

## **Impact of OfTel's "How to access the Internet at home" consumer guide**

## **Research amongst responders to UK Online's 'Get Started' campaign**

July 2003

Published 27 October 2003

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## Chapter 1

### Introduction

1.1 Oftel's document, *Effective competition review: dial-up Internet access* (January 2002) concluded that there was some dissatisfaction among consumers with the information available to them about going online and that only half of Internet consumers shopped around before choosing an ISP or Internet package.

1.2 In this document Oftel committed to produce guidance for consumers connecting to the Internet to encourage a better understanding of what products are available in the market and to enable consumers to take advantage of market opportunities resulting from competition.

1.3 A guide was drafted and mock copies were tested by a series of focus groups in May 2002. The guide was approved by the Plain Language Commission and published by Oftel in September 2002  
[http://www.oftel.gov.uk/press/releases/2002/pr53\\_02.htm](http://www.oftel.gov.uk/press/releases/2002/pr53_02.htm).

1.4 Research conducted prior to publication examined whether the content met consumers' needs and whether the design was complimentary to the content (<http://www.oftel.gov.uk/publications/research/2003/intleaf0403.pdf>). Research carried out after publication aimed to identify why consumers requested the guide, what they liked or disliked about it, what other topics they would have liked to have seen covered and whether they had or planned to take any action as a result of the information in the guide (<http://www.oftel.gov.uk/publications/research/2003/conleaf0403.htm>).

1.5 The front page of the guide features the Government's UK Online logo and has been used in Government campaigns, including 2003's Get Started<sup>1</sup> promotion, which aimed to encourage public use of Internet services. The campaign offered free Internet starter sessions in local centres. Fulfilment packs including a copy of Oftel's *How to Access the Internet at home* guide were sent out to those who called the campaign 'hotline' and who requested one. The guide is also available directly from Oftel.

1.6 Oftel has continued to seek feedback from consumers who have read the guide to understand whether the leaflet has been successful in improving consumer knowledge of the services that are available to them and to help inform future decisions about Oftel's role in raising consumer awareness.

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<sup>1</sup> [http://getting.ukonline.gov.uk/oe/getstarted.nsf/sections/homepage/\\$file/home.htm](http://getting.ukonline.gov.uk/oe/getstarted.nsf/sections/homepage/$file/home.htm)

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1.7 In July 2003, The Office of the e-Envoy (OeE) (who backed the Get Started campaign) and Oftel carried out some research amongst campaign responders. Respondents who received a copy of the Oftel guide were asked about its usefulness and whether it had encouraged them to take any actions. The findings complement Oftel's previous research and are broadly similar.

1.8 The OeE commissioned the Central Office of Information (COI) to carry out this research. 500 Telephone interviews were carried out by Network Research<sup>2</sup> between 26 June and 4 July 2003. The report has been prepared by Oftel<sup>3</sup>, based on the results provided by the COI. Consistent with the profile of callers the campaign generated, the majority of the sample (79%) were aged over 45 years, 43% were male and 57% female. 46% had used the Internet before calling the helpline.

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<sup>2</sup> Network Research interviewed a random selection of 500 respondents, aged 18+ by telephone between 26 June – 4 July. The sample was provided by the OeE and contained details of 3,558 people who had called the campaign helpline between 12 May and 1 June 2003 and had given their permission to be contacted for further research. Quotas were set on gender, based on the gender split within the sample provided.

<sup>3</sup> Oftel has conducted its own checks on the data in this report and whilst we consider it to be correct, Oftel accepts no liability in respect of any of the results provided to it by the COI or any decisions taken by any person in reliance on the report.

