KG097 Foundations for self-directed support in Scotland: An evaluation of use and impact
This report presents the findings of an evaluative study of the use and impact of the Open University course KG097 Foundations for self-directed support in Scotland (‘the course’) since its launch in April 2013. This is an online course which was created with the support of the Scottish Government to support the dissemination of knowledge and understanding of self-directed support (SDS) in Scotland.

This evaluation incorporated earlier research reports on the use of the course, in particular the report on the website analytics which was presented in 2014 (Appendix 1). The patterns of use do not appear to have changed and much of the qualitative data collected for this evaluation support the findings of that examination of the analytical data.

This report presents a brief contextual introduction before presenting the process and outcomes of the evaluative study. A small number of recommendations are offered within the context of the evidence that this course has had, and continues to have, a highly positive impact on workers, organisations and thereby on service users and carers in relation to SDS in Scotland.

www.open.edu/openlearn/health-sports-psychology/foundations-self-directed-support-scotland/content-section-overview
Context

Foundations for self-directed support in Scotland was developed by The Open University with the support of the Scottish Government to help service users, carers and professionals understand the content and implications of the Social Care (Self-directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013, which came into force in April 2014. It is set in the rapidly changing context of health and social care in Scotland, the wider UK and internationally. This course is available free of charge through the Open University’s Openlearn.

This course is presented online and reflects the growth of open education where online resources are widely available across disciplines and levels of study. Cannell and Macintyre (2014) see the potential of Open Educational Resources (OERs), educational resources available to be used as flexibly as the learner wishes, to meet the needs of those communities whose learning needs have traditionally been addressed by community-based adult education. While this course is online and not linked to any tutorial provision, it is a structured course of six sequential sections, rather than a series of free-standing OERs. The course may present the learner with the same challenges as any independent distance study. Learners need considerable motivation and self-discipline to study alone and this report notes the considerable success of initiatives to present this course to groups of learners. The support of other learners, and the opportunity to discuss the issues arising from the course material, are mentioned in the qualitative data as highly positive outcomes of the study process, and ones which had an impact on working culture and practices, to the benefit of service users and carers.

The course was initially written in relation to self-directed support (SDS) for adults. It was presented for the first time in April 2013 and was updated in 2014 to address personalisation and include self-directed support in relation to children and young people, as well as adults; learners can choose to study either or both these aspects of personalisation.

Following the relaunch of this course in 2014, three groups of people, based in three local authority areas, studied and reflected on the course in a series of workshops. These workshops were jointly facilitated by the Open University in Scotland and a colleague from each local authority. Their aim was to support the development of SDS ‘ambassadors’ and their effectiveness was evaluated later that year (Kubiak, 2014). The course was found to be effective in enhancing knowledge and understanding and, most crucially, for changes in practice, with learners feeling better able to challenge existing practice where it was not congruent with the ethos and principles of SDS. This evaluation builds on that work and aims to find evidence of how the course is now being used, and with what impact.
Objectives

The objectives of this evaluation were within the broader context of raising awareness and knowledge levels of SDS in Scotland:

- To identify and record the impact of the course on:
  - Service users and carers
  - Professionals involved in supporting SDS
  - Members of the community involved in supporting SDS
  - Organisations with an interest in SDS
- To record and communicate the achievements of the project which comprises the course and associated promotion and support
- To account for the funding which supported the project and to report accordingly to the Scottish Government
- To learn from the project outcomes so as to inform the planning of future projects of this kind.

While the findings which are presented within this report focus on the Open University course Foundations for self-directed support in Scotland, the course was funded with the broader objective of disseminating information about SDS in Scotland. The outcomes of engaging with the course and the outcomes of engaging with SDS are conflated in some of the qualitative evidence collected. Not only is this not problematic, arguably it reflects the success of the course in widening the understanding of the principles of SDS, and the examples of good practice which it contains. This is illustrated by one comment from a resource officer in a local authority; she studied the course and brought that learning back to her team, with very positive results:

“It opened my eyes, you know, to how things were happening in other areas and how other people were getting the support that they wanted, which wasn’t what was happening here. But now [that the contents of the course have been taken on board in that local authority] it’s not about the money, it’s about how we can offer change to the people, the individuals, and how we can change their support into what they want.”

RESOURCE OFFICER, Local authority

Approach

The design of this evaluation is heavily influenced by the literature (particularly Kirkpatrick, 1959; 1994; Hamblin, 1974) on the evaluation of training; the concept of different ‘levels’ of training effectiveness informed the design of the methodology and the analysis of results.

Along with the now accepted wisdom in relation to project evaluation, this literature is clear that one has to evaluate against the objectives of the project or training programme. The objectives of the course being evaluated were to disseminate knowledge about SDS in Scotland and to share information about ways in which SDS can be implemented.

Hamblin (1974), in a development of original work by Kirkpatrick (1959), proposes the evaluation of training at five levels:

**LEVEL 1**
Reaction – how did the stakeholders feel about the experience?

**LEVEL 2**
Learning includes changes in knowledge, skills and attitudes

**LEVEL 3**
(Job) Behaviour changes were addressed in this evaluation when professionals, users and carers were asked about changes in practice and/or behaviour (such as assertiveness in decision-making about the purchase and use of services)

**LEVELS 4 & 5**
Evaluated by recording the experience and outcomes of those organisations that have used the course in terms of the impact on the aims and ultimate goals of those organisations.

The course objectives require learning at individual and organisational levels and so the data collected in this evaluative work is presented within the Kirkpatrick/Hamblin levels framework.

“This course will help you understand the origins of this legislation, the principles that it is based on and its potential to enable citizens to become active participants in designing, selecting and using care and support services.”

(Foundations for self-directed support in Scotland, section overview)
This evaluation adapted the Kirkpatrick/Hamblin framework to gather and analyse information about the impact of the course on service users and carers, and their relationships with professionals and service providers. Evaluation of the use and impact of the course at levels 1, 2 and 3 offered information about achievement of the objectives. Each level of the chain is necessary to achieve results at the level above. Each depends on the other – if ‘students’ do not have a good experience (‘Reaction’ level 1), they will not take on new learning (level 2) and so on. Information about the impact of the course at the lower levels provides a basis for recommendation for the development of the course. This evaluation has attempted to address all levels so that evidence of effectiveness or impact, or the lack of such evidence, can be located in that feedback chain and appropriate action can be recommended.

Analytical data about access to, and use of, this online course were interrogated for information about location, type of organisation and length of engagement with the course. Qualitative data from interviews with 18 respondents were analysed in relation to organisational type, role of respondent, attitude to the course and outcomes, both direct and indirect.
Data collection

Quantitative data were extracted from regular analytical reports provided by the Open University’s Open Media Unit.

Respondents were selected using a snowball sampling method (Robson, 2011). Given the limited resources available for this evaluation, the number of interviewees was limited to nine. Type of engagement with the course, type of organisation/setting and geography were factors in the selection of respondents. Qualitative data were collected via face-to-face and telephone interviews (see Table 1). Some of these were semi-formal and recorded interviews, others were targeted, but less detailed, conversations with relevant stakeholders and some other interactions were opportunistic responses to meeting, or hearing about, someone whose relationship with the course might have had a bearing on the objectives of this evaluation.

Opportunistic or emergent sampling is a useful response to new knowledge collected during an organic investigation, of which this evaluation has some elements (Cohen and Crabtree, 2006). Further data were supplied via three written questionnaires at the instigation of one of the interviewed respondents who ran this course for groups of colleagues. Of those interviewed, 13 had studied the course in part or whole. The other respondents had a connection with the course, with the area of the provision of training in relation to SDS, or with the impact of such training in their organisations. All but one respondent was female, reflecting the predominance of women in the delivery of, and training about, social care.

