

Working in IT

What's in this Working in IT resource?

- Guidance for teachers*.
- A bank of learner activities to enable learners to explore the topic.

* We use 'teaching and learning' and 'teacher' as generic terms to include:

- teaching, training and learning; and
- teachers, tutors, trainers, lecturers and instructors in the further education (FE) system.

This resource is intended to be used in conjunction with the Employer challenges, which offer case studies illustrating many aspects of working in IT.

Resources in this area	
Overview	Introduction: raising learners' awareness.
Getting started	Prompts and quick links to help you find the resources that may be most relevant for you and your learners.
Going deeper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to the topic in different contexts. • Using the topic to promote the expert learner. • Using the topic to embed literacy, language and numeracy (LLN).
Working with employers	A quick start guide to engaging with local businesses.
Activities	A bank of learner activities to enable learners to explore various aspects of working in IT.

Introduction: raising learners' awareness

The number of different jobs within the IT industry is large and growing. Learners find it difficult to get a picture of the opportunities available to them, as the types of jobs available are changing rapidly.

Many businesses today employ both IT specialists and IT users. The Employer challenges offer insights into the work of both. They also show IT in action, both in non-traditional contexts such as an orchestra and a farming co-operative.

It is important to encourage learners to explore and consider the various possibilities in the IT industry. The Employer challenges may inspire them to consider work beyond the obvious areas.

IT professionals follow many different career paths. Many develop their skills and knowledge through a combination of learning on the job and attending specialised courses that are sponsored by their employer. So an important first step is to find a job in IT that will provide experience and further training. Learners need to understand this. They also need to develop their understanding of the skills and attitudes that employers seek when recruiting IT staff.

Getting started

Prompts and quick links to help you find the resources that may be most relevant for you and your learners.

Prompts	Relevant resources
My learners appreciate the role that IT plays in a wide range of organisations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer challenges
My learners understand the variety of IT jobs that they might consider.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer challenges • Meet the professionals: Learner activity (page 13)
My learners are aware of the stereotyping of people who work in IT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond stereotypes: Learner activity (page 19)
My learners understand how IT projects are delivered by teams with complementary skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects and personnel: Learner activity (page 32)
My learners understand the range of skills needed to work in IT.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Projects and personnel: Learner activity (page 32) • Meet the professionals: Learner activity (page 13)
My learners understand the importance of telephone and customer care skills.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone and customer care skills in user support: Learner activity (page 40)
My learners are aware of the equality and diversity issues that can arise.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Beyond stereotypes: Learner activity (page 19) • Who is the best person for the job? Learner activity (page 21)
My learners take part in activities that bring them into direct contact with local businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Working with employers: Guidance notes (page 6)
I want to know how to help my learners get the most out of studying this topic.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Approaches to the topic in different contexts: Guidance notes (page 4) • Using the topic to promote the expert learner: Guidance notes (page 5) • Using the topic to embed literacy, language and numeracy (LLN): Guidance notes (page 5)

Going deeper

Approaches to the topic in different contexts

Work-based learning

Work-based IT learners will, quite naturally, have direct experience of working in IT. However, they are still likely to benefit from studying the topic in order to broaden their horizons. Some may be in the IT user strand of learning at present, but may wish to progress into a more technical strand. Some might be in large organisations, but have very narrow job roles. Others may be in small companies where they have to turn their hands to many tasks, but where the technology is limited.

Further education

College-based learners with no previous experience of working in IT are likely to find the Employer challenges a useful starting point. These familiarise learners with some of the complexities of job titles and roles, and place the topic of working in IT into a real-world context. College-based learners may also be currently undecided about what kind of IT job they aspire to. The resources may help them start thinking about some of the possibilities.

Adult learning

In adult learning the needs of learners are likely to be very diverse in relation to this topic. Some adults will have signed up for IT courses because they wish to improve their job prospects, while others will be attending – to learn IT for general interest. But even the latter group may be interested in finding out a little more about the IT industry. IT tutors in adult learning will need to find out about their learners' needs and interests in order to select the activities that are most relevant.

Planning learning in multiple environments

These activities can be integrated into individual learning plans in a number of ways, including:

- using the activities at the point where learners are about to seek work placements, or are preparing to apply for jobs
- using learners' own work experience as a source of information
- setting up opportunities for learners to work with local businesses and/or carry out real-life IT projects.

Many of the resources can be adapted for independent study. Those that require learner interaction can often be used with a small group of learners in the workplace, as well as with larger groups.

Using the topic to promote the expert learner

The topic of working in IT is in many ways a highly personal one, allowing scope for learners to think about important matters that could affect their future. Learners might explore the following questions.

- What do I actually know about working in IT?
- What am I basing my ideas on?
- Am I influenced by my peers, my family, the media?
- Am I making assumptions – about myself or about IT jobs?
- How can I test these out?
- What do I need to learn about working in IT?
- How best can I learn? Do I need to talk to people, go on placements and so on?

Using the topic to embed literacy, language and numeracy (LLN)

The topic, working in IT, provides lots of opportunities for the all-round development of learners' listening, speaking, reading and writing skills. The Employer challenges and the activity **Telephone and customer care skills in user support** all require intensive use of listening skills. Individual research and note taking forms an important part of several of the activities, and all activities offer opportunities for group discussions.

At Level 1

- Listen for and identify relevant information from explanations and presentations on a range of straightforward topics.
- Judge how much to write and the level of detail to include.
- Follow and contribute to discussions on a range of topics.

At Level 2

- Listen for and identify relevant information from extended explanations or presentations on a range of topics.
- Judge how much to write and the level of detail to include.
- Make relevant contributions and help to move discussions forward.
- Support opinions and arguments with evidence.

Useful activities to extend the LLN aspects

- Role playing job interviews.
- Planning the questions employers might ask.
- Planning questions to ask a visitor from a local business or a visiting IT professional.
- Researching and writing 'A day in the life of ...' (for example, a Computer Programmer, a Web Designer).

Working with employers

A quick start guide to engaging with local businesses

Information and communication technologies play a role in almost every business, even the smallest ones. This means there are many possibilities for IT learners to get involved with local businesses in some shape or form.

This guide contains tips on:

- ways of working with local businesses
- how to find businesses to work with
- points to take into consideration.

It also includes examples of the different ways education providers can work with local businesses to benefit their learners.

The benefits to learners

Involvement with a local business can:

- develop learners' understanding of enterprise and business issues
- raise learners' awareness of the skills and attitudes that employers are seeking
- pose real-life IT challenges which form the basis of exciting learning projects
- motivate reluctant learners
- encourage learners to recognise how they can learn in multiple environments.

Ways of working with a local business

Working with a local business can take many forms, all of which have value.

The term 'local business' can include public sector organisations and voluntary groups, as well as private businesses.

Try the following approaches:

- **Fact-finding missions**
Learners visit a local business to research a specific topic, such as how the business uses IT to manage the supply chain.
- **Hot seat**
A representative of a local business comes to your premises and answers questions posed by the learners. The visitor is invited to take the 'hot seat', hence the title of the activity. The rules are simple: the learners can ask any question they like, but the person in the hot seat can refuse to answer the question.

- **Employer challenge**

A local business sets a challenge for learners, based on a real problem that they are trying to solve. Learners' proposed solutions are judged by someone from the business. Learners may even help the business to implement the solution.

- **Enterprise project**

Learners set up and run their own IT-related business. There are a number of national bodies and initiatives that can help with this, such as Young Enterprise and The Prince's Trust.

How to find a local business

Personal contacts are still enormously important in the business world, so the strategies below are more likely to be successful in getting you an introduction.

- Ask your colleagues if they have any friends or relatives who run local businesses.
- Ask your learners if any of them have family members who own or manage local businesses.
- Ask former learners who now work for (or run) local businesses.

Or, use an intermediary who works in the business support sector (see Using intermediaries).

Using intermediaries

There are a number of intermediaries who may be able to offer you advice and contacts.

