

**OFTEL**

**Internet Leaflet**

**Qualitative Research Findings**

**May 2002**

*Prepared for:*

*Karen Metcalfe,  
Oftel  
50 Ludgate Hill  
London  
ECM4 7JJ*

**J.1065**

*Prepared by:*

*Research Works Limited  
42 Hendon Lane  
Finchley  
London  
N3 1TT  
Tel. 020 8343 3328  
Fax. 020 8343 2012  
all@researchworks.co.uk*

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## **1. BACKGROUND AND METHODOLOGY**

### **1.1 Background**

In 2001, Oftel produced four leaflets for consumers, aimed at raising awareness of their rights and opportunities as telecoms users. During the course of this research, consumers expressed interest in other telecoms related information. In response to this demand, Oftel has prepared a number of further leaflets which it wanted to test prior to publication. This research focused on an Internet leaflet.

The Internet leaflet was designed and constructed with reference to some of the points raised by consumers during previous qualitative research, taking account of lessons learned.

The research focussed primarily on the content of the publication, but also examined the design and its influence on the overall message and success of the publication.

### **1.2 Research Objectives**

Previous research was used to shape both the content and design of the leaflet prior to distribution, to ensure that:

- The content met consumers' needs with regard to Internet information
- The design was complimentary to the content and sufficiently attractive to ensure consumers would pick up and use the leaflet

Oftel also wanted to research potential distribution channels for the proposed leaflet, including via computer retail outlets, where consumers would be most likely to seek out this type of information. A further specific objective was, therefore;

- To confirm that this was an appropriate distribution channel

### **1.3 Method**

Six group discussions and six face-to-face depth interviews were conducted. Group discussions allowed a more realistic reflection of general public views and shared consumer responses. This approach was chosen as it was felt that the group format would give an opportunity to seek views from all respondents within a stimulating discussion forum. Focus groups generally give the most effective feedback regarding design and impact issues, as well as broadly highlighting views on leaflet content.

Face-to-face depth interviews offered an opportunity to examine the research material in greater detail and allowed the inclusion of more personal responses in examining information presented in the leaflet.

### **1.4 Sample**

The following recruitment criteria were used:

Six focus groups:

1. Male, BC1, 20-29 years, mix of single/co-habiting and young family, London/S. East
  2. Male, BC1, 50-60 years, Empty nesters, Midlands
  3. Male, C2DE, 30-49 years, Older family, North
  4. Female, C2DE, 50-60 years, Empty nesters, Midlands
  5. Female, C2DE, 30-49 years, Older family, London/S. East
  6. Female, BC1, 20-29 years, mix of single/co-habiting and young family, North
- All respondents to be planning to get the Internet within the next three months
  - Some respondents in each group to be currently using the Internet at work
  - All respondents to be purchase decision makers

Six depth interviews:

1. Female, BC1, 50-60 years, Empty nester, London/S. East
  2. Female, C2DE, 30-49 years, Older family, North
  3. Male, C2DE, 20-29 years, single/co-habiting/young family, Midlands
- All respondents to be planning to get the Internet and currently involved in the process
4. Male, BC1, 50-60 years, Empty nester, North
  5. Female, BC1, 20-29 years, single/co-habiting/young family, Midlands
  6. Male, C2DE, 30-49 years, Older family, London/S. East
- All respondents currently seeking to switch ISP (or package type) or access method – or to have switched any of these in the past three months

Research was conducted in April and May 2002 in London/S. East, Stockport and Huntingdon

## 2. MANAGEMENT SUMMARY

Generally, switching between utility providers had become commonplace and respondents no concerns about changing supplier in response to obvious financial incentives.

The only constraining factor in relation to switching were the aggressive and often questionable sales approaches practiced by staff working for utility companies.

All the respondents were keen to access the Internet, with many feeling that they were being left behind by advances in information technology. The influence of friends and family was strong in this regard. Some older respondents were clearly concerned about becoming familiar with the basic hardware involved in using the Internet. Most of the sample were worried about the process of buying a suitable PC.

Few respondents had sought out independent information regarding Internet access or the equipment needed to use the Internet. Most assumed that they would get all the necessary advice from retailers, although most recognised that this advice was unlikely to be independent. Few respondents could identify a likely source for independent advice regarding the Internet.

Overall the Oftel Internet leaflet was positively received, with virtually all respondents believing that it offered valuable and independent advice, as well as important reference data.

The cover colour was well-liked, although other elements of the cover design were clearly seen as unsuccessful. The font size for the leaflet title was felt to be too small and therefore lack impact. The visual images used on the cover (and throughout the leaflet) were felt to be too obscure and oblique, contributing little to the visual appeal of the publication. Generally, respondents wanted a clearer visual approach which would make certain that potential users would understand the purpose of the leaflet and the subject being addressed

Respondents felt that the title itself – ‘**Your rights and choices...**’ – was too unclear and failed to communicate how useful the leaflet actually might be for ordinary consumers. Some expected that the leaflet would be both technical and legal in nature, which would not be appealing for a majority of the sample.

Language and tone were felt to be excellent and accessible for all levels of consumer, although some technical terminology needs to be clarified for the real beginners.

The contents page was seen as valuable, although some respondents would like to see this page extended to include more detail about the specific leaflet contents.

Respondents generally recognised Oftel and broadly understood the organisation’s role, although there was less certainty about the link between Oftel and the Internet. Most, however, felt that Oftel would offer a valuable, independent, perspective on Internet usage

The section dealing with ‘**Who should read this leaflet?**’ was reassuring and helpful for most respondents – they could recognise themselves in the user profiles. The only criticisms related to usage of technical terms such as ISP without explanation or clarification.

There was a feeling that the ‘**What is this leaflet going to tell me**’ section was redundant and should be included in the previous section.

