I've learned a lot too.' This particular teacher managed to get a £100 refund due to her improved consumer knowledge and confidence.

5.66 Most teachers said they would be likely to incorporate consumer education activities, like those in the toolkit, into their future teaching. Most of the teachers reported that they found it very easy to find what they needed on the OFT website. Seven of them said that the look and content of the website influenced their confidence in the educational

nature of the resources. **All but one teacher stated that they were likely to use the toolkit in the future.**

- 5.67 However, the timing of the pilot programme in the academic year and the fact that it was introduced after initial course induction was felt to be significant. Several teachers reported that they thought the period for the pilot programme was too short. Most agreed that it would have been better to have run it at the beginning of the academic year if this had been possible. This would then have avoided the pressure of exams.
- 5.68 Every teacher said that they felt the 'Buying and selling' module of the toolkit helped to improve their learners' consumer skills and knowledge and all but one of them felt the same about the 'Technology' module. However, there were some differences in their responses, with more teachers being definite about the benefits of the 'Buying and selling' module than the 'Technology' module.
- 5.69 It is important to note here that teachers' own confidence and interests may have influenced the effectiveness of the toolkit. For example, proportionally more of the 'Buying and selling' activities were trialled than those from the 'Technology' module. This may be connected to the fact that only two out of the ten teachers who participated in the pilot programme were male which may support the view that technology is a subject which mostly interests males. One female teacher revealed that she selected the 'Buying and selling' activities in preference to those from the 'Technology' section because they were of more interest to her personally and she is 'a bit of a technophobe'.
- 5.70 All of the teachers who responded said that their learners enjoyed doing the activities and using the materials from the toolkit. It was noted that the learners really enjoyed the group work and interaction involved, with one teacher commenting that, 'they like to feel more in charge of their own learning.' Another commented, 'the less confident have become more confident.' This teacher also said, 'my learners absolutely loved them.'

- 5.71 Only one teacher made a number of adaptations to the materials. Another three made a few. This may have been connected with time pressures and constraints although one teacher commented that material preparation time was fine since 'you expect to adapt resources anyway.' It is worth noting here that the 'Skilled to go' toolkit was developed with the intention to offer teachers the flexibility to make the adaptations required for the particular needs and interests of the learners they work with.
- 5.72 The life skills class teacher stated that the toolkit was highly appropriate for her learners, as they needed to understand the world around them. She reported that learners had engaged with the materials fully and had improved in their understanding of consumer issues, their consumer skills, confidence and personal interactional skills within the class. She will definitely be continuing to use the toolkit as part of the citizenship element of the course.
- 5.73 One numeracy class teacher, although slightly disappointed with what she felt was a greater emphasis in the toolkit on literacy activities, by using the toolkit became, for the first time, very clear about the benefits to learners of assessing their literacy skills, particularly their speaking and listening skills. The toolkit had raised her awareness of using such activities to enable learners to develop these skills as part of a numeracy class.

## **Learners**

- 5.74 The feedback from learners about the 'Skilled to go' toolkit showed that they found the activities and materials both fun and interesting, for example:
- almost 70 per cent of learners enjoyed it
  - only two per cent of learners did not enjoy it
  - over 60 per cent of learners enjoyed finding out about consumer issues with 36 per cent who really enjoyed it

- over 60 per cent of learners enjoyed developing their literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy skills.