National Education Business Partnership Network

Education Business Partnerships (EBPs) help identify and introduce local businesses to education providers and vice versa. Most providers will already have a relationship in place with their local EBP. If not, the national website www.nebpn.org will give you an overview of the service provided and a link to your local services.

Business Link

Each area of England has its own government-supported Business Link. The services provided by local Business Links vary considerably. The national website www.businesslink.gov.uk will give you an idea of the sort of information businesses need, but will not tell you how Business Link operates in your locality. For that information you will need to approach your local Business Link. Examples of local Business Link websites include:

- www.businesslinksw.co.uk
- www.blinkdandc.com
- www.businesslinksolutions.co.uk
- www.cambs.businesslink.co.uk

Enterprise agencies and other local organisations

If you have a local enterprise agency, they are well worth talking to and will have many useful contacts. Put the words 'enterprise agency' and a geographical tag into a search engine to see if you have a local agency. There may also be organisations in your area specialising in supporting particular businesses, such as start-ups agencies, minority ethnic business or businesses in a particular sector, such as cultural industries.

You might also find it helpful to consult your business development or careers officer if your organisation has one. They may be able to recommend some local contacts or know of any existing relationships with local businesses.

Points to consider

- Don't be over-ambitious.
- Identify how the relationship with a local business could be mutually beneficial.
- Don't overburden the business with too many learners or too many requests.
- Prepare your learners well before they have any contact with a local business. Make sure they understand the behaviour expected and understand issues such as commercially sensitive information.
- Ensure every minute spent with a local business is used productively.
- Sell the benefits of working with your learners:
 - the business can develop and explore ideas about using IT before approaching suppliers
 - the business may find suitable new recruits among your learners
 - the business will be able to influence what the learners learn, making learning more relevant to the needs of employers.

A business describes the benefits of working with learners from the local college:

"... we get an input into their training, [it] also gives the college an up-to-date view of what we as employers expect in the trade."

"... people are pre-prepared for the situations they might encounter, not only does it make them more confident in interviews to obtain their first jobs and positions even, but it will actually help them throughout their own life..."

Martin Polmountier, Steve Andrews Tyres

IT enterprise at Chichester

IT learners in the second year of the BTEC National course at Chichester College are about to launch four businesses offering IT technical support to the staff and students of the college. They are being supported by business mentors from Chichester Business School and The Prince's Trust.

Carole Holmes, Curriculum Team Manager, described how she has helped her learners get this far.

“At first I went around Chichester knocking on doors, hoping to find businesses to work with us. But that was not really effective. So I came up with the idea of enabling the students to set up businesses within the college. It has taken a year to get to this point, as I had to do a lot of planning with the students.

I realised I could not support the students’ businesses myself, so I arranged for the Business School and The Prince’s Trust to provide mentors. They advise the students about such things as developing a business plan.

I also had to think about how the project would link to assessment requirements. I have planned how students will generate evidence of their skills and knowledge for assessment purposes.

I have made sure students know their starting points and fully understand the skills and knowledge they are aiming to develop during the project. They know that, although they are working in teams, their individual contributions will be recorded and recognised.

You have to get the students on board at the very beginning. They are not used to working so autonomously. They have to get used to seeing me in a different role – leading them along the path, but not giving them the answers.

It’s a lot more challenging for the students, but it helps them to become independent and gives them the confidence to move forward in the world of work and business.”

Possible scenarios of further projects with local businesses

Learners find out how IT is used in manufacturing

Before embarking on an engineering degree, Bharat is working for a year at a manufacturing company that produces components for ships. The company have asked him to carry out a project that involves adding bar codes to components so they can be tracked during manufacture. The history of each component will be recorded on a database, which will be reviewed for quality assurance purposes.

Bharat has been invited to go back to his old school to tell IT learners about his project and set them a challenge.

Working in small teams, can they produce a simulation of the kind of process he is trying to develop?

After several weeks Bharat returns to ‘judge’ whether the challenge has been met. Each team runs its simulation. Bharat scores them on their grasp of the key concepts and their team work. The most successful team uses a simple idea – a production line for paper

aircraft in which each sheet of paper has a bar code, with key dimensions checked at each stage and results recorded in a database, culminating in a final flight test and 'quality score' for each plane.

Learners help a young designer to go global

Anita is a young jewellery designer who has a stall in a local shopping centre. Her designs appeal particularly to young Muslims, so she wants to tap into this market by selling online. However, she has few IT skills and is unsure how to go about this. When she rings her local Business Link, the business adviser mentions that she might get help from IT learners at a local learning provider. She meets the IT teacher, who helps Anita formulate a challenge for the learners. She then meets the learners, shows them her products and sets the challenge. Working in teams, the learners not only have to research and present various online trading options, but also outline the IT skills that Anita will need in order to implement each option.

After several weeks Anita returns and the teams present their findings. Anita now feels able to discuss her options with an adviser from her local Business Link. She returns a few months later to show the learners how she is getting on with implementing her online shop. She describes some of the problems she has run into and the learners research how to overcome them and share their ideas with Anita.

Learners help a small business to computerise

Gerri and Toni run a small gardening business. One of their customers is an IT teacher. The teacher notices that their invoices are handwritten, so asks them if they would like help from a group of IT learners with a view to computerising their business. They are very interested, but also very busy. The teacher explains that they will need to give up about five hours of their time, spread over several months, to work with the learners.

Gerri and Toni arrive for their first meeting with the learners to find them equipped with pens and sticky notes. Together they map the information needs of potential and current customers, the bank, the tax office and the people carrying out the gardening work (Gerri and Toni themselves).

By their second visit, each team has prepared a short presentation on a particular aspect of computerising the business. For instance, one team has looked at how the business might use a simple customer database. Another has looked at a website, another at financial processes, and another at how the internet might help them to research and source plants and gardening materials. Gerri and Toni decide to go ahead and buy a computer. They return for a third visit at which three teams present possible specifications for computer systems – one 'top end' solution, one middle solution and one 'entry level' solution. A fourth team presents an analysis of the IT skills they may need and suggests several options for possible training. Gerri and Toni now feel informed enough to approach a local computer supplier for advice on the best system for their business.

Advice boundaries

You will notice that, in these scenarios, the learners do not recommend a particular IT solution or IT system. They may propose several potential solutions but do not make recommendations or give advice, as they are not qualified to do so. It is important that the business fully understands the limitations of what the learners can offer and seeks professional advice when needed.

Activities

Introduction

These activities have been designed to be flexible and can be mixed and matched in a number of different ways. It is possible to simplify activities so that learners who have difficulty processing large amounts of information can still take part.

Activities 2 and 3 focus on exploring equality and diversity issues. They do this through looking at stereotyping and preconceptions rather than making reference to equal opportunities legislation, so teachers do not need specialist knowledge to tackle these activities.

A brief outline of the activities

Activity title		
1	Meet the professionals	An opener using multimedia clips in which a selection of people from the Employer challenges describe the skills and attitudes required for their jobs.
2	Beyond stereotypes	An activity exploring stereotypes that can be associated with people working in IT.
3	Who is the best person for the job?	A scripted discussion between three project team members following an interview. It highlights preconceptions and invites learners to challenge generalisations.
4	Projects and personnel	This activity includes a number of different IT projects that require new members to join their teams. Learners will be able to review the skills of potential team members and decide who is best suited to take the job.
5	Telephone and customer care skills in user support	IT learners often spend hours looking at visual information, but rarely get a chance to hone their listening skills. This activity aims to redress that balance. It requires learners to listen to how staff of a fictional small company handle calls from customers who are having problems using the company's online ordering system.

The activities in this section provide opportunities for you to explore a range of active learning approaches including:

- using audio and video clips during active learning, with a special emphasis on listening skills
- using learners' own views and experiences as a starting point
- enabling learners to construct theory from practical examples (inductive learning)
- co-operative learning
- using role play and scenarios to allow learners to engage with (potentially) sensitive issues in the safety of a learning environment.