The ‘**What do I need...**’ section was seen as a mixture of the blindingly obvious and the unknown. Respondents did not understand the meaning of the term ‘screen’ and interpreted this literally. Many were unaware that the Internet could be accessed through mobile phones, digital TV systems and games consoles. Few recognised the term ‘Personal Digital Assistant’ – palm-top computer was the more popular description of this technology. Overall, this section could probably be expanded and clarified, although most respondents were intending to access the Internet through a PC, rather than through any of the other options.

The section dealing with '**You need access to the network...**' was of great interest to all, although the terms Narrow-band and Dial-up were not familiar to many respondents. Most wanted to know more about Broadband, which is seen as the future for Internet access.

Respondents were confused by the '**You need an ISP**' section – many did not understand the concept of an ISP and needed further explanation.

'**What should I consider..**.' was seen as an excellent and valuable check-list of relevant issues for the Internet consumer. Even those respondents who considered themselves to be knowledgeable regarding the Internet saw the section as helpful as a reference device.

'**How do I pay?**' was a vital section for all respondents. There are issues in terms of presentation which must be resolved so that readers are clear about what type of package is being discussed. The sample were keen that this section should be especially straightforward.

'**How can I get the best deal?**' seemed useful to many respondents, but in reality some felt that there was little real information on offer. Respondents would prefer more specific advice regarding channels for information relating to Internet products.

'**Can I change my ISP?**' was seen as a fairly routine reminder of the nature of contractual arrangements, although some respondents had not considered a number of added-value issues which are affected by the decision to change ISP.

The information regarding **Broadband** was interesting for all respondents, although there were technical references which generated anxiety amongst the less knowledgeable members of the sample. There is clearly some scope for expansion or clarification.

The section dealing with '**Other questions about the Internet**' offered a collection of topic areas which were of variable interest. Respondents felt that '**What is the Internet**' should be placed at the front of the leaflet, while **child safety, premium**

**rate services** and **online shopping** were all subjects of immediate interest.

Information regarding **small businesses** was not seen as relevant for this audience, while the suggestions regarding **complaints procedures** were felt to be fairly routine.

**Contact details** were seen as important and an important motivation to keep the leaflet for future reference.

Overall, respondents saw this leaflet as important and a valuable tool for new Internet consumers who are approaching the marketplace for the first time. More experienced respondents took issue with some of the information, but still believed that the leaflet would be useful as a reference tool.

Respondents felt that, after reading the leaflet, they would be better placed to tackle the process of accessing the Internet – and more confident in terms of knowing the ‘right questions to ask’.

In relation to availability, respondents indicated that the leaflet should be available at a number of key outlets: PC retailers; Post Offices; Libraries, Supermarket community boards and Citizen’s Advice Bureaux.

### 3. MAIN FINDINGS

#### 3.1 Respondent Background

##### 3.1.1 General consumer behaviour

Switching suppliers had become a common experience for most respondents in this sample – more so for gas and electricity suppliers than for telecoms. Gas and electricity suppliers were seen, in recent years, as being more obviously targeting the public with leaflets, door knocking and telephone marketing:

*“It does annoy me. They always phone or call when I’m trying to feed the kids or getting dinner ready.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

*“We seem to have had a lot over the last couple of years.” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

Switching of utilities was usually triggered by direct approaches from competitor companies. Very few respondents had proactively sought to switch suppliers until approached. Successful marketing generally focussed upon financial savings on utility bills. This financial inducement was a key trigger in switching suppliers.

Telecoms suppliers were seen as less aggressive in their marketing. Rural respondents in particular had received very little marketing from telecoms suppliers:

*“We’ve only just got gas round here so the chances of getting cable are minimal!” (Female, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Some more urban based respondents had a wide choice of telecoms suppliers available. Consequently, a number had switched suppliers from BT to cable companies. Most had, again, switched in response to approaches from company representatives and had been particularly attracted by joint TV and telephone packages.

When prompted, respondents felt that comparison information probably existed for anyone who wanted to know more. Retail outlets were perceived as the major likely source for information leaflets. In reality, however, very few respondents had sought comparison information for any type of utility supplier.

A majority of respondents had responded to financial inducements by “...*giving companies a chance...*”:

*“You never know until you try do you? So give it a go and see.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

*“When I left X gas company I told them I was leaving they said, OK and that should anything untoward happen I would be welcome to return.” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Word of mouth also played an important role in switching behaviour. The experiences of friends and family were a major influence on decision making:

*“My sister has been with X for a couple of years. She gets her TV package and then has to pay no line rental on the phone. She suggested I call them. So I did.” (Female, 20-29 years, C2DE)*

A number of respondents had also found they had switched utility suppliers (although not telecoms) without apparently agreeing to do so. They had received letters thanking them for their agreement and indicating that the process was underway. However, these respondents had only spoken briefly to representatives in the street and had not signed any documents. Understandably these respondents were very unhappy. Furthermore, one respondent had actually found that her signature had been forged - the company in question sent her a document which supposedly contained her signature agreeing to a switch. In reality the signature was not hers. Naturally, these respondents had stayed with their original supplier and were now wary of any future approaches.

Problems had arisen amongst a minority of respondents. These problems tended to involve sudden increases in telephone call prices with cable companies. This was

particularly the case when respondents had decided to terminate the TV portion of their package:

*“We weren’t watching much of the cable channels, so we said we didn’t want it anymore, but still wanted the phone. Suddenly the prices went up massively so we went back to X.” (Male, 20-29 years, C2DE)*

### **3.1.2 Current learning about the Internet**

All respondents were currently seeking to obtain Internet access at home. A majority already had computers without Internet access - however, some respondents (particularly women aged 50-60 years) had very little practical knowledge of computers. These latter respondents were not only concerned about accessing the Internet but also about buying a PC:

*“I really don’t know where to begin. I know they will bamboozle me with science.” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

There were a number of factors driving respondent interest in accessing the Internet. First, children and grandchildren. Those with children and grandchildren were very aware of the use of computers in school. Many youngsters were using the Internet for research purposes on specific projects and also in class. This meant that homework sometimes required the use of a PC:

*“They [the children] hadn’t had time to finish some work in class so the teacher said that they should do it at home and e-mail it to her! That says it all really.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

*“It is amazing what my kids know now. They whiz around the computer. It’s like they have been born with a mouse in their hand. I need to know something to keep up with them” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Second, many respondents felt that they were, personally, being left behind by both technology and society as a whole:

*“It’s everywhere, you can’t avoid it.” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

*“Pretty soon everyone will have to have a computer and access or you will be lost. If I don’t get onboard now it will be too late.” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

*“The last computer I went on was a Sinclair Spectrum!” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Interest was also driven by previous and ongoing experience of the Internet, either personally or through friends and family. Many respondents had had access to the Internet at work or at friends’ houses. This had encouraged them to consider purchasing their own system for home access:

*“Well I use it at work a lot, in my own time of course! I use it for buying things and e-mail mostly.” (Male, 20-29, BC1)*

*“My sister has it and she booked her holiday on it and saved loads of money, so I thought I might look into it.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

A number of the more ‘intellectual’ respondents, teachers in particular, were attracted by the unlimited amount of information available:

*“It is amazing. I’d use it for school research but also just for my own interest. It is just unlimited.” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

However, this seemingly enormous volume of information was an attraction for many respondents in general:

*“I just see my sister on it and ask her a question and within seconds there are fifty people with the answer.” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

Overall, the Internet was seen as a very important tool for the future. Many felt that without some level of knowledge or understanding they would be in a minority – and actively disadvantaged in an busy information world

### **3.1.3 Steps taken to access the Internet**

Despite respondent interest in obtaining access to the Internet at home, very few had taken any practical steps toward achieving this. Those with computers at home felt that buying a PC was the first significant step. Others with a fear of computers agreed:

*“Getting into a shop to do that [buy a computer] would set me on the way.” (Female, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

However, these latter respondents were concerned about approaching computer retailers to begin the process:

*“I couldn’t go on my own. I would not have a clue!” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

The second step towards Internet access was seen as talking to friends and family *“...those people who already know what they are doing...”* Many had talked to family members (including children) and friends, although this tended to be a casual, rather than a serious, discussion about what to do next:

*“Whenever I’m round at Dave’s house he is on the Internet. I sit and see what he is doing and ask a few things. He suggests what to do – approach an ISP or something – but it never gets beyond that.”*

*“My brother knows what he is talking about. So I’ll probably ask him when I get round to it.” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

More technologically-aware respondents, typically younger males, felt that they knew enough to effectively set up access at home – when they got around to it:

*“I’ve read enough and been on the Internet enough to know how to go about getting it at home. It’s just a case of getting round to it.” (Male, 20-39 years, BC1)*

Few respondents had searched for any written advice or information about the Internet. Although many were aware that many computer-focussed magazines are available, most felt that these would be too technical for their level of understanding:

*“You would have to wade through loads of stuff just to try and find that bit of information that you need. Most of the stuff I wouldn’t understand.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

For most, the presumed first point of call for independent information would be computer retail stores. Most were aware of the free CD-Roms available in these stores (many were aware that these provided access to the Internet but few were aware that these were provided by ISPs) and, therefore, it was assumed that these stores would have extensive Internet information available:

*“I have seen X [store] has a rack of leaflets about computer stuff. I’ve never picked any up though.”*

Television commercials were also recalled by many. These adverts indicated that a CD-Rom can offer access to the Internet. However, these adverts failed to offer any further guidance as to how to access the Internet:

*“There is that girl with the funny haircut advertising X. They are an Internet service provide aren’t they?” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Overall, very few respondents had sought out any of this type of information.

When prompted as to where they might expect to access independent advice and information, respondents were uncertain:

*“I’m not sure. Is there any?” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

In reality, a majority (excluding younger respondents) did not feel confident or prepared in relation to accessing the Internet. An innate aversion to technical jargon, coupled with a fear of appearing foolish in computer stores, meant that many were

nervous about progressing further with their enquiries. As a first step, all felt that they would like access to straightforward information in order to give them an increased level of confidence.

## **3.2 The Mobile Leaflet**

### **3.2.1 Design and layout**

Respondents were initially attracted by the cover images. A majority found these confusing, with very few able to see the main image as a mouse:

*“A mouse? I thought it was an eye-ball!” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

The ‘keyboard’ image also left many confused. This required moderator explanation before many were able to distinguish a keyboard clearly:

*“I thought it was an arty groups of blocks just to fill space.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Neither of these images were felt to be eye-catching or suggestive of a leaflet about the Internet. Respondents felt that any cover image should be more obviously computer-related:

*“If it’s about the Internet then put a picture of someone on the cover who is using a computer.” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

*“A computer screen would say enough for me! It is obvious what that is about.” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

Respondents felt that a less subtle approach would also be more likely to interest them as well as clearly indicating the leaflet’s subject matter:

*“You don’t get from it that it is about the Internet at all. Neither from the pictures nor the title.” (Male)*

The title itself was not felt to be indicative of the leaflet contents. Furthermore, many felt it was uninspiring and unlikely to attract them:

*“Your rights and choices isn’t really what I need to read about.” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

*“When you do actually read it doesn’t say much about your rights does it?” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

*“I want it to say, ‘Thinking of getting the Internet – here are some things to think about first’. Something a bit more straightforward.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

The title font was also considered too small to effectively attract attention:

*“If you want to attract my attention then say it is about the Internet. Make the Internet bit stand out then I’ll know what it is about.” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

Respondents were more positive about the cover colour. It was considered bright, strong and potentially eye-catching. However, some felt it was too clinical a colour while others felt it was reminiscent of Barclays Bank:

*“It’s a bit hospitably isn’t it. A bit cold!” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

A number of respondents questioned the dark red dots on the front cover.

Respondents were unsure if these were there for a reason or simply part of the design:

*“Am I missing something here?” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

In relation to design work within the leaflet, respondents were more positive. They found the layout simple, straightforward and easy to follow. Generally, the clearly highlighted sectioning and headings were appreciated as was the use of bullet points.