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## Chapter 2

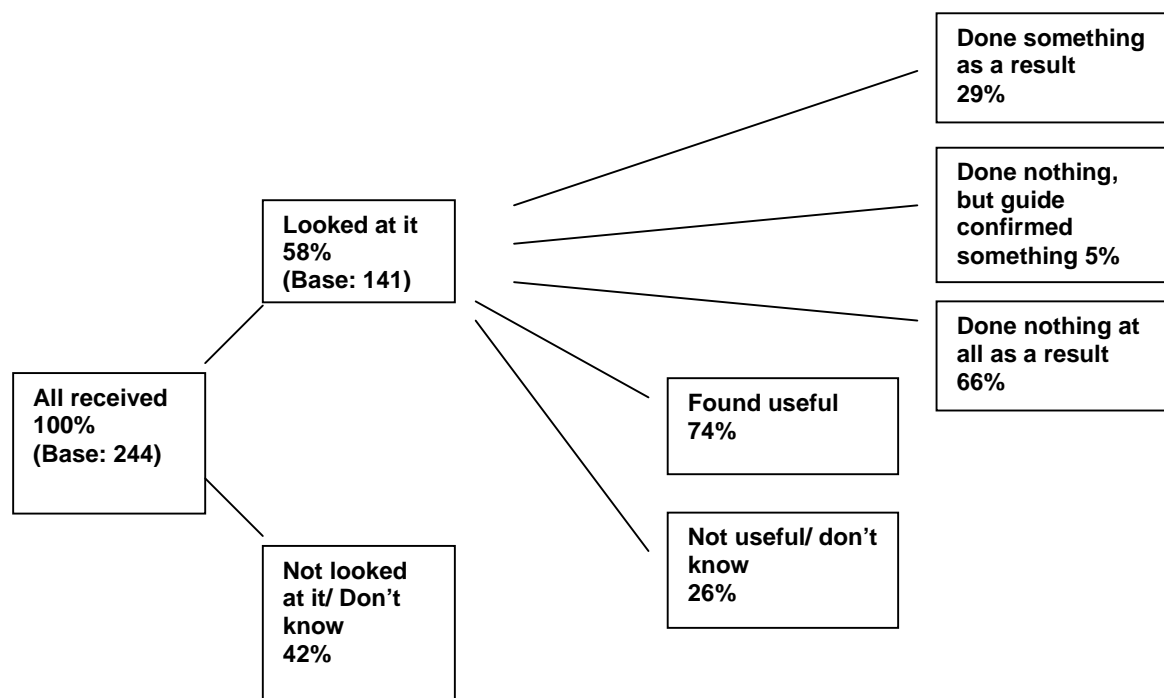
### Summary of key findings

#### How to access the Internet at home – Oftel consumer guide

- Of those who had looked at the Oftel guide, three-quarters found the guide useful. Those that were confident about using the Internet were most likely to find it useful.
- 3 in 10 of those who had looked at it had done something as a result of the information (an additional 5% said that the guide had confirmed something for them). Actions taken included attending a course, connecting to the Internet, advising somebody else on their Internet service and changing Internet service provider (ISP).
- The most frequent reason given for not having taken any action was being too busy. A small proportion said that the guide was confusing or didn't contain enough information.
- The findings broadly support previous research conducted by Oftel amongst those who requested the leaflet direct from Oftel. Those results can be used in conjunction with these more recent findings to provide a more robust analysis of the usefulness of the consumer guide.

**Figure 2a: Summary results**

Base: All who received a fulfilment pack (Base: 244)



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## Chapter 3

### Main findings

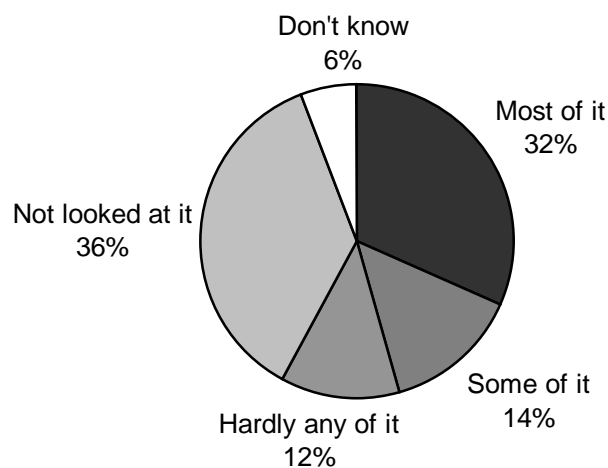
3.1 Of the 500 respondents who called the “Get Started” campaign ‘hotline’, half (49%) had requested and received a fulfilment pack - which included a copy of Oftel’s *How to access the Internet at home* consumer guide. The ‘Internet starter sessions’ that the campaign offered were perhaps the main attraction to many campaign respondents, so it is not surprising that ‘take up’ of the fulfilment pack was not higher. The fulfilment pack also included;

- a booklet produced by UK online, entitled *What will the Internet do for you?*,
- a letter inviting the responder to an ‘Internet starter session’, and;
- a leaflet with details of a prize draw for session attendees.

3.2 6 in 10 (58%) of those who had received the fulfilment pack had read at least some of the Oftel leaflet – 32% claimed to have read most of it. Responders were also asked how much of the UK online booklet they had read – the same proportion (57%) had read at least some of this.

**Figure 3a: Amount of the Oftel leaflet read**

Base: “Get Started” campaign responders who had requested and received the information pack, June '03 (Base: 244)



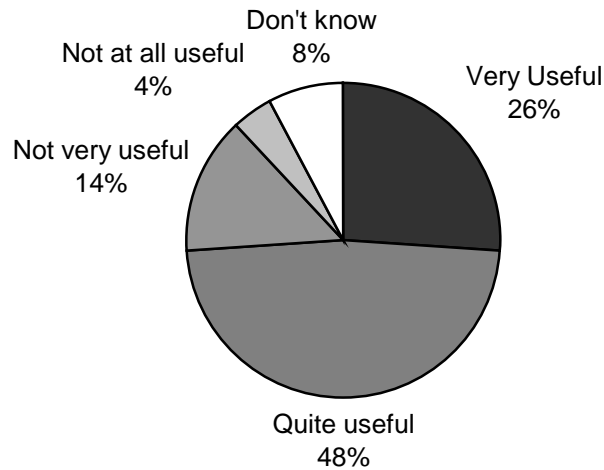
### Usefulness of the guide

3.3 Figure 3b shows that three-quarters (74%) of those who had looked at the guide found it useful. This is slightly lower than found in Oftel’s previous research when 9 in 10 of those who requested the guide from Oftel found it useful. This difference is unsurprising, given that Oftel’s previous research was amongst those who had specifically requested the Oftel leaflet, hence were more likely to be specifically interested in the content of Oftel’s guide.