Activity 1: Meet the professionals

Introduction

This opener uses short clips of professionals talking about their jobs and the skills and attitudes that they need. Learners are encouraged to actively engage with the content by being responsible for introducing a clip and presenting some of their own ideas in relation to the clip. This approach lays the foundations for further activities about working in IT. The activity can be fast-paced, with a strict time limit for the presentations.

Learning objectives

Learners should be able to:

- identify and analyse the skills and attitudes used by a variety of IT professionals
- improve their listening skills and presentation skills.

Resources required

- **Meet the professionals – audio clips.**
- A means of playing the clips, both via data projection and on individual computers with speakers.
- Headphones (optional).
- **Sheet 1.1: Meet the professionals – learner handout.** One copy per learner or pair.
- Optional – **Sheet 1.2: Job roles featured in the Employer challenges.**

Starting points

This opening activity taps into any prior knowledge or experience that learners may have gained about working in IT. It does not matter what level that knowledge is at. The opener itself provides a helpful starting point for the topic.

You will need to listen to the clips prior to starting the activity. The length and language of some of the clips vary, and you may feel that some are better suited for your learners than others.

Suggested approach

Stage 1: Allocating tasks and clips

Learners can work individually or in pairs. Each learner or pair of learners is allocated a clip (numbered from one to seven) and a task from **Sheet 1.1: Meet the professionals – learner handout** (lettered from A to F). You may not wish to use all the tasks. For instance, if you have a group of 24, half can take clips one to seven and all do task E (Interview questions), but each with a different clip. The other half can take clips one to seven and do task F (Could I do that job?). Many other combinations are possible.

Warn learners that they will have only two minutes to present their ideas after they have introduced the clip to the whole group.

Stage 2: Working on the task

Each learner or pair listens to their allocated clip and works on their allocated task.

Stage 3: Presentations

Each learner or pair shows their allocated clip and then presents their own ideas in response to their allocated task. You might like to allocate the role of time keeper to one of the learners. They can give a signal when there are just ten seconds remaining. Another learner might have the role of recorder, noting down the skills and attitudes that get mentioned during the presentations.

Stage 4: Consolidating, checking and reflecting on learning

A short plenary discussion can be followed by learners voting on what they think the top three skills needed by IT professionals are. They might also discuss how these skills can be learned. This will help learners to see the importance of developing skills such as problem-solving during their IT studies.

Assessment for learning

By observing learners' presentations you will gain an insight into their current level of understanding of the skills and attitudes required by employers. You can use this information to tailor the following activities to meet their needs.

What learners might do next

Sheet 1.2 provides a list of all the people who appear in the case studies featured in the Employer challenges area of these resources. This material can be used by learners to research working in IT in more depth.

The job roles represented here cover a wide range: from a TV Weather Presenter – who uses mainly the internet and email – through to a highly specialised technician who runs a supercomputer. The engineering strand of IT is also featured. The IT specialist roles have been asterisked, so that you can locate them more easily.

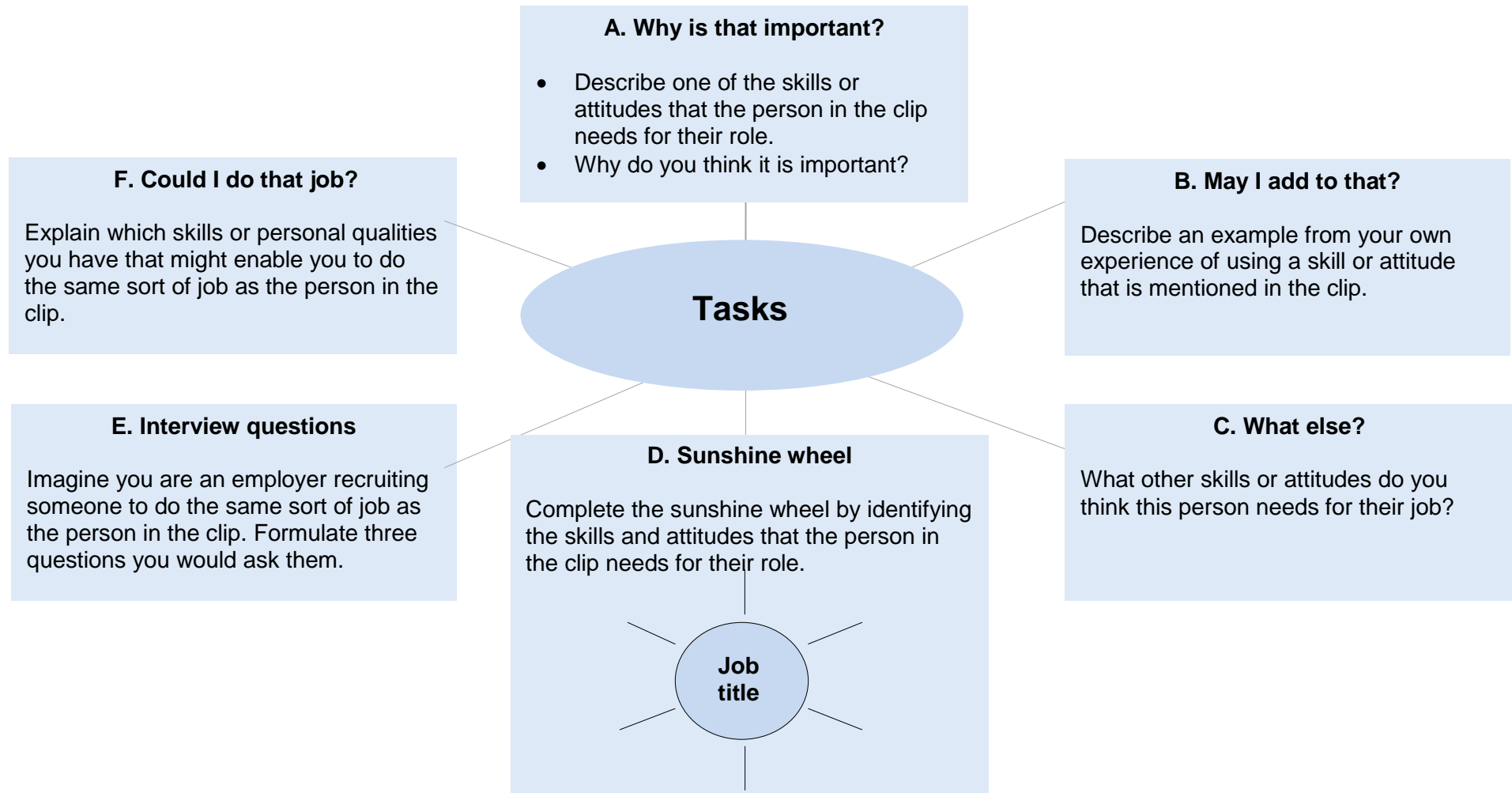
To ensure learners actively rather than passively engage with the multimedia material, they will need to look at the material with a particular task or question in mind. The tasks on **Sheet 1:1** can be used, or learners might find their own focus. You might offer prompt questions.

- What do they want to know about working in IT?
- What sort of jobs are they interested in?
- What do these jobs involve?

They might then reflect on further questions.

- Am I developing the skills and attitudes I am likely to need?
- How can I develop those skills and attitudes, both during my studies and in my wider life?