Table 1 Data collection by method

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Data collection method</th>
<th>Respondents</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>F2F recorded interview</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F2fF non-recorded interview</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone non-recorded conversation</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Written questionnaire</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total respondents</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on a semi-structured questionnaire (Appendix 2), nine face-to-face interviews were conducted and recorded. Those interviewees were chosen on the basis of geography, organisational type and role in relation to SDS to achieve as broad a sample as possible. That sample was selected by starting with members of the Reference Group for the course, and then on a snowball sampling basis whereby respondents were asked if they knew of others using the course. Snowball sampling is a useful method when it is difficult to identify members of a networked population (Robson, 2011). This method provided contact with a wider range of respondents than would have been possible by more formal means. In particular, it provided a connection to a service user who had studied the course, a respondent group which had been proving difficult to identify. In addition to the semi-formal, recorded, interviews other less formal conversations were held with those who had some connection to the course so as to elicit a breadth of feedback, as well as the more detailed data which were collected through the recorded interviews.

The respondents from whom data were collected were based in different parts of Scotland, so that a geographical spread of perspective might be achieved. One cluster of respondents worked in the West of Scotland, two in the rural North East and a further two in the rural West and South West. The others were located within or close to the Central Belt of Scotland. As illustrated in Figure 1, of the 18 interviews undertaken, seven were with an employee of a local authority, of whom three were senior managers, three worked in training/workforce
development and one worked in a review role. In addition, three local authority social work colleagues who had studied the course completed a questionnaire. Two members of the Scottish Social Service Council, a national body with a role in workforce development in relation to SDS, shared their comments about the course and its impact in an interview setting. Evaluative interviews included nine with colleagues from voluntary organisations, four of which were service user membership organisations.

Two of the interviews, one with a service user and the other with a senior manager in a local authority, were video-recorded to add depth to the presentation of the data. Standard Open University consent forms were used for all recordings, both audio and video, as well as for photographs which were always taken with prior consent. Consent to use the photographs was confirmed by sending them to the interviewee by email after each meeting and receiving confirmation of permission.

Analysis of the qualitative data

Of the interviews with voluntary organisations:

- 4 interviewees were senior/directorate staff
- 2 were advisors
- 2 were trainers/managers
- 1 was a service user

The data from interviews, conversations and completed questionnaires were analysed using an Excel spreadsheet. The data set was small and there was no expectation that definitive claims would emerge from so limited an enquiry. However, by examining the interview transcripts and the verbal data, it has been possible to identify trends in feelings about, and comments on, the course.

The analytical data on how many people accessed the course, from where, and for how long, served as a useful backdrop to the analysis of the qualitative data and, occasionally, the data within the interviews offered possible explanations of one or more pattern in the analytics.

Limitations

This evaluative study aimed to understand some of the use and impact of the course. It was designed to gather qualitative data to add some depth to the quantitative data about visitors to the course website. The sample was small and, while as diverse as was possible, no claims can be made about its representativeness of course users overall. The hope of this report is to offer a broad perspective of how and where the course has been used and what impact it might have.

Ethical considerations

Respondents were identified through their registration on the course website or through colleagues who were aware of their use of the course. One service user was interviewed and she was identified by colleagues. Permission to interview respondents was requested by email in most cases and by telephone also in the case of the service user. Consent forms were completed and signed by all whose interviews were recorded. Photographs were taken of all recorded interviewees and those photographs were emailed to them after the interview in order to confirm permission to use them in the report.

Case-studies were extracted from interviews with two respondents. The written and video-recorded material was emailed to both respondents and their permission to use them in this report was confirmed.
Finding and engaging with the course

As of 7th September 2015, 9,965 ‘unique browsers’ looked at this course since it became available in April 2013. Of those, 9,140 were based in the UK. There has been an average ‘bounce rate’ of 27.5% overall since the course start, which means that only 27.5% landed on the course, possibly in error, and the next page they looked at was a completely different website somewhere on the internet. By implication, at least 72.5% of those who found the course read the first page and then went on to look at a second page of the course. While one must interpret such data with caution, it can reasonably be suggested that approximately 7,180 unique browsers ‘hit’ this course and were interested in it.

The abbreviation ‘SDS’ relates to other organisations, notably ‘Skills Development Scotland’, and has represented groups and titles other than ‘Self-Directed Support’ for many years. Searching for these is likely to account for some of the ‘bounce’ traffic to the course website.

Table 2 Referring top level websites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Top referring websites</th>
<th>Visits</th>
<th>Page views</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.google.co.uk">www.google.co.uk</a></td>
<td>3,041</td>
<td>58,250</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.open.edu">www.open.edu</a></td>
<td>2,311</td>
<td>38,123</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><a href="http://www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk">www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk</a></td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>15,375</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The route by which people find this course is identified within the analytical data in terms of the websites from which they come to the course (see Table 2). This data identifies Google, the Open University and the Scottish Government SDS site, in that order, as the top referring domains. The Scottish Government SDS site is the top referring specific web page. These findings are echoed in the qualitative data. When asked how they found the course, one third of the respondents reported finding it by doing a general web search (6 of 18); others came across it when browsing in a more targeted way for material of relevance to SDS. The link to this course which is on the Scottish Government SDS website seems to have been an important signpost for those who have studied or recommended the course; seven of the 18 respondents who reported on how they found the course mentioned the Scottish Government site in particular (see Table 3).

Table 3 How respondents found this course

| The Scottish Government SDS site                         | 7 |
| Word of mouth or known networks                          | 6 |
| Searching within the OU website                          | 5 |
| **TOTAL**                                                 | **18** |

Note: this question was not asked on the written questionnaire, which had been designed to guide interviews, rather than to collect data at a distance.
‘Trusted intermediaries’

Email lists and newsletters of known organisations were particularly mentioned by third sector respondents and seemed to act as ‘trusted intermediaries’ for those learners. The statistics on visitors to the course website show small voluntary organisations’ websites among the top domains from which people click into the course website – they feature in 16th, 22nd and 24th places. The use of ‘trusted intermediaries’ emerged as a particularly important route and support channel for service users and small organisations which work with groups who tend to be marginalised within our communities. Much of the proactive work undertaken by the Open University in Scotland, in collaboration with community-based groups, falls into this category. It is not possible to discern any clear impact of this work in terms of use of the course, but informal comment to the researcher in this evaluation suggested that this work has had an impact on the understanding and dissemination of knowledge about SDS in Scotland. This is an objective of the course and of the funding which enabled it to be created. That an objective can be achieved without direct use of the tool established for that purpose is interesting, but not surprising in the light of the process whereby it served as a catalyst for explorations of what SDS is, and how it might be used by service users, carers and their supporting community organisations.

Reach of the course

This course was written for Scotland but has been widely accessed in other parts of the UK and, to a limited extent, further afield. The data are not sufficiently robust to draw any conclusions from the non-Scottish reach of the course. It is clear, however, from the analytics and the qualitative data, that people in all parts of Scotland find the course relevant and useful. The quantitative data reveal that the rate of returners to the site has remained stable as a share of all unique visitor numbers, with about a quarter of all visits being return visits; since April 2013 there have been an average of 263 new UK visitors to the site and an average of 94 return visits per month. This might suggest that some users of the site are either working through it and/or find it a useful repository of information and that they return to it from time to time. Supporting the hypothesis that some learners use the course as an on-going resource, one practitioner respondent who had studied it stated that she ‘accessed the course materials regularly’ and another, who also works directly with holders of SDS budgets, reported that:

“I use the information and examples [in the course material] ... to explain the process to the client and allow them to make an informed choice on what option they would like to use.”

One interviewee, who has just taken up an SDS-related role in a remote part of the West of Scotland, explained about the travel implications of accessing most training and why, therefore, the Open University model is very suitable for her. She is studying this course and requiring all her new team to do the same, so that they have the knowledge and understanding necessary for the implementation of SDS in that part of the country.

The course is used across the UK but the analytical statistics show the city in which the IP is registered, which may not be where the user is located. That the highest numbers of unique browsers appear to be based in Manchester suggests that this element of the analytical data is not reliable. It is nonetheless reassuring to find Edinburgh, Dumfries and Glasgow among the top nine city locations for unique browsers, visits and page views.