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**Figure 3b: How useful has the guide been?**

Base: Get started campaign responders who had looked at the Oftel Internet guide, June '03  
(Base: 141)



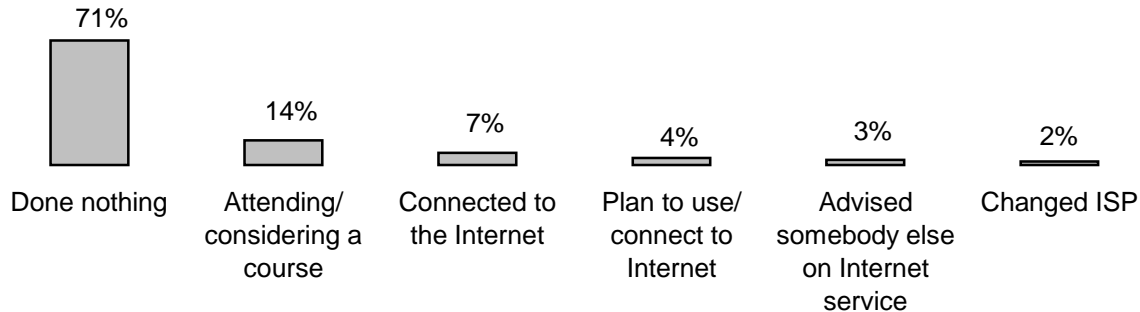
3.4 There was no significant difference in perceived usefulness of Oftel's guide according to whether respondents had prior Internet experience. However, those that were less confident about using the Internet found the guide less useful (66%) than those who were quite confident or very confident about Internet use (88%). Perhaps related to this finding, those that used the Internet for entertainment or shopping were also more likely to find the guide useful.

**Actions taken as a result of the leaflet**

3.5 Respondents were asked if they or their household had done anything specifically as a result of information in the Oftel guide. Most (71%) had taken no action. 14% claimed to be attending or considering attending a course – the prominence of this action is almost certainly related to the nature of the promotional campaign, which offered free courses. 1 in 10 (11%) had either connected to the Internet or planned to use or connect to the Internet as a result of information in the Oftel guide. The overall proportion who claimed to have taken some action as a result of information in the guide is similar to findings from Oftel's previous research.

**Figure 3c - Actions taken as a result of information in the Oftel Internet guide**

Base: "Get Started" campaign responders who had looked at the Oftel Internet guide, June '03  
(Base: 119\*)



\* NB Due to a technical problem some of those who had looked at the guide were not asked this question

3.6 As shown in figure 3d, the most frequent reason given for not having taken any action was being too busy, mentioned by a quarter. The guide confirmed something (what was already known, that the Internet was not wanted or needed, or that they were already getting the best deal) for just under 1 in 10 (8%) of those who had not taken any action.

3.7 A small proportion said that the guide was either confusing (5%) or didn't contain enough information (3%) – these were all aged 45+, and primarily either not very confident using the Internet or non-Internet users.

**Figure 3d: Reasons for not having taken any action as a result of the information in Oftel's guide**

Base: Get started campaign responders who had looked at the Oftel Internet guide, but not taken any action, June '03 (Base: 80)

	%
Haven't got round to it/ been busy	24%
Want to attend lessons/ learn more	9%
Guide wasn't aimed at me/ appropriate for my circumstances	8%
Was not considering getting Internet at home	6%
Plan to take some action in the future	6%
Guide confirmed what I already knew	5%
The guide was confusing/ didn't understand	5%
Already had/ have the Internet	4%
Home PC being repaired/ upgraded	4%
Don't have/ want a home PC	4%
Guide didn't contain enough information	3%
Other	11%
Don't know	16%

## Annex A

### Questionnaire

#### July 2003 questions about the Oftel guide

- Q1 ASK ALL WHO READ OR LOOKED AT THE INFORMATION PACK  
I would like to know how much of each item you read. Thinking about the blue booklet from Oftel called "How to access the Internet at Home", did you read?
- Most of it
  - Some of it
  - Hardly any of it
  - Not looked at it
- Q2 ASK ALL WHO READ AT LEAST SOME OF THE OFTEL BOOKLET  
How useful was the blue booklet from Oftel called 'How to access the Internet at home'?
- Very useful
  - Quite useful
  - Not very useful
  - Not at all useful
- Q3 ASK ALL WHO READ AT LEAST SOME OF THE OFTEL BOOKLET  
What, if anything, have you or your household done **specifically** as a result of information in the Oftel guide?
- Q4 ASK ALL WHO HAD DONE NOTHING AS A RESULT OF INFORMATION IN THE OFTEL BOOKLET  
Why have you done nothing as a result of the information in Oftel's guide?
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