Sheet 1.1: Meet the professionals – learner handout



Sheet 1.2: Job roles featured in the Employer challenges

From weather observations to weather forecast: the story of data at the Met Office

Name	Role	Sometimes known as
Tim Allot*	Website Manager	Web Developer
Dave Britton	Chief Press Officer	
Helen Chivers	Forecaster	
Ralph James*	IT Engineer	
Duncan Jeffery*	Message Switching Manager	
Shefali Oza	Weather Presenter (BBC – Midlands today)	
Lauren Reid	Applied Scientist	Programmer
Mark Sweeney*	IT Manager: Operations centre	
Nikki Thew*	Operations Centre Team Leader	IT Helpdesk Manager
Will Wishart*	Supercomputer Operator	Computer Operator

IT solutions for a music events organisation: Planning an event multimedia presentation

Victoria Arnold	Events Co-ordinator
Jeremy Garside*	Head of IT
Chris Meehan	Stage Technician
Steve Ramsden	Technical Manager
Chris Rogers*	Digital Projects Manager

IT solutions for a music events organisation: IT solutions at the LSO multimedia presentation

Brian Moran*	ICT Manager
Tom Nazelli*	Software Developer
(Jeremy Garside also features in this presentation)	
Using IT and telecoms in the emergency services	
Richard Beaman*	Network Engineer
Lewis Elston	Emergency Medical Dispatcher
Francis Gillen*	Head of ICT
Jan Parsons*	IT Projects Manager
Andy Perris*	Clinical Hub Manager
Kirsty Petfield	Call-taker
Claire Pratt	Clinical Supervisor
Tom Stacey*	ICT Customer Services Officer
Rob White*	Deputy Head of IT
Anita Cawley	Paramedic Supervisor

Using IT to develop a farm enterprise

Ian Bower	Crop Technician
Martin Evans	Chief Executive, Freshgro
Andrew Howard	Office Manager
Alan Hunt	Commercial Manager
Andrea Jagosova	Quality Assurance Manager
Stephen Welch	Transport Manager

* IT specialist roles are indicated with an asterisk.

Activity 2: Beyond stereotypes

Introduction

The IT industry still struggles to achieve full diversity across its workforce. This activity gives learners the opportunity to explore some of the possible influences at work here. The approach starts from the learners' own experiences of how the world perceives IT workers and then asks them to compare this with reality. Finally, they have an opportunity to suggest ways of changing the situation. The activity requires careful facilitation by the teacher and works best if learners have developed trust and mutual respect.

Learning objectives

Learners should be able to:

- identify a range of issues relating to stereotyping
- consider why the IT workforce does not represent the diversity within the UK
- identify possible solutions.

Resources required

- Large sheets of paper.
- Marker pens.
- The **Meet the professionals – audio clips**.
- A means of playing the clips, both via data projection and on individual computers with speakers.

Starting points

It is essential that groups have agreed ground rules before embarking on the activity. The Co-operative learning area features several ways of doing this. The activity is likely to work best when done by co-operative learning teams who have already developed trust and who are able to run their own discussions effectively.

Suggested approach

Stage 1: Identifying stereotypes

Working in small groups or co-operative learning teams, ask learners to think about the image that the general public has of a person that works in the IT industry. Emphasise that you would like them to think about how IT workers are depicted on television and in magazines and books, rather than their personal view.

Groups discuss the type of image they think the public has, then draw a picture that represents the stereotype. Encourage them to add notes to explain the features they have chosen and to use their imagination. They might give the person a name, age and short CV.

Stage 2: Discussing the stereotypes

Display all the images developed. Ask groups to explain their drawing by asking them suitable questions, such as:

- Why have you chosen these features?
- Why do you think the public has this view of IT workers?
- Where does this view come from?

Stage 3: Delving deeper

If learners have not done **Activity 1: Meet the professionals**, they now need to listen to the **Meet the professionals – audio clips**, where they can hear real IT professionals.

- To what extent does reality match the stereotype?
- Can they explain any of the processes at work here?
- What influences people's career choices?

Stage 4: Identifying solutions

The UK is about to face a new shortage of IT workers. What ideas can learners suggest to encourage a wider range of people to choose a career in IT?

Remind the learners to think about all the different groups within society. Are there groups of people who are unlikely to consider a career in IT? Why? What are the barriers they face? How might those barriers be overcome?

What might learners do next

Activity 3: Who is the best person for the job? will enable learners to extend their exploration of equality and diversity issues.

Activity 3: Who is the best person for the job?

Introduction

This activity highlights preconceptions and invites learners to challenge generalisations. It could also be used as a prompt for a discussion about how society stereotypes and makes generalisations.

The activity uses a script of a discussion between three people who form an interview panel. The panel are choosing members for a project team. The discussion reveals the preconceptions and stereotyping that have crept into the process. Can your learners spot when this happens?

The activity encourages learners to put themselves into others' shoes, leading to learning in the affective domain.

Learning objectives

Learners should be able to:

- describe how first impressions can influence decisions
- consider the role of stereotyping and preconceptions in interviews
- challenge stereotypes
- reach a decision through debate and discussion.

Resources required

- **Sheet 3.1: Script of a discussion between project team members.**
- **Sheet 3.2: Application summary cards** – for Daniel Wade, Sarah Salva, John Yee and Ken Hall.
- **Sheet 3.3 Project card** – for the festival website.

Starting points

Activity 2: Beyond stereotypes, provides a useful opener prior to this activity.

Suggested approach

Stage 1: Reviewing the script of a discussion between project team members

Three learners take on the role of the project team. They will not be required to have acting skills, but they will need to read from a script. Allow them time and space to rehearse reading the script in **Sheet 3.1**. The script involves a discussion between project team members who are appointing a new member of their team.

When they are ready, ask the project team to read the script.

While the rest of the group are listening to the role play, ask them to take notes.

- Were any of the comments unfair?
- Why were they unfair?
- Were the project team making judgements about the candidates that were based on stereotypes or preconceptions?

Stage 2: Challenging stereotypes and preconceptions

In small groups ask the learners to compare notes and develop a full list of answers to the questions posed in Stage one. Encourage them to debate any points where there is a difference of opinion. Note any negative attitudes that are surfacing and think carefully about how you might handle them. One approach might be to ask the learners about how they might behave in a professional situation in the workplace. Would they make the same comments? What does acting in a professional manner mean?

Assessment for learning

By listening to the discussions you will be able to plan how to handle the next stage of the activity. In particular, you will be able to note which groups or learners have useful contributions to make that will move things forward in a positive way.

Stage 3: Reviewing their findings

Ask each group to present and explain their findings. Encourage a debate to develop about what is meant by 'fair' and 'unfair'.

Also pick up on points that can provide a useful starting point for further discussion. For example, if you have a group of younger learners, how important is Daniel's choice of interview clothes and how will it affect his chances of getting the job?

Stage 4: Making a fair decision

Give each group a copy of **Sheet 3.3** that describes the project the successful candidate will be joining.

Using **Sheet 3.3**, the script and the job summaries ask the groups to review all the information they have and decide who they think should be given the job and why.

Take a vote on who should get the job. Ask each group to say who they would have chosen and the reasons for their choice. Encourage learners to challenge any decisions that appear to have been based on stereotypes and preconceptions.

What the learners might do next

Within the project cards there is a project that requires a team to build a new network system. Select the job summaries that mention networking experience and ask learners to write a short job description for a Network Engineer and a list of questions that they could ask during an interview. Are all of the questions they come up with fair? What is a fair question?

Sheet 3.1: Script of a discussion between project team members

People interviewed:

- Daniel Wade
- Sarah Salva
- John Yee
- Ken Hall

Interviewers:

- Project team member 1 – Project Director
- Project team member 2 – Web Developer
- Project team member 3 – Human Resources Manager

New team member: Web Development Assistant

Role description:

Reporting to the Web Developer, the new member of the team will implement changes to the website and undertake and organise testing. They will also undertake some aspects of the design work with the support of the Web Developer and carry out general duties to support the project.

Script:

Project team member 3: I think we should talk through each of the interviews. Perhaps we can make a note of some of the main points and then come up with a decision. Shall we take them in order?

Project team member 1: Daniel Wade.... Very young, nervous at the start, but he did settle down later. Still he was smartly dressed... although he could have been over dressed. He didn't look very creative.

Project team member 3: Hang on, what would you have said if he turned up with holes in his jeans?

Project team member 1: OK

Project team member 2: Well having said that, the tie looked as though it had been borrowed from his dad.