- 5.75 The data was interrogated to assess whether the activities and materials appealed less to 16-18 learners than adult learners. However, feedback from the 16-18 age group did not confirm this as 57 per cent of the responses indicated that they were felt to be 'good' or 'great' and only eight per cent of the responses indicated that they felt the activities were 'poor'. This compares with 68 per cent of 19+ learners' responses indicating 'good' or 'great' and only six per cent indicating 'poor'. In fact, on the final learner evaluation forms, the response to the question relating to overall enjoyment of taking part in the pilot programme was more positive from the 16-18 age group than the 19+ . **Ninety four per cent of the younger learners quite enjoyed or really enjoyed it compared with 57 per cent of the older learners.** None of the 16-18 learners said that they didn't enjoy it. Only one of the 19+ learners responded in this way and the rest thought it was ok or better.
- 5.76 In interviews, one group of 16-18 learners commented that the mobile phone activities were their favourites because 'we use them a lot' and 'I can do everything on my mobile phone – TV, internet ....' This particular group of 16-18 learners also said there was nothing they did not like or would change about the materials.
- 5.77 Evidence from the learners' self assessments indicates an improvement in their speaking, listening, reading, writing, maths and IT skills. There were higher percentages of learners saying that they feel very strong or good for all of these skills and lower percentages saying that they do not feel good about them.
- 5.78 As learners often underestimate their abilities and skills in assessments, it is very positive to note that over 80 per cent of learners felt that they had made at least a little progress in their literacy/language (ESOL) skills. Learners working below Entry 3/Access 3 and those working at Level 1/Intermediate 1 and above assessed themselves as making most progress in their speaking and listening skills, with around 80 per cent

reporting that they had made a lot or quite a lot of progress in these skills. Learners working at Entry 3/Access 3 reacted differently. The best results were seen in their reading skills, with 80 per cent of learners saying that they had improved a lot or quite a lot in these skills.

- 5.79 Most learners in this group said they were learning what they had come to learn and the level was about right for most activities. Even though at the beginning a couple of learners in the Level 1/Intermediate 1 numeracy class indicated a little dissatisfaction in doing activities other than the maths they were expecting from the course.
- 5.80 The vocational group of learners provided feedback on over three times as many literacy/language (ESOL) based activities as numeracy based activities. However, this may reveal more about the teacher's choice of activity than the learners'.

### **Adaptations to the 'Skilled to go' toolkit**

- 5.81 What follows is a selection of examples of feedback, from across the two modules, which was collected from teachers and learners about the materials they used during the pilot programme. The sample also includes some wider issues relating to the teachers' experience of delivering the pilot programme. The examples shown illustrate the range of areas about which feedback was collected, the types of feedback provided and the actions that were taken to adapt the 'Skilled to go' toolkit as a result.
- 5.82 The table below lists a summary of the feedback, the specific activities concerned and the action taken as a result of the feedback.

<b>Activity</b>	<b>Feedback</b>	<b>Action taken</b>
<b>'Buying and selling' module</b>		
Unit 1 Activity 2a Best buys price cards	Provide alternative best buys with gadgets etc for 16-19s that is, not just foods	A second version of the activity produced with LCD TVs

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unit 3 V1 Video clip 1 - Dodgy dealers targeted</li> <li>Unit 3 V2 Video clip 2 - Bargain buy at car boot sale</li> </ul>	Video activity too difficult/too fast for some learners	Transcript produced for each video clip
Unit 2 Activity 4 Auctions	<p>Simulated auction in the classroom:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>is too long</li> <li>is too teacher-focused</li> <li>does not provide enough speaking time and therefore language learning for learners</li> </ul>	Change the simulated auction so that learners themselves describe and try to sell item of their choice
<b>Technology module</b>		
<p>Unit 2 Finding the best mobile phone deal game encompassing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Activity 2a Tariff game cards</li> <li>Activity 2b Tariff game service cards</li> <li>Activity 2c Tariff game days of week cards</li> <li>Activity 2d Tariff game digit cards</li> <li>Activity 2e Tariff game board</li> <li>Activity 2f Tariff game tariffs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Making the game is very time consuming</li> <li>Duration for voicemail is too long - one digit card is sufficient</li> <li>Include more context setting questions in the Teachers' notes to lead into the game</li> <li>Game is good for fitting in with data handling work</li> </ul>	Instructions for the game amended so that only one digit card selected for voicemail and suggestions for context setting questions added to the Teachers' notes
Unit 2 Activity 2d Sorting out a problem on the telephone	Listening case studies too long and quite dry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Listening case studies re-recorded and broken into chunks with silent gaps between dialogue</li> <li>Picture stories produced to</li> </ul>