As would be expected, the number of visitors, both new and returning, has dropped steadily over the two years in which the course has been available. In the early days, after the legislation was enacted, this course was a major element of available support; over time it has become less unique and those wishing to enhance their knowledge and understanding now have a wider range of options. The challenges of implementing the SDS legislation across the country have led to quite a cluttered landscape in terms of guidance and support for service users and organisations, which either support them or provide services. This Open University course is now but one feature of that landscape.
Why people studied the course

Of the 14 respondents who studied the course, in part or whole, most (9 out of 14) did so because SDS is a core part of their work role and they needed the knowledge and understanding which the course offered. The other five studied it for background information on SDS, for their own professional development or because it is an area about which they felt they needed a better understanding.

At least two of those who studied it because of a general interest in the area went on to provide it for groups of staff in their workplace. Two others encouraged others to study the course and offered support.

How people studied the course

The vast majority of respondents who had studied the course (14 in total) had completed all sections. Only two people started it but did not complete; for one person this was because other SDS-related training became available as part of her work and the other did not fully complete it because she only studied the parts which were relevant to her role.

The data in this report on how learners studied the course are affected by the snowball sampling method used. When a respondent was found who had run the course for groups of colleagues, the opportunity was taken to elicit feedback from those learners. One result of that process is a skewing of data about the study patterns of respondents, since so many were in the same or similar cohorts.

One training group met once a week over six weeks for a full day, addressing a section each week. This study day was spent doing some reading, watching the videos and discussing the issues which arose from that week’s material. This was experienced as very supportive by the participants, not least because it enabled them to overcome any technological barriers to the course material; the trainer provided the audio-visual material on a large screen so that they could be viewed comfortably and in the group. Most learners found that this was enough time to complete the course but others did further reading in their own time.

Five respondents studied the course on their own, with three of those completing all sections. A further two respondents studied the course in a pair, alongside private study, and found that supportive. The three people who studied the course on their own took between two and three months to complete it. Those who worked on it in a pair or group took between 6 weeks and three months to complete it.

The respondents who worked in groups were able to do so because of support from the managers of those learners. Releasing staff for one day a week, or a half a day a month represents a considerable level of organisational support for this learning. In one local authority, that support developed into support for the organisational changes that came about as a result of the learners bringing their learning about SDS back to their work situations.
What is important to people about SDS

To contextualise the interviews, respondents were asked what was important to them about SDS. Of the 13 people who responded to this question, four identified ‘outcomes’ as the most important feature of SDS; a comment which encapsulates many of those concerns about outcomes was: “If people don’t get outcomes right ... they don’t ‘get’ SDS”.

Informed choice was identified by three people as the most important aspect of SDS with another respondent, whose role involves ensuring that clients have the best possible information on which to base their choices, offering a wider perspective of this aspect. She identified the element of informed choice as “to inform, involve, empower”. A fifth respondent identified “personalised budgets” as the particular aspect of choice which was pivotal for her role in assessing and reviewing service user needs in relation to SDS.

The ethos of SDS was most important to one respondent, though many of the other responses implied the importance of a changed ethos, for example one service-user membership organisation sees SDS as heralding “a new relationship and a shift of power”.

Most of those who were interviewed have some responsibility for advising and supporting service users and the factor of wishing to “signpost people to the best provider for them” (Rural Advisory Service Manager) reflected the seriousness with which that responsibility is being discharged.

From an organisational perspective, most respondents considered that mainstreaming SDS, making it everyday practice, was the most important objective in this area.

Individual reaction

All but one of those who have studied or looked at the course reported that they liked it. There was a range of perspectives on the balance between textual and audio-visual content in the course, reflecting the different learning styles and learning histories of the respondents. One learner, a manager of an advisory and support service, commented that:

“It was readable, it was understandable, it wasn’t overly academic. So it was comfortable ... enough content to challenge my thinking, because it did get you thinking.”

Learning style and preference

To some of those for whom the written word is easy and accessible, this course seems to be ‘light’ on textual content and have considerable content in other formats. For two of the respondents who hold professional roles, and have had considerable experience of education, the course felt ‘difficult and repetitive’ with “too many words; it was very interesting but it was... it was not easy to read”. Only three of the 13 respondents found difficulty with the amount of text in the course. This lack of comfort with the written word, while a minority reaction, came from across the occupational spectrum and included one person in a senior training role.

In spite of the difficulties which many respondents experienced in accessing the audio-visual material, just two of those who had studied the course would have preferred more text and fewer audio-visual elements. One respondent, manager of an advisory service and someone who is comfortable with reading, was not so much at ease with the video-based material:

“I don’t like to sit still very long I’m not very good at this video clipping that’s becoming quite the fashion and I found I sit better if I’m sitting with somebody and we’re discussing ...”
Among those who were comfortable with computers and with the written word were many who preferred to read from paper and, therefore, they printed off the module content, even when computer and internet access were not a barrier. Five of the 13 respondents who had studied the course specifically mentioned that they liked the printed version, even though this was not the subject of any direct question. A typical comment was:

“I love a computer to research and that but I’ll print it off to read it”.

Others printed off the material to compensate for technological challenges in terms of access to suitable computers or to the internet.

**Individual learning**

The learning outcomes mentioned by the 13 respondents who had studied the course can be grouped as follows:

- **Knowledge and understanding** was mentioned by nine of these 13 respondents. In other parts of their interviews or questionnaires, most of those went on to link this learning with changes in their practice and the practice of their colleagues.

- **Learning about the ethos and principles of SDS** was mentioned by six respondents. This is closely linked with learning about the history of the legal and policy changes which led to SDS, and three respondents specifically mentioned the history of SDS as an important area of personal and professional learning for them. For those respondents, it is essential that this material continues to be available because they see it as fundamental to understanding and working within the ethos of SDS. A manager of a rural service, who was thereafter able to help inform her colleagues in other settings about the core aspects of SDS, commented that:

  “it was a really good course in helping to understand the underlying reasons for why things needed to change.”

- Three respondents mentioned that they had learnt about **the law and structures of SDS**, with two others reporting that working through the course content had helped them to update their knowledge in those areas.

- Two respondents appreciated the **enhanced understanding of the lives of service users** which they gained from the course case-study material. Another (with a role in resource management) shared her reaction of “how lucky I am” and her raised awareness of the importance of equality in her work.

Respondents reported that the case-studies in the course provided important learning for them; this is illustrated by the representative comment that “the examples were [what] I really got most from, they’re about people’s lives”. Learners were able to extrapolate from the situations depicted in the case-studies to ways in which their own practice, and that of their organisation, might improve.

Four respondents commented on the impact of the course on their colleagues. The ripple effect of their own learning led to improved and more standardised practice among colleagues. ‘New approaches’ was mentioned twice as was seeing service users getting better support.

One respondent, whose role is that of support and advice to service users, and who belongs to a number of professional networks, was very clear about the wider impact of her own learning.
Learning with other people was a positive aspect for all those who studied this course in groups or in pairs. Learning as an individual was difficult and hard to sustain, in line with the findings of recent research on the low retention of users of OERs and the newer ‘Massive Open Online Courses’ (MOOCs). (Koutropoulos et al., 2012; Liyanagunawardena et al., 2013)

Changes to behaviour

When asked what they do differently as a result of having studied the course, many respondents spoke about using their new knowledge to ‘champion’ SDS and to support colleagues in their own and other organisations. Typically they made direct links between any change in practice and the knowledge and understanding gained through the course.

Sharing information with others, in particular within professional networks, was a behavioural change directly reported by two respondents. That information-sharing was related to their increased confidence in the subject area and their enhanced understanding of the ethos and principles of SDS. One respondent in a third sector advisory organisation explained it like this:

“Because self-directed support is the crux of so many different changes within services having to change what they do and local authorities having to change how they do that, I am able to see behind a lot of these things and I can offer a service-user’s input into different meetings and say ‘OK, I can see why that’s needing to change’. Certainly in mental health services … I attend things like mental health reference forums so I can explain to colleagues who are at the table who have not done the course and are a little bit confused as to why things are changing - I explain that to them.”