Project team member 3: Enough! He had obviously made an effort. He may have taken advice from a tutor.

Project team member 2: He seems a bit dozy.

Project team member 3: (Glances at Project team member 2) He has excellent results from his college course, particularly in web design, but he doesn't have a lot of experience. However, that could be positive. He seems keen to learn. He could be just what we need.

What about Hana? She has a degree and some relevant experience.

Project team member 2: Hmm yes, and her references seemed OK, but she didn't look me in the eye and seemed rather nervous. I am not sure that she would fit in very easily.

Project team member 3: Why do you say that? What do you really mean?

Project team member 1: Well, not sure, I can't really put my finger on it. But we need lively upbeat people. She seemed a bit too polite and serious for me.

Project team member 3: How can you criticise someone for being too serious!

Project team member 2: She also had not done her homework on the background to the festival and the type of music that we will be featuring.

Project team member 3: Yes, it would have been helpful if she had done a bit of research, but the others knew just as little. Does it really matter at this stage? If they are willing to learn they should be able to pick things up quickly.

Project team member 1: However, she did bring some work to show us. The other three didn't. The work looked good. Perhaps too good, she might know more than we do. That might not work out too well. She could cause trouble in the team.

Project team member 3: What about Nick?

Project team member 1: Yes, Nick. Very laidback...

Project team member 2: I liked him. His clothes were cool! And he has bags of experience.

Project team member 3: Yes, perhaps a bit over-qualified for this job. Wasn't really very clear about why he wanted it. I am not sure that I quite believe that he is re-locating to this area. Has he been in some kind of trouble? His reference is a bit vague.

Project team member 1: But not that vague. It seems a believable reason to me. We need people to get started quickly and know what they have to do.

Project team member 3: But could that cause friction in the team?

Project team member 1: Yes.... But I think it could be worth taking the risk.

Project team member 3: So you think it should be Nick then? We haven't yet talked about Ken.

Project team member 2: Yes ... tell me why we interviewed him? He's not right at all.

Project team member 1: Well.... We can't be seen to be ageist!

Project team member 2: No – but quite honestly by the time we got round to interviewing him I was not listening, I was watching him messing about with his reading glasses. He might have trouble looking at the screen all day.

Project team member 3: Hang on. Ken has excellent references. He is keen to take on a project. He's not after promotion or even a high salary. He could be quite an asset, although he would have quite a bit to learn.

Project team member 2: Well, as long as we kept him away from the clients.

Project team member 3: No more. Do we have a decision?

Project team member 1: For me, it has to be Nick.

Project team member 2: And me, I agree.

Project team member 3: I am not so sure ... Let's talk again tomorrow.

Sheet 3.2: Application summary cards

Daniel Wade

- List your previous jobs and describe your responsibilities and achievements.** I have had several part-time jobs when I was at college. These included working in a supermarket and a mobile phone shop.
- List all of your relevant qualifications.**
BTEC National Award for IT practitioners.
GCSEs in Mathematics and English.
- Give details of your main hobbies and interests.** Computer gaming and science fiction.
- Give an example of a problem you have solved recently.** When I was completing a web design project during my last year at college the client wanted several changes. I had to make major changes to the design and was able to do this successfully and complete the project on time.
- Describe a time when you were working under pressure with competing deadlines.** At one stage at college I was working on three major assignments at the same time and working part-time. I managed to complete all the work on time, though it was very difficult.
- Describe a situation when you last worked in a team.** What were your strengths and weaknesses in this situation? One of my projects at college was a team project. I did not take the lead in the group but I did complete my section of the project and enjoyed working in a group.

Open reference

Referee: College Tutor

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not known
Time keeping	X				
Team worker			X		
Communication			X		
Project management skills		X			
Problem solving skills		X			

Additional information: Daniel completed his course and was awarded a merit. He also achieved a distinction in the web design unit. He is hard working and keen to succeed.

Sheet 3.2: Application summary card

Sarah Salva

1. **List your previous jobs and describe your responsibilities and achievements.** I have worked for several years for an architecture practice that specialises in public buildings for schools.
2. **List all of your relevant qualifications.**
BTEC National Certificate in Graphic Design.
3. **Give details of your main hobbies and interests.** Travel and going to the gym.
4. **Give an example of a problem you have solved recently.** The planning department recently suggested several changes to the plans for a new building. As a result, major changes had to be made to the plans. I was able to work out how these changes should be made and developed the revised plans to meet the needs of the planners.
5. **Describe a time when you were working under pressure with competing deadlines.** Architects always work to tight deadlines. I often have to work late to complete the work.
6. **Describe a situation when you last worked in a team.** What were your strengths and weaknesses in this situation? In our office we all work as a team. We all have our own areas of expertise but need to work together to get the job done.

Open reference:

Referee: Current Manager

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not known
Time keeping		X			
Team worker		X			
Communication			X		
Project management skills			X		
Problem solving skills		X			

Additional information: Sarah is a hard worker. When she joined the firm she had not used CAD software before. She quickly learned how to use it and she uses her graphic design skills to produce clear and accurate designs.

Sheet 3.2: Application summary card

John Yee

1. **List your previous jobs and describe your responsibilities and achievements.** I have worked for several years for an engineering firm in their design department. I use CAD software to develop designs for machine parts. I need to be very accurate and follow the design specifications provided by the design engineers.
2. **List all of your relevant qualifications.**
HND in Business Information Technology
3. **Give details of your main hobbies and interests.** Trail biking.
4. **Give an example of a problem you have solved recently.** I was recently asked to manage a small design project. To help with this I taught myself to use project management software so that I could manage the project successfully.
5. **Describe a time when you were working under pressure with competing deadlines.** In my current job we always work to tight deadlines. I enjoy the challenge of working under pressure.
6. **Describe a situation when you last worked in a team.** What were your strengths and weaknesses in this situation? There are only a few people in my department and we work very well as a team. We have to work together to get the job done.

Open reference

Referee: Current Manager

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not known
Time keeping		X			
Team worker		X			
Communication		X			
Project management skills		X			
Problem solving skills		X			

Additional information: John has worked for us for several years now. When he joined the company he did not have any design or CAD skills. He learned on the job and did so quickly. John has also learned how to use project management software. We are very pleased with the progress he has made.

Sheet 3.2: Application summary card

Ken Hall

- List your previous jobs and describe your responsibilities and achievements.** I have worked in the IT industry for over 30 years. I have worked on a large number of different projects, including database design and payroll systems. In recent years I have worked on a number of web-based systems. I have enjoyed taking on new challenges.
- List all of your relevant qualifications.**
BSc in Computing Science.
- Give details of your main hobbies and interests.** Walking and playing golf.
- Give an example of a problem you have solved recently.** A client called me in because their online database was not working as they wanted. I was able to create solution that improved the efficiency of the system.
- Describe a time when you were working under pressure with competing deadlines.** Throughout my career I have always worked in environments where deadlines were tight. I always aim to be very well organised and set targets every day so that I can meet the requirements of the project.
- Describe a situation when you last worked in a team.** What were your strengths and weaknesses in this situation? I really enjoy projects where I have sole responsibility. However, on many of the projects that I have worked on team working has been important. When I am working as part of a team I establish what I am responsible for and aim to complete that part of the project as well as I can.

Open reference

Referee: Former client

	Excellent	Good	Average	Poor	Not known
Time keeping					X
Team worker					X
Communication		X			
Project management skills		X			
Problem solving skills		X			

Additional information: Ken has completed several projects for us over the years. We have always been pleased with the results and would recommend him to other companies.

Sheet 3.3: Project card for the festival website

Festival website

The organisers of an international music festival need a small project team to develop a website to advertise the festival and manage online bookings.

The website that was developed for the festival last year still exists but needs to be updated. The software for the booking system has already been developed.

Outline specification

- Website to be updated and refreshed with new images and video footage.
- Brochures and flyers (paper and downloadable) to be created.
- Management of online booking.
- A back office team to answer telephone and email questions about the booking system.