By contrast, pages three and four were felt to be text-heavy and lacking a visual device to break up the text.

The images used inside the leaflet were again confusing for some respondents. Many were unable to understand what the images actually were:

*“A keyboard! I thought it was a radiator.” (Female, , C2DE)*

Respondents recognised that images were useful, but suggested more immediate, obviously Internet-related images:

*“Show a picture of someone using the Internet, or something like that.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Overall, respondents did not like any attempts at subtlety or ‘artiness’. Currently the cover fails to communicate that the leaflet is about the Internet and that it is relevant for those who are considering purchasing an Internet connection. The internal layout was generally praised but many felt that the images needed to be more accessible and relevant.

### ***3.2.2 Expectations of the leaflet***

Given the title, respondents were quite unsure regarding the type of information which the leaflet might contain. ‘Rights and choices’ suggested to many that it would contain legal information for the consumer. The title also suggested that it was a leaflet for people who already have Internet access:

*“It says as an ‘Internet customer’. I’m not, I’m only just planning to get it.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Again this caused respondents to feel uncertain about the possible content and whether the content was targeted at them.

Positive perceptions and expectations were, however, greater amongst those respondents who had some knowledge of Oftel. These respondents felt that Oftel's involvement would ensure that the leaflet would not be:

*"...someone trying to sell me something. They are independent so it should be trustworthy." (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Expectations were further influenced, for some, by fears concerning technology. These respondents instinctively felt that, as the leaflet was about the Internet, it would contain information which they would not understand:

*"I see the word Internet and think, oh God here we go!" (Female, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

These respondents, in particular, would welcome a more simple and accessible title style.

In general, respondents were hopeful that the leaflet would be helpful. The cover image and title, however, led them to believe it was targeting a more knowledgeable segment of the public.

### **3.2.3 Contents page**

Virtually all respondents had read the contents page and most found subject areas that were of potential interest. Areas that were indicated as being of particular interest were those featuring terms or words which respondents had heard before, but did not totally understand - for example, ISP and broadband.

Other areas of interest, particularly for the parents within the sample, were 'How do I pay' and 'how do I get the best deal'. These respondents were aware that having the Internet at home would cause their children to spend many hours 'surfing'. As a consequence, cost issues were of great importance:

*“Without a doubt cost is something I have to think about.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

A number again commented on the “...weird...” image at the bottom of the page and questioned its value:

*“I don’t think it adds anything.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

*“I think it just distracts from the contents!” (Male, 20-29 years, C2DE)*

On the whole, respondents were keen on the inclusion of a contents page, however, there were suggestions that greater detail should be included. As many were parents, issues such as child security were of interest and concern. Highlighting these areas in the contents would further emphasise the potential value of the leaflet for these respondents.

### **3.2.4 Who is Oftel?**

A majority of respondents recognised the Oftel name and linked it with independence. Those respondents who had not previously heard of Oftel recognised the ‘Of’ label structure and simply assumed that Oftel was similar to Ofsted and Ofwat:

*“I’d assume they were a watchdog body for the telephone industry?” (Female, 20-29 years, C2DE)*

A small number were initially unsure as to why Oftel – as a telephone body – would be producing a leaflet about the Internet. However, a majority felt that Oftel’s involvement gave credibility and independence to the leaflet:

*“You’d expect the truth I suppose, not sales stuff.” (Male, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Reading this section simply clarified an understanding of Oftel’s role. However, the additional ‘Oftel wants to see choice and value for money.....’ sentence was felt to offer encouragement that Oftel was on “...our side...”

A small number of respondents felt that this paragraph should include a comment on Oftel's independence, highlighting the fact that this is one of the only independent leaflets available:

*“Oftel's independence is one of their strengths. Highlighting this definitely adds to the feeling of trustworthiness.” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Respondents also noted that this paragraph hinted at what the leaflet was about, which was appreciated:

*“It mentions about getting the best, that's what we want.” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

### **3.2.5 A guide to accessing the Internet at home**

#### ***Who should read this leaflet?***

This section clearly explained whether the leaflet was relevant for these respondents. All respondents, excluding the younger 'Internet aware' segment, were able to locate themselves in this section. This confirmed that the leaflet would probably be useful:

*“This just states it very clearly. If you are one of these people then this could be for you. Excellent.”*

Because respondents located themselves in this section, they were encouraged to read further:

*“Well it is definitely targeted at me!” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Respondents noted that ISPs were mentioned in both of the first two sections – without, however, any explanation of the term. For some, particularly non-computer literate respondents, this confirmed initial fears about a jargon filled leaflet:

*“We’re two paragraphs in and ISPs have been mentioned twice. I know they spell it out, but what are they!?” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

It is worth noting that respondents particularly appreciated the sections where abbreviations were accompanied by a statement of the full title:

*“There are a couple of time later on where it doesn’t do this and I don’t like that.” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

Showing the full spelling added meaning to otherwise unknown abbreviations. This made respondents more comfortable with the subject matter and language of the leaflet:

*“It doesn’t matter if you don’t understand exactly what it is saying but it does clarify it a bit.” (Male, 30-49, BC1)*

Overall, this section encouraged respondents to continue reading the leaflet. Recognising themselves in these paragraphs relaxed respondents and made them believe that any further information would be presented in an comprehensible fashion.

### ***What is this leaflet going to tell me?***

Although respondents did not overtly dislike this section, many felt that it simply repeated the information offered in the first two sections:

*“It just says the same really.” (Female, 20-29 years BC1)*

It was suggested that the second paragraph in this section could easily be included in the last paragraph of the ‘Who should...’ section. This would create more room for some of the additional information which respondents requested in later sections.