		accompany each recording
Essential information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Needs to be broken into sections</li> <li>Design as a handout to be given out at the end of specific sessions</li> </ul>	Essential information pages: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>broken up with pictures</li> <li>made more use of bullets</li> <li>divided up information and inserted throughout the units rather than locating all the information in one place</li> </ul>
All	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Some activities took a long time to make</li> <li>Would be useful for materials to be provided ready made</li> </ul>	Options for producing a hard copy set of ' <i>Skilled to go</i> ' materials are being investigated
Games	A video demonstration of the games and activities would be useful	At this stage there are no plans to produce a video but the idea has been kept on file in case there are additional video needs in future, in which case this idea might be incorporated into a multi-function video, for example
All	The way that material is currently organised on the website means teachers aren't always downloading all the materials they need for an activity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cluster headings have been added to web pages which group together all the materials relevant to a particular activity</li> <li>Web page layout has been spaced out so divisions between activities are clearer</li> </ul>

## 6 CONCLUSIONS

- 6.1 The research has shown that the 'Skilled to go' toolkit is an excellent vehicle for raising consumer skills, knowledge and confidence as well as learners' ability to handle consumer scenarios with related LLN skills.
- 6.2 The 'Skilled to go' toolkit proved to be very effective with learners at Level 1/Intermediate 1 who were the target group.
- 6.3 It was also successful above Level 1/Intermediate 1 and at Entry level 3 /Access 3 and below, when used with appropriate support. The toolkit was therefore, adaptable and flexible enough to use with learners outside the target group.
- 6.4 In addition, it was shown to be effective for both 16-18 and adult (19+) age groups in improving their consumer knowledge and in improving their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills.
- 6.5 Both adult males and females made significant progress in their consumer knowledge and in their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills.
- 6.6 The toolkit was found to have particular appeal to groups of learners who are traditionally harder to reach in an educational setting, such as young males. These learners improved their consumer knowledge, confidence and their ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy and numeracy skills.
- 6.7 The toolkit also appealed to learners who generally require longer periods to demonstrate progress in their skills such as language (ESOL) learners and learners with learning difficulties such as Asperger's syndrome. There was evidence that these learners were motivated by the link with citizenship skills and by an enhanced feeling of inclusion in society.

- 6.8 Key to learning was the fact that the toolkit was accessible and inclusive that is, it met the needs of different learners' learning styles and preferences. This approach meant that learners engaged with the materials in a meaningful and enthusiastic manner - essential precursors to measurable progress in skills development.
- 6.9 The findings and feedback demonstrate that the 'Skilled to go' toolkit was also successful at promoting learning and development of consumer related skills and knowledge in a range of learning contexts including discrete Skills for Life courses and vocational courses.
- 6.10 Other findings from the pilot programme include how useful it was to provide the opportunity to focus on literacy and language skills, particularly speaking and listening skills, in a numeracy course because this was an optional way to use the 'Skilled to go' toolkit.
- 6.11 The effectiveness of the toolkit is demonstrated by the positive outcomes learners experienced in real life situations outside of the learning environment. The impact it had beyond the classroom was significant, as learners' families and friends were also able to benefit.
- 6.12 Teachers rated the toolkit highly both as an authorable resource and for addressing the needs of their learners.
- 6.13 The website design was found easy to navigate and quick to download.
- 6.14 The 'Skilled to go' toolkit demonstrates that learning can take place if information is presented in a relevant context that engages and motivates learners and if the materials used are accessible and inclusive.

## **7 RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 7.1 The recommendations below are based on the findings from the research and take account of feedback from participating teachers and learners and LLU+ project team.

### **Rolling out the 'Skilled to go' toolkit**

- 7.2 Set up half day training events for teachers to raise awareness of the toolkit and how they can use it in their situation.
- 7.3 Set up online, interactive taster activities as an alternative introduction to the toolkit.
- 7.4 Produce paper-based versions of the Teachers' notes and User guide to use as publicity materials.