Time: 60 days

Activity 4: Projects and personnel

Introduction

This activity explores a range of IT jobs and how different people are brought together to work in a team to complete a project. It aims to show that in a real working situation one person does not usually complete a project on their own, but works with others to develop a solution.

It also starts to explore the job application process. Short summaries of job applicants are provided and learners are asked to choose the person best suited for the job. This activity could be used as a starting point when learners are starting to look for employment, work experience or progress to new programmes.

An alternative version of the activity is available and can be used where learners find it more difficult to absorb large amounts of text.

Learning objectives

Learners should be able to:

- identify the roles needed to complete an IT project
- identify people whose skills match the roles.

Resources required

- **Sheet 4.1: Project cards.**
- **Sheet 4.2: Application summary cards** (included in a separate document).

Starting points

Activity 1: Meet the professionals provides an ideal starting point for this activity. Learners will also be able to draw on any work experience they have in IT, or the experience of completing projects in teams.

Suggested approach

Stage 1: Listing roles and responsibilities

Learners work in groups of four. Each group is given a different project card from **Sheet 4.1: Project cards**. (Alternatively all groups might work on a single project). Using the information provided they need to compile a list of the different roles and responsibilities they might need to form a team that will work together to complete the project.

Some groups may need some help to get started. Remind them to think about general roles as well, for example Administrators.

Stage 2: Selecting candidates

Give the learners a set of the **Sheet 4.2: Application summary cards** and ask them to select the candidates best suited for each role that they have identified. Before they start to sort through the cards ask the learners to consider how they are going to organise the task. For example, it might be a good idea to delegate one role to each member of the group. Leave the learners to decide how they will organise the task.

As they complete the task, ask the learners to make brief notes outlining the reasons they have chosen a particular person for the job.

Advise the learners that they do not have to fill all the jobs available. There may be some skills gaps. If so, ask them to make a list of these along with the reasons certain applicants do not meet the needs of the project.

Stage 3: Presenting the decision

Ask each group to create a short presentation, diagram or simple list that can be shared with other learners.

Stage 4: Consolidating, checking and reflecting

Below are some suitable questions for the learners to consider following their presentation

- How did they come to their solution?
- Did they have enough information to make decisions?
- What additional information would have been useful?
- Are there any skills that all the projects need?
- How important are IT skills when compared with other more general skills?

Alternative approach

Using **Sheet 4.1: Project cards** and **Sheet 4.2: Application summary cards**, choose two jobs from each project and ask the learners to select appropriate candidates for the two posts. If necessary, reduce the number of job application cards given to each group of learners.

What learners might do next

Activities 2: Beyond stereotypes and **Activity 3: Who is the best person for the job?** are both suitable as ways of extending this activity, especially if you want to explore the equality and diversity aspects of working in IT.

Learners might apply what they have learned about putting an effective IT team together when they embark on their next team project. They might role play applying for a 'job' with the team.

Sheet 4.1: Project cards

A. Festival website

The organisers of an international music festival need a small project team to develop a website to advertise the festival and manage online bookings.

The website that was developed for the festival last year still exists but needs to be updated. The software for the booking system has already been developed.

Outline specification

- Website to be updated and refreshed with new images and video footage.
- Brochures and flyers (paper and downloadable) to be created.
- Management of online booking.
- A back office team to answer telephone and email questions about the booking system.

Time: 60 days

B. Customer tracking system for a new vet's practice

A company that has ten veterinary surgeries will be opening a branch in a small suburban shopping centre in the next three months.

The company uses its own database system. However the system will need to be changed to meet the needs of the new surgery. The team will work with the vets who will be working in the new centre. They will need to ensure the vets have the information they need and that they can use the system.

Outline specification

- Database customised to meet the needs of the team of vets.
- Data to be entered into the new system.
- Vets to be trained to use the system.

Time: 10 days

C. TV programme website

'Our changing world' is a set of six television programmes that will explore the effect of climate change on the UK.

The programme will be supported by a website that will remain live for six weeks after the programme finishes.

The website will use the template used by the TV production company. However the production team also wants a site that will appeal to viewers in the 10 to 16 age range and their parents.

Outline specification

The following content will be required.

- Information about each programme with video clips, still images etc.
- A bulletin board that will be used by the presenters of the programme to communicate with viewers.
- Interactive activities for learners.
- Links to related sites.

The content of the site will need to be updated daily during the screening period and for up to six weeks afterwards.

Time: 60 days

D. Communication systems for a mountain rescue team

Research report on the use of mobile technologies to improve the service and to improve links with main emergency services.

A local mountain rescue team has been awarded a grant to replace their outdated communications system.

Outline specification

A report that produces a number of different proposals describing the type of equipment to help improve:

- the rescue team's response time
- the safety of the team when they are out in bad weather.

The report should include detailed costings.

Time: 30 days

E. Multimedia presentation for an architect firm

A firm of architects have been invited to showcase their work at an international conference in Venice in 2008.

They have decided to commission a multimedia presentation that will project images of some of the buildings they have designed in the last few years. They want the presentation to be projected onto a large white wall within the exhibition and in several other locations in the exhibition hall.

They would like to make the best use of the latest technology including sound and lighting effects.

At the same time the images must be accurate and show the quality of the work that the firm produces.

Outline specification

- A multimedia presentation that is exciting but at the same time displays the work of the firm to its best advantage.
- A robust networked system – suitable for an exhibition.
- Management of the presentation before and during the exhibition.

Time: 30 days

F. Networking system for a college

A college wants to install a flexible, modern networking system and server room in their new building.

The college wants to put networked computers into every classroom and into 'flexible' workspaces that will be located on every floor. They would also like a wireless network area in the refectory that can be accessed using a password.

Outline specification

A detailed plan for the proposed system that includes:

- location of servers and any cabling
- specifications for all equipment
- detailed costings of hardware and software
- detailed diagrams showing the location of equipment
- full installation service.

Time: 90 days

Activity 5: Telephone and customer care skills in user support

Learners and tutors with visual impairments at Royal National College enjoyed this activity. One learner said: “We need a lot more of these kind of activities. They’re important and useful for everyone.”

Teachers at the college used the activity in a range of settings: during one-to-one tutorials, with small groups of advanced level ICT learners and with adult learners. A manager who observed a group using the activity commented that “It seeded terrific discussions.” She also noticed how the activity contributed to a positive atmosphere of enjoyment and collaboration.

Introduction

Many employers comment that they are seeking IT staff with good telephone and customer care skills. This activity aims to help learners develop a more professional approach to providing user support over the phone. It embeds key messages about customer care.

IT learners often spend hours looking at visual information, but rarely get a chance to hone their listening skills. This activity aims to redress that balance. It requires learners to listen to how staff of a fictional small company handle calls from customers who are having problems using the company’s online ordering system. These are not fully-trained call centre staff, just ordinary members of an IT department who have to deal with calls from customers.

The telephone conversations are intentionally fictional to avoid any worries about confidentiality. However, the problems experienced are based on real examples and the call framework (included as an optional handout) is based on frameworks used in real companies.

The activity can be used either inductively or deductively to help learners relate theory and practice. You may like to experiment with both approaches, allowing your learners to express their views about the method they have experienced, thus building their skills as expert learners.

In the inductive approach, learners start by engaging with concrete examples (the calls) then move forward in the learning cycle towards reflecting on those examples and constructing theory from them. This inductive process mirrors the way humans naturally learn. In the deductive approach, learners are given the ‘call framework’ at the outset and then evaluate the concrete examples (the calls) against the theory provided by the framework.

Learning objectives

Learners should be able to:

- improve their listening skills
- develop greater empathy for the customer and increase their awareness of the importance of customer care
- identify the features of good and poor call handling
- develop their analytical thinking skills by devising guidelines or using a 'call framework'.

Resources required

- A means of playing the audio resource – ideally both via headphones and to the whole group.
- For the deductive approach, one copy per learner of **Sheet 5.1: Call framework handout**.