Generally, respondents did not feel this section either added to the leaflet’s general value or encouraged further reading:

*“I’ve gathered by now what the leaflet is about and that it is for me!” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

***What do I need to access the Internet at home?***

Initial responses to the ‘**You need a screen**’ title were sarcasm and laughter:

*“Erm, even I know that.” (Female, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Some respondents recognised that ‘screen’ is a piece of insider terminology, but most interpreted this literally and missed the wider meaning of the term.

Despite this, respondents recognised that this was an attempt to “...begin at the beginning...”. Reflecting this, respondents felt the accompanying image could be more obviously related to the section’s subject matter, for example, a computer monitor:

*“It just makes it fit better and says it’s about computers.” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

All respondents recognised the term PC and understood that this was the most common way to access the Internet - a minority thought this was the only way. These respondents were very unsure about other ways in which it could be accessed.

A majority recognised the term ‘Internet-browser software’ - and those who had not seen it before felt that it was self-explanatory:

*“I assume from the name that it is a computer program that lets you look on the Internet.” (Female, 20-49 years, C2DE)*

Modem was also understood by all respondents, who recognised that they were “...What connected you to the Internet...”. Some clearly had a greater understanding of modems and spoke of different speeds and that they were “...modulators/demodulators...”. Generally, however, all respondents felt comfortable with the term.

'Internet-ready', was also considered a self-explanatory term. Some respondents, particularly C2DE respondents, appreciated the hint to check older computers:

*"That is a good idea. A lot of people buy computers second hand, so they should check first. That is a good tip!" (Female, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

The other methods of accessing the Internet mentioned were of less interest to a majority of the sample. A number of respondents had mobile access and had either never used it or found it slow and tedious:

*"I've got it and it is crap. Really slow and expensive." (Female, 20-29 years, BC1)*

'3G' was a term recognised from news programs and the media in general, although most did not appreciate its meaning. In general, however, respondents felt that a mention was all that was necessary:

*"If you want to know more, then they have given you the name you can go out and look further. Giving more detail would confuse things." (Male, 20-29 years, BC1)*

Personal digital assistants were not widely recognised by many of the sample. Younger males, however, were more aware of these products. Older respondents, in particular, could not understand what personal digital assistants might be:

*"Is it like a secretary who does all your computer work for you?" (Male, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

When prompted by the term 'palm-top computer', however, respondents obviously recognised the concept. Most felt that the inclusion of this additional name would increase their understanding. Overall, however, many respondents did not want further information regarding PDAs.

A majority were aware of access to the Internet through games consoles and digital television - however, only a small number had experience of these media. Those with experience had been disappointed by its limitations, a point noted in the text. One

respondent was considering this as an option but after reading about limited access she changed her mind immediately:

*“That is important to know. They don’t highlight that in the adverts!” (Female, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Generally, respondents felt that this information was useful and warranted inclusion. However, none wanted greater detail regarding any of the additional methods of accessing the Internet.

No respondents had accessed the Oftel website and respondents were unsure as to what it would offer. Mention of the price calculators, by the moderator, increased respondent interest:

*“Oh, something to save money. I might have a look when I’m at work and see what else there is there.” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

***You need access to the network e.g. the telephone or cable network***

This section was of immediate interest to respondents. A majority had heard the term ‘broadband’ previously but were unsure of what it actually meant.

All recognised that they would need access through a fixed phone line but most were unsure what mobile, satellite and fixed wireless access meant. Some felt that they would like these options explained further, while others were concerned that the explanation might become too complex.

Narrow-band was not a widely recognised term and, for some, neither was ‘dial up’. Dial up, was, however, considered “...*easy to work out what it means...*”. Broadband aroused the greatest interest amongst respondents and some felt that a more detailed explanation should be given:

*“This is where it mentions it, so you are left thinking well, what is it?” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

In general, however, most recognised that detailed explanations would follow later. Requests were, therefore, made for the relevant page number to be highlighted:

*“It says later, see page 10 or something. Put that in here then you can jump ahead if you want to.” (Male, 30-49, BC1)*

Most respondents had not realised that broadband would not be available everywhere. For rural respondents in particular, this was a concern. Reading ahead in the leaflet many had been attracted by the concept of broadband and sadly expected that ‘limited availability’ meant rural areas:

*“That would be right. We won’t be able to get it.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Respondents did, however, appreciate being advised about this problem.

### ***You need an Internet service provider***

For many respondents, notably older segments of the sample, this section explored unknown territory. Although ISP was a term that most had heard, these older respondents clearly had little concept of what ISPs actually are. Importantly, this section does not offer any level of explanation:

*“It says my ISP will provide access to the Internet, but it doesn’t say what an ISP is or where to get one.” (Female, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Equally, a number of these older respondents, with little or no computer knowledge, did not know what an ‘icon’ was – more detail was requested:

*“I know what an icon is in real terms, but on a computer?” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

Overall, a majority of respondents felt that this was not new information – and many felt that they could guess at what an ISP was:

*“Is the company, like X. that you sign up to an ISP?” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

However, for the less computer literate, terms such as ISP and icon may require a sentence of explanation, otherwise these respondents might feel that the leaflet is becoming too complicated.

### **3.2.6 What should I consider when choosing an ISP and Internet package?**

#### ***The main things to consider***

Overall, this section was seen as an excellent ‘tick list’ and reference device. Those respondents with greater Internet knowledge felt that there was nothing new in the list, but still saw it as a potentially useful tool:

*“It serves as a good reminder of the key points to consider.” (Male, 20-29 years, BC1)*

Equally, less knowledgeable respondents clearly saw the value in the list. A majority agreed with each point in turn “...yes, you’d think about that...” but also felt that the final three points offered some new information for consideration:

*“I would never have thought about levels of customer support, or whether it offered free e-mail. I’d assumed all e-mail would be free.” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Respondents also appreciated direction to other sections:

*“That’s what they didn’t do earlier with the broadband bit.” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Overall, this section was seen as extremely important and useful by a majority of the sample.