Practitioners who work directly with SDS provision reported that their reports were more structured (1), their assessments more thorough (1), their recording had improved (1) and they were better able to explain the SDS processes to clients (1). The service user respondent reported that she used her budget differently as a result of her learning on the course.

These reported changes in individual behaviour are mirrored by changes reported in colleagues’ practice. Five respondents noted ways in which their colleagues’ work had changed as a result of the sharing of learning from the course. These changes were similar to the individual changes, viz., better information-sharing, standardisation of form-completion, more thorough assessments and the ability to provide more ‘solid’ advice to service users.

Organisational change

This evaluative study identified a number of changes in organisations which were attributed, by the respondents, to learning from, and the process of, studying this course. The learning which was most often identified as important in organisational terms was about the history and ethos of SDS. That has brought about fundamental changes in some organisations and is illustrated in a case-study, overleaf, from one local authority.

The organisational changes illustrated in the case-study incorporate changes in systems as well as in attitudes and working practices. Larger organisations reported on new systems and new ways of working; smaller organisations reported on enhanced confidence levels in terms of advising service users and relating to SDS as a service provider, a supporter or an intermediary.

“My understanding of what SDS is … I can help to explain that to other people. I can raise awareness; I can provide different information to help people understand things in a different way.”
Frances Toland is a Social Work Training Officer with Renfrewshire Council. She found ‘Foundations for self-directed support in Scotland’ (‘the course’) while looking for training materials for SDS. She worked through it on her own and realised that it would be a useful resource across the Health and Social Care Partnership in Renfrewshire. She negotiated with managers to allow ten social work staff members to have one day a week study time over six weeks. That pilot attracted good feedback and Frances has been running the course twice a year on the same model of a day a week, working together.

Their study day involved some reading, a lot of discussion and reflection and the opportunity to view any course materials which may have been difficult for the participants to access on their own computers. Frances had negotiated access to all of the online materials, which are often blocked by organisational firewalls.

She was able to share videos and other material on a screen in the training unit so that the group viewed them together.

Among the course participants over the last two years are colleagues who held pivotal roles, and those who have since been promoted, thereby enhancing the impact of the learning:

“One of the team leaders that actually did the course, she wasn’t a senior at the time, [...] she’s now a senior. So certainly when she’s been going to meetings she’s been able to talk about the ethos of self-directed support and raise some of the conflicts in terms of implementation.”

Mary McLean, a resource officer in the review and performance team, studied the course and described the changes in approach and practice of her team as a result of what she and a colleague learnt on that course:

“I was going out and looking at hours and seeing whether I could make savings for the department. So now that’s not what I do, I go out and look at the individual and see what their needs are and their wants and what they’ve got now and what they’d like to have and see how we can put that down, justify why they need it and try and present it in paperwork so that they can get the budget that they need to have the life that they want. But now it’s not about the money, it’s about how we can change the people, the individuals, and how we can change their support into what they want.”

Gerry Dykes, the Self Directed Support Manager of the Council, reported on the impact the course has had on the systems and procedures of the Council, in relation to SDS through the workers who have studied the course. Across the audio and video interviews she made the following points about the organisational impact of the course:

1. We’ve got a broad selection of staff who’ve been on the OU course
2. The course provided SDS champions for the teams in which they worked as well as acting as a ‘steadying influence’
3. The learning on the course is being passed on to colleagues
4. The workers who were involved with the OU said that the existing system did not necessarily achieve the best outcomes for the service user; that system was then changed so as better to reflect service user outcomes
5. SDS is quite a culture change
6. SDS – it’s just the way we do things now; there’s not a separate SDS process, that’s how we do it.
Some of the reported impact on organisational culture and procedures is attributed to the process of people working together on the course, particularly in the initial pilot workshops:

“Actually what happened as the result of the Ambassador’s training is that the strategic planning group opened its doors so that more external people were able to join in. We didn’t have ‘advocacy’ sitting on there before, we didn’t have Voluntary Actions sitting there before.” (Facilitator of one of the pilot workshop groups)

Other outcomes

Seven of the 13 respondents noted that their service users get a better, more consistent service and are more fully involved in producing their care plans as a result of them or their colleagues studying this course. Another respondent, a service user, reported that it had impacted directly on her own life in a very positive way. Enhanced confidence in working with SDS was an important outcome for three practitioner respondents and a cultural change in their organisations was reported by a further two of those interviewed.

Barriers

In the course of gathering qualitative data on views of this course, its applicability and impact, several barriers to using it were raised.

Language

In an increasingly multi-cultural country, some service users groups will not be able to use a learning resource in English. Translating the content via an automatic system would not be a solution; apart from the recognised limitations of translating word-by-word, translating concepts is a sophisticated process.

Literacy

In Scotland the traveller community faces considerable structural discrimination and huge barriers in terms of engaging with formal learning. One example of that is the challenge they face using public libraries. Without a permanent address, it is not usually possible to borrow books. While it is possible to return books to a different library from which they were borrowed within a local authority, this is not possible between local authorities (SLIC, 2015). Against this background, and within the context of access to computers very often being limited, encouraging travellers to use public libraries to access an online course would be a problematic solution.

Technology-related issues

Internet access and lack of access to suitable computers was the barrier most often cited in relation to this course. Internet access can be problematic for individual financial reasons and/or because of firewall restrictions in the local authorities in particular. The variance of broadband access across Scotland and other parts of the UK continues to be a barrier to full participation in online learning, in spite of the ambitions of the Scottish Government ‘to ensure a world-class, vibrant and successful digital economy in our country’ (Digital Scotland, 2015).

As noted above, public libraries offer free internet access, but often for too restricted a time for a learner to get to grips with online learning materials. Where learners on this course were able to get access to the internet, they were not always able to view the videos. This needs a faster connection than is common in some areas of the country and the learner would also need headphones when accessing the videos in a non-private space.
The combination of poor internet access (limited broadband, organisational firewalls), and computers which were old and did not have the facility to listen to audio, were mentioned by many respondents. Four responses specifically mentioned this issue but three of those were reporting on the experience of groups of learners. When these problems occurred in learner groups, there was usually, but not always, a work-around which included sharing the video material on a large screen. One group was unable to access the quizzes and did not succeed in overcoming that obstacle. This offers some triangulation with the statistical data which show far more learners engaging with the material than completing via the quiz at the end of each section.

To have been able to email the audio-visual material to themselves would have been helpful to some respondents as they could have listened to, and watched it, on their phones.

Discussion

Neither the quantitative data from statistical analyses of visitors to the course website, nor the qualitative data from a limited number of learners and other stakeholders, can offer definitive information about how much this course is being used, how it is being used and with what impact – but there are some indications of the answers to those questions.

The statistical data demonstrate that, since the course launch in April 2013, it has been accessed by all 32 local authorities in Scotland. This breadth of reach by the local authority domains is supplemented by the considerable engagement of the third sector. This qualitative evaluation found sustained use of the course across a wide geographical area. Not only is its use not confined to Scottish cities, but the data may indicate proportionately more use of it in rural areas, where training opportunities are fewer. The course has also been used extensively in other parts of the UK, notably in England, and the analytics also show quite a bit of interest in it from other countries. So the course is clearly relevant and useful across regions and countries. Engagement with it has dropped off slowly and steadily since its launch, as would be expected, with a spike when the revised version was launched in 2014. The number of return visits, however, has remained consistent in proportion to new browser visits, possibly suggesting a continued pattern of use.