Transcripts of the calls are available within this document but you do not need to make copies for your learners unless they are unable to hear the audio clips.

Preparation

You will need to listen to all four audio clips in advance. You will notice that calls A and B illustrate the extremes of good and bad, while calls C and D are more mixed. Decide which two calls your learners will work with initially.

You will also need to decide whether you want your learners to work inductively or deductively. See below for possible ways of using the two approaches.

Starting points

If your learners are unfamiliar with the idea of user support, you might ask them to identify various IT jobs that involve giving support – and who might be the recipients. Emphasise that supporting users is part of many IT jobs, and clarify that support may be provided to both internal and external customers.

Your learners may be interested to hear what Tom, who provides IT support for staff of an ambulance service, has to say about his job. You will find this clip in the **The Southwestern Ambulance Service – multimedia presentation**.

Planning learning in multiple environments

This activity can be integrated into individual learning plans in a number of ways, including:

- As independent study, outside of formal learning sessions – the plenary questions can be extracted to guide learners.

- As an activity in the workplace, perhaps with another learner on placement at the same company.
- As part of preparation for work placement.
- As part of a series of classroom-based sessions on customer care, used in combination with the Customer care resources.

Suggested approach: Inductive option – starting from the calls

Stage 1: Introduction

Explain the aim of the activity. You might like to put the task into a context, for example: “Imagine you are the IT Manager at a paper supply company called Mostly Paper. Your IT team provides telephone support to customers who are having problems with the online ordering system. However, you are not sure how well this is working so you are going to listen in to some of the calls and draw up guidelines to help your staff.”

Stage 2: Listening to two of the calls

Invite learners to work in small groups. If co-operative learning teams have been established, learners can work in these teams. All groups listen to two calls and learners take individual notes. Allow them to listen to the calls as many times as required.

Stage 3: Comparing notes

In their groups, learners discuss their notes and agree what they thought of each call. They may wish to listen again.

Stage 4: Interim plenary

Possible questions might include:

- Which call was handled the most effectively? Which was least effective?
- What was the worst thing that the call taker did? Why was it so bad?
- What was the best thing that the call taker did? Why was it so good?

Assessment for learning

Learners’ answers to these questions will enable you to check their understanding and adjust the rest of the activity to meet their needs. For instance, you may ask them to listen to the calls again and consolidate their notes before moving on to the next stage.

Stage 5: Devising guidelines

Learners go back into their groups to devise guidelines for giving IT support over the phone. This could take the form of a ‘Do’s and don’ts’ list or a T-column showing the features of ‘Good’ and ‘Poor’ call handling. They can take on formal roles during this task,

such as recorder, presenter and discussion leader. The Co-operative learning resources contain further tips on using roles.

Good	Poor	'Do's and don'ts'
		Do answer the phone promptly

Stage 6: Testing the guidelines

Learners test out their guidelines, using them to evaluate one or two new calls. They discuss and refine the guidelines according to their increased experience of listening to calls and applying the guidelines.

Stage 7: Presenting the guidelines

Each group presents its set of guidelines to the other groups, who are invited to offer feedback. This could be structured as a **Peer panel** activity. Details of this technique can be found in the Peer review resources.

Stage 8: Consolidating, checking and reflecting on learning

Learners can move towards higher order thinking skills and consolidate their learning through answering questions such as:

- What skills and attitudes do IT staff need in order to give effective support to users over the phone?
- If you were an employer looking for staff with these skills and attitudes, what interview questions might you ask?
- What is the best way to learn these skills and attitudes?

Learners might go back into their groups to discuss the questions, before sharing their ideas during a plenary.

Alternative approach: Deductive option – starting from the call framework

Stage 1: Introduction

Explain the aim of the activity. You might like to put the task into a context, for example: “Imagine you are responsible for the IT department at a paper supply company called Mostly Paper. You are not sure how well your staff are providing support for customers experiencing problems with the company’s online ordering system. You have drawn up a call framework to help you analyse how well your staff are doing.”

Stage 2: Using the call framework

Learners work in pairs. Give each learner the **Sheet 5.1: Call framework handout** and allow them time to read and discuss it, noting any items they are unsure about.

Stage 3: Interim plenary

Ask the pairs to flag up any items they are unsure about and invite other learners to explain these items.

Assessment for learning

This gives you an opportunity to evaluate how much your learners understand and to clear up any misconceptions.

Stage 4: Applying the framework

Each pair listens to a call. They work individually at first, using the call framework to help them analyse the call and make notes.

Then, as a pair they work through the call framework, explaining their findings on how well the call was handled. This peer explaining element is important, allowing learners to articulate the application of theory to practice.

They then repeat the process for a second call.

Stage 5: Consolidating, checking and reflecting on learning

Invite each pair to feed back their findings on a particular call. You may need to play the call beforehand so everyone can follow the feedback easily.

Possible plenary questions might include:

- What was the worst thing that the call taker did during that call? Why was that so bad?
- What was the best thing that the call taker did during that call? Why was that so good?
- Which call was handled the most effectively? Which was least effective? Why?
- How might Mostly Paper be affected by how well its IT staff provide telephone support?

- If you managed this IT department, how would you improve how staff handle customer support calls?
- How might you improve the call framework?

These questions take the learners towards higher order thinking skills. They might work in groups to discuss the harder questions, before sharing their ideas with the whole group.

Differentiation to meet individual needs

The inductive approach allows greater scope for differentiation. You can select the more obvious calls for learners who are less confident and allow them to construct guidelines that reflect their level of understanding. More confident learners can be challenged in both the inductive and deductive approaches through questions that require higher order thinking.

What learners might do next

Ideally, the activity should lead on to learners actually giving support to users over the phone. This should enable them to move further through the learning cycle and apply theory to their own practice.

Giving support to real customers via the telephone may not be feasible in all learning environments, however, the skills can be practised by learners supporting each other. Apprentices may like to provide support to each other over the phone, and learners in the classroom can sit with their back to a partner to simulate the limitations of telephone support. Alternatively, learners might like to try supporting each other using a live chat facility via the provider's Virtual Learning Environment or the internet, allowing the text 'conversation' to take place in real time.

It would also be desirable for learners to listen to each other giving telephone support, evaluate each other's performance and give feedback. See the **Giving and receiving feedback** activity in the Peer review area for more ideas on this approach.

Transcript: Call A

Adam works in the IT department of a paper supply company, Mostly Paper. The company has just modified their ordering website to make it more secure, but this is causing problems for some customers.

	<i>(The phone rings seven times. Adam answers it while still chatting to a colleague.)</i>
Adam	Yeah, it was great. I'm going to do it again... Oh, hello.
Caller	Is that Mostly Paper?
Adam	Yes. <i>(Sound of Adam sipping his coffee.)</i>
Caller	I'm calling from Pronto Printers. I've been using your online ordering system for over a year but I suddenly find I can't get into the site. What's happening?
Adam	<i>(Speaking indistinctly, as he is not holding the phone properly.)</i> Oh, it's just that we've upped the security.
Caller	But I can't get on to order anything. I need to order paper for a rush job.
Adam	Yeah, lots of customers are having problems. <i>(Sound of keys clicking – Adam is answering his emails.)</i>
Caller	But are you going to fix it?
Adam	The problem's at your end, not at our end. We've improved the site.
Caller	But I've tried to log on just as I always do. I haven't changed anything.
Adam	No, you don't understand. You have to change stuff at your end. It's not our fault.
Caller	Well, what do I need to do? I need to order paper urgently.
Adam	<i>(Sounding hesitant.)</i> I expect it's a cookies issue.
Caller	What on earth are you talking about?
Adam	You know, cookies. You must know what cookies are?
Caller	Well, in America I think they call biscuits 'cookies'.
Adam	No, not that sort of cookies. The internet ones.
Caller	<i>(Speaking through gritted teeth.)</i> Please, just tell me how to fix the problem.
Adam	Well, if you didn't start talking about biscuits we might get a bit further.
Caller	Please, I really must order...
Adam	<i>(Interrupting)</i> OK, I expect you've got us on your favourites list. Just delete that. Then you could go to your security settings and add us to your trusted sites – that might help.
Caller	But I have no idea how to do that.
Adam	You know... just go to 'favourites' and delete our site. Then go to security and add us to your trusted sites.
Caller	I haven't got time for this. I'm going to order the paper from someone else.
Adam	OK. <i>(Puts the phone down before the caller does.)</i>

Transcript: Call B

Anita works in the IT department of a paper supply company, Mostly Paper. The company has just modified their ordering website to make it more secure, but this is causing problems for some customers.