### ***3.2.7 How do I pay?***

Respondents had been attracted to this section by the contents page - because of the financial references in the title. The first two paragraphs were considered simple to understand and offered little in the way of new information:

*“I assumed it would cost extra.” (Male, 5-60 years, C2DE)*

Equally, all respondents were aware that different payment options existed, although many were unsure about the nature of these.

#### ***The following packages refer to narrowband access using a PC:***

A majority of respondents failed to read and understand this title, instead moving directly to the first payment option presented. Consequently, few noticed that these initial payment options related to narrow-band only (unlike the broadband section, narrow-band does not have a clear, black heading). Furthermore, given some respondents lack of familiarity with the term narrowband, many suggested that ‘dial up’ should be added in brackets to the main title.

#### ***Metered or ‘pay-as-you-go’***

Respondents were most familiar with this concept. However, many (especially the less knowledgeable) had no idea of the actual costs involved and, therefore, inclusion of specific figures was appreciated. Many of these same respondents were also unaware that calls were usually charged at local rate. An additional subscription fee was also a factor which many had not considered.

#### ***Un-metered off-peak***

A majority had heard of this option;

*“That’s what my brother does. They are free in the evenings and at weekends.”*  
(Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)

### ***Un-metered 24/7***

This section was confusing for some respondents. It mentioned broadband as having un-metered access but respondents thought this was a section on narrowband:

*“Can you have un-metered on narrowband then?”* (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)

This issue required clarification.

The italicised paragraphs in this section were appreciated by respondents. These paragraphs allowed respondents to easily calculate which option would be the best for them:

*“I like that. It gives you the idea then says, do you fit into this category.”* (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)

Overall, this section was considered valuable, particularly for those with little Internet knowledge. Some minor clarifications regarding costs in relation to narrowband and broadband are required.

### ***3.2.7 How can I get the best deal?***

At this point respondents were quite clear about the type of information which leaflet was able to provide. As such, the information in this section met respondents expectations:

*“I know they can’t put price comparisons and comparisons of different ISPs so this just hints at how to go about checking for yourself.”* (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)

Most, apart from younger males, felt that they would not read specialist computer magazines because of the perceived complexity and jargon.

Libraries were considered a potential source for information by these respondents. Many older respondents, and those with children, were regular users of libraries - and library staff were considered helpful and knowledgeable. Respondents felt that gaining access to the Internet with staff help may be a useful option.

Friends and family were clearly seen as a useful source of advice. For most this route was likely to be a first option and give important guidance. In reality, however, respondents were aware that this advice would not be independent.

Overall, this section was seen as basic, but useful advice.

### ***3.2.8 Can I change my ISP or Internet package if I'm not happy?***

Contracts were a subject which concerned many respondents. Some respondents had experienced problems with contracts in the past and recognised the need to consider this aspect carefully before purchasing the Internet:

*“I had this before. It does pay to check details. You tend to think of price first, but other details are so important.” (Male, 20-29 years, BC1)*

Generally, the information in the section was seen as standard advice for all types of contracts, however, a majority felt that they would not have considered e-mail addresses when changing ISPs:

*“That would have been the last thing I thought of.” (Female, 20-29 years, BC1)*

Equally, a majority had not considered building their own web-site:

*“MY own website! I wouldn't know what to do with it!” (Male, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Overall, this section was seen as a reminder that “...*contracts were contracts...*” and that all details should be checked. Some respondents spotted new and potentially useful information, which they were aware that they should consider:

*“It is a case or forewarned is forearmed isn’t it.” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

### **3.2.9 What is Broadband?**

This section was of interest to most respondents. A majority had heard the term broadband in the media and from friends and family. Most, however, were unclear as to its meaning:

*“I’ve kept on hearing this from my son, talking about his computers at school. I nod at what he says, but I haven’t got a clue.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Respondents were extremely interested in this section. After reading the text all felt that they had a basic grasp of what broadband is and what it could offer them. Although most had no basic concept of Internet access speeds, many were surprised that access with broadband was ten times as fast:

*“That sounds good. At my brother’s he doesn’t have that and I know he complains about sitting there waiting for pages on the Internet.” (Male, 30-49 years, BC1)*

A majority did not know that broadband also allowed the use of their normal telephone line at the same time as Internet access. For many this was important:

*“I know the kids will be on it for hours and I just assumed I wouldn’t be able to use the phone.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Information regarding ADSL and cable modems proved confusing for some respondents. These terms were not explained and neither were the abbreviations clarified. This was infuriating:

*“There, they’ve done it again. ADSL what is it?” (Male, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Respondents recognised that a detailed explanation of these terms may be confusing, but some level of further explanation was required.

Mention of engineers raised concerns about the possible costs of upgrading a telephone line. Although respondents recognised that specific prices could not be printed, the inclusion of a sentence stating that some costs may be incurred would be valuable:

*“I asked BT to put another line in and they said it would cost £75 quid. So I assume that having this fitted would cost!?” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Information regarding satellite and fixed wireless access was again confusing for many respondents. The lack of any clear explanation meant that this paragraph was often bypassed by respondents:

*“Is satellite where the Internet information is bounced up to a satellite and them back to the phonline? From another country?” (Female, 50-60 years, BC1)*

*“I wasn’t sure if that bit was relevant or not.” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Overall, this information seemed confusing if no adequate explanation is offered.

The final paragraph in this section disappointed some respondents, particularly those living in rural areas:

*“So from this, it is unlikely we’ll be able to get it anyway. I assume it will only be in cities?” (Male, 50-60 years, C2DE)*

Overall, this section provided a great deal of new information. Also, respondents were extremely pleased that they now knew more concerning the nature of broadband:

*“This explains it so simply. When people talk about it now I won’t feel embarrassed. That was really good.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Clarification regarding alternative access methods was requested - although those with little current technical knowledge felt that any more detail could increase confusion and were evidently fearful about being bombarded with computer jargon.