The analytics about the route users ‘travelled’ to find the course are supported by the qualitative data and suggest that learners do a general web search for it, or click to it from a trusted intermediary site, most usually the Open University or the Scottish Government’s SDS website. Woven through the interviews with those who have used the course is comment about hearing about it through networks and recommending it to colleagues and networks. While word-of-mouth and mailing lists are often an important source of information about relevant professional development, the low visibility of the course on websites whose content relates closely to SDS is surprising. The available data cannot support definitive comment on the usefulness of this course for carers and service users but, given the positive feedback inherent in the qualitative data, it would seem helpful to work towards a higher profile for the course on relevant websites—see Recommendation 5 below.

Closely related to the issue of visibility of the course is that of the intertwining of outcomes from the course itself, and of the work of disseminating information about the course. The latter area of work seems to have had the effect of disseminating information about SDS within community groups, including minority ethnic groups. For a range of reasons, including literacy, language and computing skills/access, as charted in ‘Findings’ above, this work may have resulted in very little extra engagement with the course, but the outcomes in terms of engagement with SDS are more evident in feedback from those involved. The objectives of the funding, which made this course possible, included the dissemination of information about SDS in Scotland. Qualitative data suggest that, using this course as a conduit, community groups were able to introduce service users and carers to the principles and ethos of SDS and, thereby, encourage their engagement in its processes. Until SDS is embedded in the way in which social care is delivered in Scotland, this support work should continue and be incorporated into the work suggested in Recommendation 5 below.

In 2014 the Open University engaged in the training of SDS ‘Ambassadors’ by offering this course to groups of practitioners and other staff based in three local authorities in Scotland. One of those groups included colleagues from the voluntary sector. The outcomes of that work echo the findings of this evaluation at different Kirkpatrick (1994) and Hamblin (1974) levels, viz:

- Improved personal understanding and confidence (Level 2)
- Changing personal practice (Level 3)
- Confidence to challenge established practice in relation to SDS (Level 3)
- Changing workplace practice (Levels 4 and 5)
- Enhanced confidence in working with servicer users (Level 2)
- Enhanced comfort with the role changes which SDS involves (Levels 3 and 4)
The particular feature of increased confidence to challenge practice, which may not have been congruent with the ethos and principles of SDS, reported by Kubiak (2014), is reflected in the organisational-change case-study presented above as part of the findings of this evaluation and illustrative of changes at Levels 4 and 5 of the Kirkpatrick/Hamblin models.

Because this evaluation sought data at Level 1 of Kirkpatrick’s model, the level of reaction, it elicited comment about learning style. The course is presented as text on the screen, along with many video case-studies and interviews. Each section ends with an interactive quiz. The course is aimed at anyone with an interest in SDS but is, perhaps predictably, being used mostly by professionals with a direct SDS role or an advisory role in relation to service users who may use SDS.

A minority of respondents who had studied the course considered it to be text-heavy. It is, perhaps, surprising that this kind of comment was made by those in professional roles, but such data act as a reminder of the wide range of learning styles which learners have. Not everyone was comfortable with the level of video material either, though this was sometimes, but not always, connected with the technological barriers mentioned above. Almost half of the interview respondents who had studied the course reported their preference for reading a printed version of the course content. The ‘view as a single page’ option in each section was useful for these learners as it facilitated the printing of the section content. For those unable or unwilling to watch the video material on their computer, it would be useful to have an easy way to email it to themselves so that they could listen to it on a mobile device, which is now the most important device for internet access (Ofcom, 2015). One rural learner had to read the transcriptions of the videos because her broadband connection was not good enough for downloading. This same learner found the course had ‘too many words’ as her learning style is more auditory than visual. To have to rely on the transcriptions of the video case-studies exacerbated her challenges with the written text.

There have been considerable improvements in broadband provision across the UK in recent years. Ofcom (2015) reports that 73% of premises in Scotland were able to receive superfast broadband service in May 2015. However, this is the lowest proportion among the UK nations, with England being the highest at 84% (page 7). In addition, the take-up of broadband is not consistent across socio-economic groups and 25% of homes in Scotland do not have any kind of computer at home (page 70). Variations in broadband provision around Scotland, and even within urban areas, have also been noted in other parts of the UK, particularly in rural areas (Ofcom, 2015).

Time and again, in this evaluation, respondents reported difficulties in accessing the audio-visual material and/or the quizzes at the end of each section. Some access problems were firewall issues in local authorities and those challenges have been documented by IRISS (2010). There is little evidence that the situation in local authorities has improved (IRISS, 2013) in spite of the Scottish Government’s digital strategy (Scottish Government, 2011), which aims for widespread digital participation and broadband connectivity in Scotland by 2020. Rural broadband may have arrived in Scotland, but stability of service and size of bandwidth are often too poor to enable the use of online resources which include video and interactive resources. That broadband cover and speed varies between different cities and within cities in Scotland is also a frustration to urban learners and those who support them (White, 2013). One way to support learners to overcome some of the technological obstacles in studying this course might be to consider other ways in which it might be made available, such as separate OERs which could be incorporated into existing elearning systems – see Recommendation 2.

Literacy was a barrier which was mentioned, in particular, in research engagement with minority ethnic groups and their supporting organisations. Several service user groups are not literate in English; these groups include the traveller community in Scotland and groups for whom English is not a first language and who may not be literate in their own first language. Added to this language barrier is the major challenge of the lack of computing skills among many groups of service users. The particular problems with broadband services, as discussed above, in rural areas exacerbate the exclusion experienced by

**Findings**

73% of premises in Scotland are able to receive superfast broadband

25% of homes in Scotland do not have any kind of computer
these service users and carer groups. This will not be an easy hurdle to overcome – see Recommendation 3.

In terms of Kirkpatrick’s levels of learning, the data collected in this evaluative study suggest that the vast majority of users of the course liked it (Level 1) and learnt about the history of SDS, its ethos and structures (Level 2). Furthermore, they changed how they worked (Level 3) and also were often able to influence colleagues’ work practices (Level 4). Comments about gaps in the course content are reported above and the need for stronger material on outcomes is noted and reflected in Recommendation 4.

The evaluation found evidence of organisational change (Level 4) in relation to SDS in three particular organisations and one of those is illustrated in a case study above. The organisational changes described by respondents included new systems and structures, new ways of working and a cultural change in relation to that work. Extrapolating from accounts of new ways of including service users in care planning, it can be suggested that these organisational changes impact on the service users, and so could be described as evidence of changes in the achievement of ultimate goals (Hamblin’s Level 5).

The objective of creating as wide an access as possible to this material must be considered alongside the value to the learner of the ‘credibility’ (the word used by one respondent to explain why she chose this particular resource) of the learning resource. Though being a ‘university’ course might be a barrier to some workers, service users and carers, it seemed important to the learners consulted in this evaluation that it is presented by the Open University. They felt able to trust that it was accurate and unbiased and it carried enough status for the essential management support for study time, and subsequent organisational changes. Without support from middle and senior managers, the organisational changes reported by a number of respondents would not have been possible. The costs in staff time, where this course is delivered to groups in the workplace, are considerable. It seems that the Open University ‘badge’ on the course was an element in the decision by management teams to support staff development in this format. One organisation releases staff for one day a week over six weeks. This is a considerable investment and one which encourages openness to change as a result of the learning of those staff members on this course.
Grampian Opportunities

Grampian Opportunities (GO) is an independent organisation with charitable status which works in the North East of Scotland to support disabled people and people with mental health problems to have choice and control in their lives. GO supports its members into employment in the broadest sense. It works with them to increase their confidence and skill levels by providing supported opportunities in admin/office work, marketing, advertising, finance, events organisation, journalism, IT, driving and much more.

“We’ve got quite a lot of volunteers who are doing work roles on an unpaid basis and sometimes they’ll be needing support so there’s a whole area of how SDS might support people who volunteer.”
(Linda Singer)

Marie Johnston is a service user who started with GO as a volunteer and is now a part-time admin worker. She found this course when looking for training about SDS for herself, at that time a volunteer, and her GO colleagues. She was signposted to it by emails from networks and trusted intermediaries. She thought it would be useful for her and also for the staff at GO.