### **Extending the 'Skilled to go' toolkit**

- 7.5 Produce further modules on different topics.
- 7.6 Design resources for Entry 2 and Entry 3/Access 1 and 2 in all skills.
- 7.7 Design resources to meet the needs and interests of people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, who are nevertheless independent consumers in society.
- 7.8 Design resources specifically for English for speakers of other languages (ESOL).
- 7.9 Include video clips explaining how to use some of the more (seemingly) complicated activities that are produced and uploaded to the OFT website.
- 7.10 In addition to the online toolkit, produce ready-made hard copy sets of activities for teachers to have easier access to the resources.

7.11 Use the toolkit to design an online teacher training module on contextualised LLN for teachers. The training module would develop teachers' confidence and skills to integrate LLN as part of their specialist area of expertise, for example:

- numeracy teachers to support literacy skills development
- ESOL teachers to provide opportunities to develop numeracy skills
- vocational teachers to support learners' language development
- literacy teachers to support numeracy skills development.

### **Developing the effectiveness of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit**

7.12 Include a section on the website for teachers and learners to speak to a consumer expert in OFT about their queries.

7.13 Include a section on the website to collect feedback from teachers on learners' application of consumer skills in their daily lives.

### **Considerations for future consumer education evaluation of the toolkit**

7.14 The methodology of evaluating the toolkit proved to be effective. If further modules are to be evaluated, then the processes used in this research, with some amendments, would be recommended, that is:

- undertake a mini trial of benchmarking and evaluation tools as part of quality assurance prior to running a pilot programme
- conduct a pilot programme over a longer period to allow for
  - more quality assurance visits by the research team
  - more opportunities for learners to apply what they are learning in real life consumer experiences

- integrating the toolkit and the benchmarking and evaluation tools into learning programmes
  - plan the timescale of a pilot programme to avoid clashing with critical events in an educational institution's timetable, for example, exams preparation.
- 7.15 Undertake an impact survey of the effectiveness of the 'Skilled to go' toolkit on developing and applying consumer skills, knowledge and confidence at least six months after the pilot programme finishes.

## 8 GLOSSARY OF TERMS

Term	Definition
Ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills	<p>This is a measure of learners' ability to deal with a given consumer scenario, which has been developed for the purposes of this evaluation project. The scenarios used in this evaluation project reflect the fact that in real life people's ability to read write, speak, listen and manage numbers effectively can impact on their ability to handle consumer situations effectively. The elements required to respond effectively in these consumer scenarios include consumer skills, knowledge and literacy skills, including reading, writing, speaking and listening. The scenarios used include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• identifying questions to ask before buying a mobile phone</li><li>• writing a dialogue to negotiate a refund on a consumer item</li><li>• writing a letter of complaint.</li></ul> <p>When the research results about learners' ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills is displayed in a chart, the name of the data has been shortened to <b>'handling consumer scenarios with literacy'</b> in order to reduce the page space required for the data name.</p>
Ability to handle consumer scenarios with related numeracy skills	<p>This is a measure of learners' ability to deal with a given consumer scenario, which has been developed for the purposes of this evaluation project. The scenarios used in this evaluation project reflect the fact that in real life people's ability to read write, speak, listen and manage numbers effectively can impact on their ability to handle consumer situations effectively. The elements required to respond effectively in these consumer scenarios include consumer skills, knowledge and related numeracy skills</p>

such as the ability to estimate a total cost and calculate percentages and discounts. The consumer scenarios used involved comparing between products to select the appropriate ones for the task, estimating the cost of a range of items and calculating a discount and the VAT on these.

When the research results about learners' ability to handle consumer scenarios with related literacy skills is displayed in a chart, the name of the data has been shortened to **'handling consumer scenarios with numeracy'** in order to reduce the page space required for the data name.