### **3.2.10 Other questions about the Internet**

#### ***What is the Internet and how can I benefit from it?***

Immediate responses to this section were that it is misplaced in the leaflet:

*“That should be right at the beginning. If it is for complete novices then before we find out how to get on it we should find out what it is.” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Only a minority had previously heard of UK Online. Furthermore, few respondents could recall any other sources of information about the Internet:

*“That is actually interesting. I’d be interested in calling that number. Unless it is going to blind me with science. Could they say in the leaflet that it is a simple information helpline?” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

#### ***How can I make sure my children are safe online?***

This section was of great interest to most respondents – the sample included many parents and grandparents. Recent media reports had raised concerns about children accessing questionable websites. Many were aware that schools had placed ‘locks’ on some sites (avoiding sex and violence) and wondered if they would be able to do this – requests were made for a sentence outlining possible options:

*“She [daughter] knows more than me, so any advice would help.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

Many respondents were interested in phoning the helpline and were pleased that this was an access option in addition to the web-site.

Overall, this section (and this topic in general) was of great interest to many respondents and most felt that it should be highlighted in the contents page:

*“That is one of the major worries about having the Internet at home. The kids in the bedroom on their own. This in the contents would draw me to it straight away, it is something I want to know about before I get the Internet.” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

***Where can I find advice about premium rate services on the Internet?***

Many respondents had not heard of premium rate sites and most wanted to know what these were. Although the section was easy to understand, examples of this type of site would be very useful.

A major concern for respondents was awareness - knowing when they might have entered one of these sites:

*“Does it warn you first?” (Male, 20-29 years, C2DE)*

Respondents also wanted to know whether these premium rate sites would appear on the phone bill:

*“It would make me keep an eye on the phone bill with the kids using it!” (Female, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

Most doubted that they would access the web-site or call the phone number, but as this was new information it was considered useful for reference.

***Where can I find advice about shopping online?***

Since most respondents felt that shopping online would be a growing phenomenon, there were clear concerns regarding this subject. Security was of prime concern, as were methods of recognising whether a site was secure:

*“I am really worried about using my credit card online. How do I know it is safe.”*  
(Male, 50-60 years, BC1)

Reflecting this level of concern, any advice was seen as useful. Most wanted a phone number to call, but recognised that their library could be a first point of call.

***Where can I get advice for small businesses?***

All respondents felt that this section was “...not for me...”. However, it was recognised that, for some, this would be useful information.

***What do I do if I have a complaint about my ISP?***

Most considered this section a useful reminder rather than obviously relevant advice. The reminder list was seen as common sense but many recognised that:

*“...in the heat of the moment how often do you get those details. It is a useful reminder.”* (Male, 50-60 years, C2DE)

Respondents were also pleased that Oftel was presenting itself as a body which could be contacted should problems persist. However, many noticed that Oftel could not always guarantee to resolve complaints. Interestingly, this did not impact negatively upon Oftel. Instead respondents felt that any impartial, independent, advice would be useful.

### **3.2.11 Contact Details**

Contact details were appreciated. For many of these respondents the Internet generates a number of concerns – consequently, simply knowing that help and advice is available was extremely reassuring:

*“It makes you feel that you are not stuck out on a limb. Some one is there to help and answer your questions.” (Female, 20-29 years, C2DE)*

### **3.2.11 Language and tone**

Respondents found the language and tone a pleasant surprise. There were initial concerns that computer jargon would overwhelm the leaflet. These anxieties were alleviated very quickly.

Where jargon was used it was seen as, for the most part, justifiable (and mostly explained). Some respondents felt that a number of abbreviations within the leaflet needed clarifying in order to avoid frustration:

*“I just can’t stand it. Some abbreviations are spelled out and some aren’t. I don’t want loads of detail just what does it stand for!” (Male, 50-60 years, BC1)*

Tonally, respondents found the leaflet friendly and approachable. The subject of the Internet was, for many, an area of concern. This simple approach was both surprising and much appreciated:

*“I went in thinking God this is going to be difficult to understand. I came out knowing more but also not feeling swamped.” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

### **3.2.12 Impact/Action**

It became clear throughout the research that respondents were generally interested in following up some of the contacts offered in the leaflet. Furthermore, many felt that

they would now be less fearful of approaching friends, family and computer retailers about the Internet:

*“I do feel that I could speak to them and have some idea about what they are talking about. When they mention broadband I KNOW what it is!” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

In reality, this leaflet gave some respondents greater confidence in an subject area which they felt they would never properly understand. Consequently, a number felt that their timescales for access the Internet would now be accelerated.

### **3.2.13 Availability**

In terms of availability respondents suggested a number of possible relevant sources. First choice was computer retailers. Although some recognised that they may not be too keen to offer advice that may affect their sales, this was seen as the ideal route:

*“It is where I’ll go to buy a computer and where I’d go for advice. Stick the leaflet on their counters!” (Male, 30-49 years, C2DE)*

The Post Office, Libraries, Supermarket Community Boards and Citizens’ Advice Bureaux were also suggested.

In its current design format, however, a majority felt that they would not pick the leaflet up. Increased clarity regarding the communication of subject matter and improved cover images were requested:

*“Simply highlight what it is about!” (Female, 30-49 years, BC1)*

#### 4. Current Internet Users, who were switching ISP

This group were very familiar with most of the information offered by the leaflet. As experienced Internet consumers they were sceptical about some of the advice being offered.

Most comments focussed on the section dealing with getting the 'best deal' – respondents felt that, in their experience, computer magazines offered very little useful information regarding different Internet options. Most believed that finding good independent advice was very difficult and that it was necessary to use business-focussed sources in order to access reliable data.

Equally, most dismissed the library as a realistic source for useful consumer information. Most felt that novice Internet users would require a lot of help to effectively use library facilities to search the net for information – and that this may not be easy to find.