Linda Singer, the Lead Worker at GO, and Marie studied the course together:

“We did a bit of self-study because timings meant we weren’t always [in the office] together but we actually found it helpful when it came to watching some of the video clips and that... I don’t like to sit still very long I’m not very good at this video clipping that’s becoming quite the fashion and I found I am better if I’m sitting with somebody and we’re discussing it. So self-study at times and sitting together at times.” (Linda)

What did you learn from the course?

“I learnt that it was OK to ask and that it was OK to... it wasn’t just about having the label and it was OK do things for myself and not rely on traditional services... it gave me the confidence to say I want to change my support plan. And I was able to see that I could use my budget differently.” (Marie)

After learning about SDS on the course, Marie requested that her support plan be revised in the light of SDS principles. This enabled her to be supported in her developing role at GO, to start going away by herself for short breaks and to continue learning. Her picture (Figure 3) tells her story graphically.
Recommendations
Recommendations

This section brings together some of the findings of this evaluation and suggests one or more recommendations where those might be suggested by the findings.

In general, those consulted within this evaluation considered that the course is a valuable resource to those working with, or using, SDS. There are greater barriers for service users studying the course, but the value of it for professionals working in this area is evidenced by the findings reported above. Those consulted would like to see this course continue to be available as SDS ‘beds in’; the work of disseminating knowledge and understanding is not yet complete.

Recommendation 1 – maintain the course content and availability

It was less easy for respondents to agree how this course should continue to be maintained. Many of those consulted would like it to be available in separate ‘chunks’, though they valued the logical progression through the sections. One way to approach this would be to consider transforming the structure of the course into a series of Open Educational Resources (OERs). Cannell (2015) defines an OER as ‘educational material that allows users the option to reuse, revise, remix, redistribute and retain; these freedoms are often known as the SRs of OER’ (page 5).

We might look at OERs in terms of co-creation. Alongside the commitment of SDS to co-production and the moves to see OERs as constantly developing, rather than static, resources, turning the sections of this course into reversionable OERs could enable users to amend and develop it, in the context of their own needs and the needs of their partners in the provision and use of SDS. If the course was available in separated sections, or as OERs which could be incorporated into the elearning systems (‘Brightwave’ in one local authority), the firewall and access problems would be resolved. These would have to be updatable and versionable, as explored by Cannell (2015, 2015a), and consideration needs to be given to the advantage of being OU ‘badged’ and the corresponding tension between such accreditation and wider access to the course materials. The NHS Education for Scotland (NES) has an internal elearning system which may then also be able to include this course.

Recommendation 2 – Consider how the course might be adapted for inclusion in other elearning systems and the Open University’s Social Work Degree programme

A view was expressed by several respondents that this material should be integrated into the Social Work degree programme.

Recommendation 3 – consider how this course can be made accessible to those not literate in English

If this resource is to be useful to minority ethnic communities, some consideration must be given to providing a translation of the contents.

Recommendation 4 – when the course content is being revised, consider enhancing the material on outcomes as well as considering the points above

Opinion among respondents was divided on the importance of the inclusion of the history of SDS legislation. Some respondents felt that it was very important and several commented that it was helpful to them to understand SDS as part of a continuum of changing attitudes, context and legislation. A small minority of respondents felt that this section was ‘dry’, overly detailed and no longer necessary, though they would like it to be compressed and/or optional within the course, rather than removed.

Content updating suggestions included:

• Include examples of some of the imaginative solutions which have been found to meet service user outcomes; broaden out the examples from direct payments
• Use examples of support plans
• Create a section with a focus solely on outcomes, the area on which most content-related comment in this evaluation was focused.

‘Outcomes’ was an area identified by those respondents who had a workforce development role. They would welcome more material on outcomes and, in particular, some case-studies demonstrating how to apply an outcomes model of working and how to differentiate between an activity, a service and an outcome.

One respondent argued for more representation of issues relating to mental health: “It’s very much based towards physical disabilities or learning difficulties.”; (Advisor to service users with mental health issues)

One respondent mentioned how learning about SDS might support people who volunteer. An organisation can become a volunteer’s community and thereby be an important source of support. Some guidance about how organisations might use this SDS course to support their volunteers would be welcomed.

Recommendation 5 – Extend the reach of this course via continued work in the community and liaison with holders of other websites.

Networks and intermediaries are an important source of information about SDS and about this course. Word-of-mouth and interpersonal contact remain vital conduits of information about relevant professional and personal development resources, such as this course. While those channels of communication are fundamental to information sharing, online visibility is increasingly important. If it is to reach those who are working most closely with service users and carers in the community, the course should feature on any website which offers related support. Considerable work was undertaken to ensure a visibility on relevant websites when this course was first launched. Websites and organisations change quite quickly, items can ‘fall off’ or become almost invisible, as other news takes over. New organisations appear and new projects develop additional websites. A renewed effort to reinstate a link to the course on the website of umbrella bodies and networks would extend its reach into the community.
Conclusion
Conclusion

This evaluation adopted a qualitative approach to assessing the use and impact of KG097 Foundations for SDS in Scotland. Evidence was collected from 21 respondents, of whom nine participated in a recorded interview and two of those agreed to a video presentation of their main feedback.

Of the stakeholders consulted, there was a balance between respondents from local authorities (10) and the third sector (9) – the latter included a service user. Of the 17 professionals who provided evidence, five worked in a training role and seven were senior managers. The other five worked directly with service users, though in a range of roles.

As well as an analysis of the qualitative data collected within this evaluation, this report includes data from the statistical analytics relating to the use of the course website. As an enhancement of these sets of results, two case-studies are included in this report. One of the case-studies illustrates the individual change which can happen as a result of studying this course and a service user shares the story of how her life changed as a result of SDS, one driver for that change being her study of this course.

Those who studied the course found it in different ways; both the qualitative and statistical data suggest that general web searching, the Open University website and the Scottish Government SDS site were the top three routes to the course. Levels of engagement have varied and the expected slow-down of visitors to the course has been steady, with return visitors staying at a level of 25% of all visits. The course has been accessed and used right across Scotland and across types of organisations. The research for this evaluation found evidence of the importance of community-based ‘trusted intermediaries’ in signposting to the course to those who may not have had the knowledge and skills to find and assess it for themselves. There is some evidence that the Open University itself is seen as an ‘honest broker’ and its material carries a ‘credibility’ (in the words of one respondent) which can otherwise be difficult to identify in the swathe of training resources being offered. It seems important that this work of sharing information about the course would continue and develop, particularly given the Scottish Government and Open University’s goal of engaging as wide an audience as possible in raising levels of knowledge and understanding of this important change in social care delivery.

One objective of the course funding was the dissemination of knowledge about SDS in Scotland and the findings of this report suggest that this objective was achieved. Knowledge was gained, shared and used in creative ways to the benefit of service users and carers and SDS is becoming embedded in many organisations. This course played a part in the cultural shift which was involved; that shift is more marked in some organisations than others and this course can, of course, only have been one of the influences in that process. The evidence of this conclusion is presented within the ‘levels’ framework of Kirkpatrick (1959) as adapted by Hamblin (1974). This framework allows an examination of the evidence at different levels, all of which are necessary if the ultimate goals of the organisation are to be achieved.

Respondents liked the course and offered a range of comments about the balance between textual and audio-visual content. Those who work with service users all reported a change in their practice to bring it into line with the ethos of SDS. Five respondents also reported changes in their colleagues’ ways of working, as a result of sharing the learning gained on the course. These changes set the scene for changes in organisational systems and procedures. Some of the organisations which participated in this research were small enough for the learning of the lead worker to impact immediately on the whole organisation and that process was reported by three respondents from different third sector organisations. Larger organisations are more difficult to change but one local authority provided specific evidence of high-level change as a direct result of the changed attitudes and job behaviour of learners on the course:

“The information that came back from workers [who studied the course] made us re-examine the systems that we had in place.” (Senior Manager).
A number of barriers to studying the course emerged during the research for this evaluation. Chief among these were the technological challenges faced by many of the learners. These problems ranged from unsuitable hardware, through firewall problems to the bandwidth of the available broadband service. This feedback reflects a wider inequality in access to the internet in spite of the governmental drive to enable all citizens to have good internet access. That inequality exists across the UK but is more marked in Scotland (Ofcom, 2015).