Access 2 - Intermediate 2/Advanced level	Part of the Scottish Credit and Qualifications Framework (SCQF) which is a 12-level framework designed to include everything from Access 1 Units to PhDs. Access 2 covers a wide range of abilities including learners with special educational needs and extensive learning disabilities. Access 3 - Intermediate 2 can be seen as being educationally equivalent to Foundation and Credit respectively at Standard Grade. (Standard Grades are Scotland's educational qualifications for students aged around 14 to 16 years.)
Adult Literacy and Numeracy Core Curriculum for England and Wales	Documents that set out the entitlement to learning for all adults who have difficulties with literacy and numeracy. They describe the content of what should be taught in adult literacy and numeracy programmes in any context. They assist teachers to meet the individual needs of adults through the selection and teaching of skills appropriate to adults' needs. They provide a clear set of skills required to meet national standards, together with the knowledge and understanding that underpin those skills, supported by sample strategies to develop them.
An Adult	A framework which adopts a process-based approach to

Literacy and Numeracy Curriculum Framework for Scotland	curriculum, while providing learners and tutors some guidance on possible content of learning. The emphasis of this document is on the way that the curriculum is negotiated with learners and builds creatively on their existing knowledge and skills and the contexts they experience in their private, family, community and working lives.
Asperger's Syndrome	An autistic disorder most notable for the often great discrepancy between the intellectual and social abilities of those who have it. Asperger's syndrome is a pervasive developmental disorder that is characterised by an inability to understand how to interact socially. Typical features of the syndrome may also include clumsy and uncoordinated motor movements, social impairment with extreme egocentricity, limited interests and unusual preoccupations, repetitive routines or rituals, speech and language peculiarities, and non-verbal communication problems.
Basic skills	The ability to read, write and speak in English and to use mathematics at a level necessary to function at work and in society in general.
Benchmarking	A measurement or standard that serves as a point of reference by which performance is measured.
Citizenship skills	People engaged as 'active citizens', who are able to make informed decisions about their lives, communities and workplaces. The sense of citizenship is embedded in each individual's unique life history and formed through relationships with others. Active citizens usually learn their citizenship skills through trying to solve a problem or to fulfil a mission, rather than by setting out to 'learn to be good citizens'. Learning and citizenship emerge as a consequence of this primary motivation. Learning

therefore has to be embedded in those processes.

Consumer confidence

Confidence to operate effectively in everyday consumer situations. This confidence develops as levels of consumer skills and consumer knowledge increase.

Consumer education

Consumer education is about giving consumers the confidence, skills and knowledge to:

- make good choices when buying and using goods and services
- solve or get help with problems when things go wrong.

With good information on products and services, and the skills to communicate their needs effectively, consumers can get the best deals and avoid the worst pitfalls. The Office of Fair Trading (OFT)'s consumer education work supports people to become more confident, assertive consumers who can help to promote competitive markets by demanding high standards from business.

Consumer knowledge

Knowledge which helps to equip people to deal effectively with consumer situations which they meet in their everyday lives. Consumer knowledge may include sources of help and support, consumer rights and responsibilities information, safety precautions etc.

Consumer skills

A range of skills which equip people to deal effectively with the consumer situations which they meet in their everyday lives. These include the ability to:

- research relevant information to help make consumer choices
- consider personal needs and preferences before making a consumer decision

- analyse the features of consumer goods and services to identify their pros and cons
- compare consumer goods and services to identify their pros and cons
- communicate effectively in a wide range of consumer situations
- identify sources of help to deal with consumer problems or handle consumer problems effectively.

Digital switchover

The conversion of television broadcasting from analogue to digital. It will take place region by region in the UK between 2008 and 2012.

Discrete literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy

A literacy, language (ESOL) or numeracy course where the primary learning goal is improving literacy, English language or numeracy skills, as opposed to receiving support in these skills in order to access and achieve in other subject areas.

Embedded (also known as integrated) literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy

Teaching and learning that combines the development of literacy, language (ESOL) and numeracy (LLN) skills with vocational and other skills. The skills acquired provide learners with the confidence, competence and motivation necessary for them to succeed in qualifications, in life and at work. The concept of embedding LLN is applied at all stages of the planning, delivering and identifying achievement.

Evaluation

A systematic process for assessing strengths and weaknesses in order to improve effectiveness. It involves the systematic collection and analysis of data needed to make decisions and these data may be a blend of quantitative and qualitative information.