Importantly, all the respondents felt that friends and family were the worst sources of information regarding ISPs – and all could cite advice which had proved disastrous in the longer-term. There was a feeling that potential users should clearly work out what they actually want to achieve before seeking inputs from others:

*“I bought into what my family said was the best option and it was terrible – OK for the kids and messing about, but I wanted to do some fairly sophisticated things and I simply couldn't achieve any of them.....in the end I had to start again and go back to the basics – even now I'm still trying to get where I want to be...” (Male 50-60 years, BC1)*

Overall, this group felt that the leaflet was authoritative, well-written and free from jargon. They saw it as an excellent starting-point for beginners and a valuable reference tool for even the experienced Internet user. Their views regarding design features and the front cover in particular were the same as those expressed by the main body of the sample.

## 4. APPENDIX

### 4.1 Topic Guide

#### Introduction

- Introduce self, company, MRS code of conduct, confidentiality and the task of the session (to review a consumer leaflet)
- Individually - name, age, family, job, hobbies/lifestyle

#### Background – Switching Suppliers

##### *Information about you as consumers first:*

Generally:

- Have you ever switched utility supplier, or thought about switching supplier?  
*E.g. gas electric, telecoms etc*
- What prompted you to switch these suppliers? (*probe adverts, word of mouth, information leaflets, problems*)
- How did you go about choosing a new supplier? *What information was the decision based on?*
- Did you seek out information yourself or was it given to you? *Who by?*

#### Current Learning about the Internet

- Who is currently looking to get Internet access at home?
- Why are you planning to get Internet access – what factors are driving your interest?
- What do you hope to achieve using the Internet?
- What actual experience do you have of the Internet? *Probe: Work usage*
- Do you have any friends or family with Internet access?
- Will they help you or offer advice?
  
- What have you done so far in relation to getting the Internet?
- What sources have been the main aids, or what sources have provided the most assistance, in relation to your Internet planning?
- What have been the main barriers to learning about the Internet?
- What specific information have you obtained?
- Where did this information come from and how satisfied are you with what you have learned?
- Any examples of particularly helpful or unhelpful material?
- How well prepared do you feel in relation to getting the Internet – what else would you like to know?

### **(For Switchers Only) Individual Internet history**

- Who is your current Internet provider?
- What is your current access method? *Why did you choose this?*
- Any plans to change access method? *Why?*
- Have you had any other past providers? *Who were they? Why did you switch?*
- Have you ever wanted, or had, to get more information as an Internet consumer? *What was this regarding?*
- Did you seek out any information in relation to your Internet service? *If yes: Where from? If no: why not?*
- Overall, have you been most interested in knowing your rights as a consumer or simply getting more information about your Internet service?
- Was this information useful? *Why/ why not?*
- How did you resolve the problem?
- What information about the Internet had you seen before choosing your own service/provider?
- Where did they see this?
- How useful was it? *Why?*

### **Leaflet content – General**

- Before you read the leaflet, what were you expecting to find in the leaflet?
- What specific subject areas?
- What would you wanted to have read about? *(at flip-chart – write down the areas that people wanted to know about)*

### **Examine each section in detail: Use pre-tasking forms here**

#### *Contents page*

- Did any of you read the contents page? Why/not?
- Which bits on the list caught your attention?

#### **Oftel**

- Were you aware of Oftel prior to reading the leaflet? *Where had you heard of them and in what context?*
- Were you aware of Oftel's role prior to reading the leaflet?
- Are you now clear as to Oftel's role after reading the leaflet? *If not why not?*
- Were you interested in reading about Oftel? Why/not?

### **Each section will be examined in turn for:**

- Was there too much or too little information?
- What information in this section did you already know/not already know?
- What information is missing that they want?

- What information is included that they don't want?
- Did certain aspects need more explanation? *If so, which aspects?*
- Would you be likely to contact any of the organisations mentioned in the section? *Which companies? Will they contact them shortly, or as the need arises?*
- Do you have access to the web?
- Have you ever used a best buy calculator? Would you try one?
- Did you understand the language used? *Probe:*

*ISP*

*Internet package*

*Broadband – high speed*

*Narrowband – dial-up*

*Internet-browser*

*Internet-explorer*

*Netscape navigator*

*3G*

*Personal digital assistants*

*PC*

*Flat-rate*

### **Overall content**

- What did you think of the information contained in this leaflet?
- Who do they think that it is aimed at? *Who would benefit from reading it?*
- How easy was it to read/understand/follow? *Why, why not?*
- How did they feel about the language/technical terms used? *Were these easy to follow/understand?*
- Was/is the information useful? *Why/Why not?*
- Did it answer any queries? *If not: what additional information would be needed? What was the query?*
- What information in the leaflet did you already know/not already know?
- Was there too much or too little information?
- What information is missing that they want?
- What information is included that they do not want?
- Did certain aspects need more explanation? *If so, which aspects?*
- Would you be likely to contact any of the organisations mentioned in the leaflets? *Which and why? Will they contact them now, or as the need arises?*

### ***Not sure:***

- Did they notice the Plain English Campaign Logo? Do they recognise this – do they know what it means?
- Does the PEC logo add value to, or increase interest in, the leaflet? *Why/why not?*

### **Impact/Action**

- What action might you take as a result of reading the leaflet? *Why?*
- Did it/will it change your behaviour in any way? *If so, how?*
- Is there any other information that you might need in order to take action?
- Do you think that using the information presented in this leaflet will enable you to get a better deal, or make the right choices, in relation to your Internet service? *Why/why not?*
- How likely would they be to keep this leaflet for future reference? *Why do you say that?*

### **Leaflet design, layout**

- What do they think of each leaflet design?
- Do you think the designs are attractive? *Likes and dislikes?*
- What do you think of the colours and pictures?
- Does the title of the leaflet reflect the content? *Why/why not?*
- Suggestions for improvement

### **Availability**

- If received or saw in outlet – how likely to pick up and look? *Why/why not?*
- Where would they like to see these leaflets available? *Why?*
- How likely would you be to use these leaflets? *When?*

### **Sum Up**

- Any other comments?

COLLECT IN ALL THE LEAFLETS!!!!