Other barriers noted in the qualitative data were those relating to language and to literacy. Many service users and carers are not literate in their first language and not at all comfortable with the written word in English.

A number of recommendations are made within this report on the basis of the evidence gathered. Importantly this report notes the value of the course in embedding the ethos and principle of SDS in the organisations which support service users and manage SDS processes. To reconsider the formats in which the course is made available may support local authorities and the NHS to incorporate that material into their own elearning systems, thereby bypassing many of the technological challenges encountered by respondents and their fellow-learners.

In terms of content, the material on history and ethos of SDS is highly valued by learners. The material on outcomes is not as full or as up-to-date as many of the respondents would wish and arguments were made for more examples of how outcomes differ from services and how outcome-based care plans can be created.

In summary, this course had made an impact on the knowledge and understanding of SDS across Scotland; it should be retained, though the form it might take could be re-examined in the light of some of the evidence presented here. Work should continue on raising its profile within professional networks and, particularly, with organisations which operate as ‘trusted intermediaries’ for service users and carers.
References


Kubiak (2014), Evaluation of the Self-directed Support Ambassadors, (internal report), Milton Keynes: The Open University


SLIC (Scottish Library & Information Council), (2015) Personal communication, 21 September 2015


KG097 Foundations for Self-Directed Support in Scotland, a free-at-the-point-of-use online course of approximately 40 study hours was first presented by The Open University in OpenLearn in week beginning April 15th 2013. This the final report on usage.

Headlines

1. The number of unique browsers who have accessed KG097 is now 4,810 (the number was 3,245 in November 2013).

2. An average of 48 new unique browsers return to view and use KG097 each week. This means that approximately 2,221 unique browsers have ‘returned’ to engage with KG097 since April 2013. In addition we estimate that 1,200 users have ‘enrolled’ on the course; in other words, between 1,200 and 2,221 unique browsers have probably been using the course in a serious and sustained way. The quizzes are used but only modestly, with probably 300+ unique browsers accessing the quizzes but a lesser number circa 200 actually completing quizzes. Few of these, currently only 79 have downloaded a Statement of Participation although this is a big increase from the November figure of 46. This increase may or may not be associated with the workforce pilots.

3. There was a spike of interest in KG097 in June 2013 followed by consistent interest throughout the rest of 2013 until December 2013/January 2014 when a more modest ‘spike’ or rather ‘lump’ of interest is evident, and this may be occurring still.

4. In November we were able to report that KG097 had been widely used in Scotland and in this report we have seen that growth in usage widen and deepen throughout Scotland. Within this picture we can discern particular ‘spurts’ of growth in particular geographic regions at particular times against a background of steady growth.

5. Separately we have seen encouraging growth in awareness of KG097 in the FE sector and in the NHS/health-related sectors but both of these areas will need further promotion work.

Unique browsers and bounce rate

From April 15th until week beginning 3rd March 2014, 4,810 unique browsers have visited the course website. These browsers made 8,614 visits with a bounce rate of 25% with a total of 118,630 pages views since April 15th 2013. The recent average bounce rate for all OpenLearn materials was 55%, so KG097 does a lot better than most other OpenLearn material. In addition these figures show improvement since the last report. More people are looking at KG097 materials for longer periods of time.

The graphs below distinguish between (a) total unique browsers, (b) new browsers and (c) returning browsers, where (a) is a straightforward addition of (b) and (c) over elapsed time since April 15th. Early peaks can be noted where initial publicity through various sites including the Scottish Government attracted people to explore the site. During this early phase there is a substantial gap between the figures for (b) and (c). Over time we can see the two lines merging at least until November/December 2013, this is consistent with a greater proportion of users actually using the course rather than just browsing ‘something new’. For some reason from November/December 2013 there has been another surge in interest in KG097 and the gap between ‘new’ and ‘returning’ widens again. This is consistent with the early usage of KG097, it simply means that a proportion of ‘new’ users are using KG097 in a very ‘light’ way. The sharp drop off in ‘March 2014’ is a statistical artefact as not all March data have been collected and is therefore not significant. Graph 2 is just another view of the same data illustrated in Graph 1. It is clearer in showing the late surge of interest in November/December 2013.
Returning Unique Browsers

The number of ‘returning users’ is probably indicative of the number of ‘real’ users/course participants. On any given week this number ranges from about 40 to 50, apart from the first and second week of operation the lowest number was 29 in Week 43 October 21- October 27, 2013, and the highest was 96 in Week 23 June 3rd-June 9th 2013, and another high point in Week 8 2014, 15th- 21st February when 72 unique browsers returned to view KG097. The overall weekly average of returning unique browsers since course start is 48 (up slightly from 45 in November 2013). In approximate terms therefore about 2221 UK based unique browsers have returned to the site since course start, indicating the kind of numbers of people actually using the course rather than just ‘viewing’ it.

There is an ‘enrol’ button on the site. This allows access of online interactives; if ‘enrol’ is not clicked then users effectively can’t use the quizzes and some other interactive learning tools. However, the ‘enrol button’ is quite small on screen and while a pop-up asks for an email address and name, no further demographic or other data is taken. If ‘enrol’ is clicked it does not send an email to the recipient to positively state enrolment. This is a deficit in the system.

This issue was noted in November 2013. Text was added to the site to help address this problem.
It is doubtful if this work on its own will resolve the issue. This is evidenced by actual numbers accessing the quizzes compared with returning unique browsers. The number of unique individuals who have ‘enrolled’ is 1,200 or 54% of returning unique browsers but this is better than was the case in November 2013, when the figure seemed to be about 36% of returning unique browsers. So this is a substantial improvement on the November 2013. These users would have had access to quizzes and other interactive media, the evidence for substantial engagement in quiz activity is limited. There were 327 unique browser views of quiz pages of which 256 unique browser attempts in quiz pages and of these there were 217 unique browsers who viewed the quiz summary page and 202 unique browsers who viewed the quiz review page. In effect, it is probable that only about 200 or so of unique browsers substantially engaged in the quizzes or about 16% of enrolled users. In November the number of users actually downloading the Statement of Participation was very low at 46 individuals it has now increased to 79, which is perhaps still lower than we expected at course start. Of course the KG097 was written with the view that it could become used as an extended open educational resource, even in the majority of its usage. We may have to wait on the impact of the workforce pilots to see a rise in downloads of the Statement.

Location of Unique Browsers

KG097 on OpenLearn means that it accessible throughout the world even if its curriculum is focused on use in Scotland. Use is focused within the UK – see Appendix 1.1. We can tell the geographical location of the users by tracking the location of their internet service provider address. This is not exact in the way it would be if the learner were to apply for an accredited module or qualification in which full demographic data would be given. Moreover there is some instability in the accuracy of these data. For example, the system was tested by OpenLearn staff recently when the location of use was definitely known, i.e. Milton Keynes and then each unique browser’s geographic location was traced through the analytics system but this indicated London, Richmond and Newbury rather than Milton Keynes! So the data outlined here are not as robust as we’d like it to be. We think this is because the analytics reveal locations of Internet Service Providers rather than device locations. It is possible that the high incidence of ‘London’ could include almost any UK location, including Scotland.

The Pie Charts below indicate the proportion and distribution of unique browsers in the UK. It can be immediately seen that the greatest proportion of unique browsers come from England principally London. However because we know the data are not as reliable as we would wish, we believe that currently these data underrepresent use in Scotland. We are using these data as a benchmark as we know there are inherent problems with identifying Geo IP address locations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>England</td>
<td>40.67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scotland</td>
<td>0.22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wales</td>
<td>28.05%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northern Ireland</td>
<td>0.16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>London</td>
<td>40.21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rest of UK</td>
<td>29.72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* “London” and “England” are mutually exclusive categories for present purposes
* “London” and “England” are mutually exclusive categories for present purposes.