Entry 3 - Level 2

Part of the national standards for adult literacy and numeracy. They are also included in the National Qualifications Framework for England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Entry level, also known as Skills for Life at Entry level, gives people basic knowledge and skills with the ability to apply learning in everyday situations and is not

geared towards specific occupations. Level 1 gives people basic knowledge and skills with the ability to apply learning with guidance and supervision and may be linked to job competence. Level 2 gives people good knowledge and understanding of a subject and the ability to perform a variety of tasks with some guidance and supervision and is appropriate to many job roles.

ESOL (English for Speakers of Other Languages) Further Education institution

The ability to understand and employ English language in daily activities at home, at work and in the community to achieve one's goals, and to develop one's knowledge and potential.

Primarily FE colleges, work-based learning, and adult and community learning institutions. It offers education or training after the age of 16 that leads to a range of qualifications including degrees validated by a university. It may be at the same level or at a higher level or lower level than secondary education, anything from basic training to Higher National Diploma or Foundation Degree. The term is mainly used in connection with adult education in the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland.

Initial and diagnostic assessment

Initial assessment is used to identify a learner's level in order to select the appropriate learning programme for the learner. Diagnostic assessment is used to develop a detailed personal profile of the learner's skills as the basis for an individual learning plan.

Internet security logo

A form of security software which can be recognised by a yellow padlock symbol (in the bottom right hand corner of the computer screen) or 'https' in the website address.

Kinaesthetic

In this report kinaesthetic describes a particular preferred way of learning. This means that for some people actually physically carrying out an activity or using a hands-on approach is essential to engage in meaningful learning.

Learning difficulties

The Disability Discrimination Act (2005) defines a disabled person as one with a physical or mental impairment which

and disabilities	has a substantial, adverse and long-term effect on his or her ability to carry out 'normal' day to day activities. This includes such learning difficulties as dyslexia.
Learner-centered	Education that places the learner at the centre of education. It begins with understanding the educational contexts from which a learner comes. It continues with the teacher evaluating the learner's progress towards learning objectives. By helping the learner acquire the basic skills to learn, it ultimately provides a basis for learning throughout life. It therefore places the responsibility for learning on the learner, while the teacher assumes responsibility for making it possible for the student to learn. This approach strives to be individualistic, flexible, varied in methodology and not always constrained by time or place.
Learner-empowerment	Encouraging people to become more independent learners so that they are then in a better position to make more informed choices.
Learning objectives	The specific learning goals related to individual activities and the toolkit as a whole.
Learning styles	In this report, this relates to each individual's preferred way of learning which may include how, where and when the person likes to learn.
Life skills	The skills necessary for successful living. They fall into 6 main areas: self, family, job, community, leisure, and spirituality.
LLU +	A national consultancy and professional development centre for staff working in the areas of literacy, numeracy, dyslexia, family learning and English for Speakers of Other Languages. The organisation also specialises in learning support, language and maths and the application of learning styles approaches to teaching and learning.
Low levels of literacy and numeracy	Literacy and/or numeracy below Level 1 in the National Qualifications Framework for England and Wales and below Access3-Intermediate 1 in the Scottish National Qualifications Framework.

Pilot programme	The term used in the report to describe the work with the two institutions who trialled the 'Skilled to go' modules.
Productive skills	Speaking and writing
Receptive skills	Listening and reading
Rounding skills	The ability to round to the nearest whole number, for example, to the nearest pound.
Settings	Settings relate to where the educational provision is based, for example, in the community, prisons etc
Spiky profile	Learners who have different levels of ability within their literacy or numeracy skills, for example, they maybe fluent and at a high level in speaking skills but at a lower level in reading and/or writing skills.
Vocational	Of, relating to, or concerned with a vocation or occupation, and undergoing training in a skill or trade to be pursued as a career.

## Acronyms

E3	Entry 3
ESOL	English for speakers of other languages
FE	further education
Int 1/2	Intermediate 1/2
L1/2	Levels 1/2
LLN	literacy, language and numeracy
LDD	learning difficulties and disabilities
LSBU	London South Bank University
OFT	Office of Fair Trading
VAT	value added tax