	<i>(The phone rings twice before it's answered.)</i>
Anita	Good morning, Mostly Paper, my name's Anita. How may I help?
Caller	I'm having trouble getting onto your site. I was beginning to think you had gone out of business.
Anita	I'm so sorry you are having problems. May I have your name?
Caller	It's George MacKenzie here, from Suttons Haulage.
Anita	We've changed our site to make it more secure Mr MacKenzie, and this is causing some teething problems. Can you spare a couple of minutes? I'm sure we can sort it out.
Caller	Yes, that's fine.
Anita	Which software are you using when you go online? Is it internet Explorer?
Caller	Yes.
Anita	OK. Are you in Internet Explorer? Does it say it on the strip at the top of the screen?
Caller	Yes.
Anita	OK. What we need to do is add the Mostly Paper website to your trusted sites list, so that the security settings don't block it. Can you see an item on the menu bar called 'Tools'?
Caller	Yep, I see it.
Anita	Good. Click on this and you'll see a list with 'Internet Options' at the bottom.
Caller	Oh... I clicked the wrong thing.
Anita	No problem. Just try again.
Caller	OK – done it.
Anita	Now you should be in 'Internet Options' and you need to select 'Security' – it's a tab at the top.
Caller	Done.
Anita	Can you see an icon with a green circle and a white tick?
Caller	Yes, should I click on that?
Anita	Yes please. Then, if you click on the button called 'sites' you'll get a new window with a space for you to type in the Mostly Paper address. Do you know it?
Caller	Yes, I have it here. <i>(Sound of keys clicking.)</i>
Anita	Brilliant. Once you've put it in, press enter.
Caller	Done.
Anita	Now you just have to click 'OK' and the site will be in your trusted sites list. Do you want me to stay on the line while you go onto the site and place your order?
Caller	I've actually got another call coming in. Could you give me a call back in 10 minutes, just in case I'm having problems?
Anita	No problem, Mr Mackenzie, I have your number. I'll call you back.
Caller	Great, thanks for your help. <i>(Caller puts phone down first.)</i>

Transcript: Call C

Adam works in the IT department of a paper supply company, Mostly Paper. When customers phone about problems with Mostly Paper's online ordering system, they are put through to the IT department. Today it is Adam's turn to provide customer support.

Adam	<i>(The phone rings three times.)</i> Hi, Adam here.
Caller	Is that Mostly Paper?
Adam	Yes. Good morning.
Caller	I'm calling from Premium Print. I've been trying to order paper online, but I've run into a problem. I can't get it to give me the right discount because I want the paper delivered to two different sites. We usually get a 15 per cent discount ...
Adam	<i>(Interrupting)</i> Let me stop you a minute so I can take this one step at a time. Are you saying that you want to make a bulk order that is then split and delivered to two different places?
Caller	Yes, that's right. If I put it in as two separate orders the system does not give me the bulk order discount.
Adam	Yeah. I see what you mean. We didn't think of that when we designed the ordering system. We need to fix that. Of course you should get the bulk discount. We'll change the way the online order form works.
Caller	<i>(Getting slightly impatient.)</i> But are you going to fix it today so that I can get on and order the paper?
Adam	It's not quite that simple. I'll have to look into it and see what my boss says. Changes all cost money.
Caller	<i>(Getting more impatient.)</i> I don't really care what your boss says, I just want to order the paper.
Adam	Sorry. You just want a solution don't you? I think I know how we can do this.
Caller	Good.
Adam	<i>(Sounding confident.)</i> Put in your order as you would normally and give one of the locations as the delivery address. Then in the box that says 'special delivery instructions', tell us how you want the order split and give the other delivery address. Can you do that?
Caller	Yes, but are you sure that will work?
Adam	Could I take your name?
Caller	It's Callum. I'm the operations manager.
Adam	OK, Callum. If you make your order as soon as this call finishes, I will go over to the sales office and make sure they understand what needs to happen. Then I'll email you to confirm everything is OK. How does that sound?
Caller	That sounds just fine. Thank you, Adam.
Adam	Thank you for telling us about the problem with the ordering system. And thanks for ordering from us.
Caller	Thanks for your help. Bye for now.

Transcript: Call D

Anita works in the IT department of a paper supply company, Mostly Paper. When customers phone about problems with Mostly Paper's online ordering system, they are put through to the IT department. Today it is Anita's turn to provide customer support.

Anita	<i>(Phone rings 10 times.)</i> Good morning – sorry, good afternoon. This is Mostly Paper.
Caller	<i>(Sounding angry.)</i> I've just wasted nearly an hour with your ridiculous ordering system. I spent ages selecting all the different paper and card that I need for an important job. But when I went to the checkout, the system would not recognise my postcode. It tells me the postcode is invalid.
Anita	<i>(Attempting to sound friendly but sounding more patronising.)</i> People often blame the computer when it's usually a case of finger trouble. I expect you've been entering the postcode incorrectly. Have you checked?
Caller	<i>(Through gritted teeth)</i> Of course I've checked. I must have entered it twenty times. Why do you IT people always blame the customer? Can I have your name? I'm going to make a complaint.
Anita	<i>(Sounding flustered.)</i> I'm Anita ... I'm sorry, I've not heard of this happening before. <i>(Making a conscious effort to sound calm.)</i> Bear with me a moment... Let me try something. Please give me your postcode.
Caller	CF49 3XY
Anita	<i>(Sound of keys clicking)</i> Ah... I see what you mean... our database does not recognise that postcode.
Caller	Exactly!
Anita	Please accept my apologies. I understand how frustrating this has been for you.
Caller	I don't want sympathy. I just want you to fix the problem.
Anita	Well, we buy in a database of postcodes which we load into our ordering database and we are due for an update ...
Caller	<i>(Interrupting.)</i> I don't care about any of that. Just sort out my order!
Anita	Yes, of course. There's no way you can do it online, I'm afraid. Without the postcode the order will be rejected by the computer.
Caller	This is ridiculous. Do you want my business or not?
Anita	Of course we want your business. I'll put you through to our sales department. Perhaps you can give them the order over the phone?
Caller	What a waste of time! I need dozens of different items. It would take ages to do it over the phone.
Anita	I can't think of another solution.
Caller	Well I can. I'm going to take my business elsewhere. <i>(Slams the phone down.)</i>

Sheet 5.1: Call framework handout

	First call	Second call
<p>Make a good first impression</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Answer promptly (within a few rings). • Give a friendly greeting. • Give your name. • Get the customer’s name. • Respond with interest. • Speak clearly. 		
<p>Develop the conversation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow the customer to talk. • Be sensitive to the customer’s situation. • Make supportive comments. 		
<p>Establish customer needs</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use questions carefully. • Listen actively. • Ask again if unclear. • Don’t make assumptions. • Control the call – keep it on track. 		
<p>Propose solutions</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Check that the customer is ready to work with you on the problem. • Be specific when giving instructions. • Avoid jargon. • Don’t give too much information at once. • Give the customer time to respond. • Keep checking that the customer understands. • Show commitment to solving the problem. • Be positive and confident. • Never blame the customer. 		
<p>Build the relationship</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Exceed the customer’s expectations. • Check if they need any other support. • Thank the customer for their call. • Allow the customer to put the phone down first, if possible. 		