The Pie Charts and the Graph together demonstrate the appeal of KG097 in England/London even if there are some doubts about device location the overall trend is established. What is noticeable however is the negligible use of KG097 in Wales and Northern Ireland. Even if the results are outlined above turn out to be accurate in terms of device location, this is not a problem. The evaluative issue we have to tackle is whether given the aims of KG097 it is being sufficiently used within Scotland for Scottish purposes. Using the ISP data we can generate an understanding of usage over time.

### Table 1 Scottish regional usage growth of KG097

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>REGION</th>
<th>WEEK 1 10TH JUNE 2013</th>
<th>WEEK 15 16TH SEPT 2013</th>
<th>WEEK 29 23RD DEC 2013</th>
<th>WEEK 39 3RD MARCH 2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen and Moray</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Argyll and Bute</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayrshire(s)</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borders</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Edinburgh and the Lothians</td>
<td>131</td>
<td>240</td>
<td>295</td>
<td>361</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greater Glasgow</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>135</td>
<td>201</td>
<td>229</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Highland</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lanarkshire(s)</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>95</td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orkney</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perth, Angus and Fife</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shetland</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stirling, Falkirk and Clackmann</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>109</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data goes some way in establishing trend data however they do not give a comprehensive picture. For example the ISP data do not indicate that KG097 has a presence in Comhairle nan Eilean Siar but we know from looking at the direct entry domain (see section below) that KG097 has been accessed from that location. So we have to be careful in interpreting trends, absence from the ISP data does not mean that people in certain locations are not accessing KG097, and the figures above may underestimate the total number of unique browsers accessing KG097 from a given location. Nevertheless Table 1 does allow us to say that KG097 has presence in almost every Scottish locality. We can also see particular areas of apparently enthusiastic take-up, e.g. Shetland. In other places we can see ‘steady growth’, for example Aberdeenshire and Moray. There are also interesting disparities even where there is growth, for example, much better take-up in Edinburgh and the Lothians as compared with Greater Glasgow. The graph below allows a slightly different view and concentrates on specific city/town locations of access.
The disparity between Glasgow and Edinburgh is naturally repeated but the rising tide of ‘rest of Scotland’ also shows the overall growth in and more widespread use of KG097 across Scotland. The Dumfries line is also interesting in that it shows growth of use arising at a certain point in time between the 12th August and 2nd September 2013. The same is true of Lerwick between 17th June 2013 and 8th July 2013, and possibly Galashiels between 1st July 2013 and 22nd July 2013. These different nuances allow some room for further promotion and reinforcement of communications. Of course there are major population differences between each of these locations and we can expect that ‘saturation point’, that is the point at which we should expect limited or no growth in further usage to be met earlier in Shetland as compared to either Glasgow or Edinburgh.

**Location of Unique Browser by direct entry domain**

We can also track usage by looking at how unique browsers found KG097 materials. This is subdivided into (a) Direct Entry, (b) Search Engines or (c) External Referrers, and now (d) social media. The Pie Charts below indicate the proportions involved.
An external referrer would be, for example, from a Scottish Government site or from the various sites that agreed to take on our links back in April/May 2013. The direct entry sites can either be from bookmarks of the KG097 site made on individual PC browsers or they can be from identifiable corporate domains. There are modest differences between what we knew in November 2013 and what we know now. For example, we can see an influence from social media now that was not present in November. In addition we can see a slight shift away from ‘direct entry’ to ‘external referrer’ as the source from which unique browsers came to KG097. Search engines retain the same profile as in November 2013.

We can’t pin down the location of all UK based ‘direct entry’ unique browsers but we can tell quite a lot. We can establish for example which local authorities have knowledge of KG097 and have accessed it; we can’t tell who or why access took place but we can say how many unique browsers accessed KG097 from particular local authority locations.

Unique browser direct entry type can help us to understand ‘reach’ particularly in relation to its use in health and social care workplaces. Although there is a lot that remains obscure we can identify a number of the ‘other’ domains but not their health and social care workforce significance. Nevertheless we can compare the picture we had last November with the present picture in Table 2 below, this helps to supplement the ISP data. For example, the ISP data did not pick up any access of KG097 from Comhairle nan Eilean Siar but the direct entry type data does pick this up. So these two sources of data should be seen as complementary and at times overlapping. The helps to show trend.

Table 2 Known Usage using Scottish Local Authority Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCOTTISH LOCAL AUTHORITIES</th>
<th>UNIQUE BROWSERS VIA DOMAIN NOVEMBER 2013</th>
<th>MARCH 2014</th>
<th>CHANGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 East Ayrshire Council</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>145</td>
<td>+7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Dumfries and Galloway Council</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>+34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 Shetland Islands Council</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>+17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 Highland Council</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 Edinburgh</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 Midlothian Council</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7 Perth &amp; Kinross Council</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>78</td>
<td>+49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 South Ayrshire Council</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>+12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 Scottish Borders Council</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 Fife Council</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11 Angus Council</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>+9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 Moray Council</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13 Renfrewshire Council</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>+19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 West Dunbartonshire Council</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>+10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 North Ayrshire Council</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 East Renfrewshire Council</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Aberdeenshire Council</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>+4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Dundee City Council</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Inverclyde Council</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Comhairle nan Eilean Siar</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Glasgow City Council</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Clackmannanshire Council</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>No Change</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23 South Lanarkshire Council</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24 East Dunbartonshire Council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>No data</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 Falkirk council</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>+5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>691</td>
<td>889</td>
<td>+198</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These data help to show where there seems to have been growth of use by local authorities since last November which in turn might reflect any ‘on the ground’ activity. By this measure we can see particular growth of use in Perth and Kinross and Renfrewshire, and other ‘growth areas’ such as Shetland and Dumfries and Galloway that have already been picked up using the ISP data.

In November there was evidence of limited HE use but it seems that the on the ground work completed in autumn 2013 to engage the FE sector has worked and awareness of KG097 in the FE sector is now tangible. Nevertheless there are many more FE colleges; the FE colleges listed here represent approximately half of colleges in the sector. In addition it is likely and natural that use to date has been exploratory rather with any serious thought of including KG097 in FE curriculum. This could be an avenue of work over the next period, especially in light of the extension to KG097 concerning children.
Table 3 Known Usage using HE/FE Domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCOTTISH HE/FE</th>
<th>UNIQUE BROWSERS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Reid Kerr College (West College Scotland – Paisley)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Further Education Unit (Colleges Scotland, Stirling)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aberdeen College</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Stirling</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Wheatley College (Glasgow Kelvin College)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Strathclyde</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ayr College</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Watt College of Further &amp; Higher Education (West College Scotland, Greenock)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Lanarkshire College (East Kilbride)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stow College (Glasgow)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Open University</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>University of Dundee</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Smith College (Fife/Kirkcaldy)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Banff &amp; Buchan College of Further Education (Fraserburgh)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Borders College (Galashiels, Hawick and St. Boswells)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardonald College (Glasgow)</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Falkirk College of Further &amp; Higher Education</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>North Glasgow College</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Browsers</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We noted in the last report that direct entry domains featuring the NHS could not be pinned to specific locations in Scotland, in effect the location might be anywhere in the UK. In Table 4 the number of unique browsers from ‘health related’ domains is given but note that ‘health related’ is widely defined and some organisations might consider themselves as social care organisations. Use by the NHS has gone up, with 92 unique browsers, many more than was the case in November, though still much lower that the total from local authorities (889 unique browsers). Many of these 92 unique browsers will be based in Scotland but given the comparative organisational and workforce size of the NHS compared to local authorities there is likely to be room for usage growth in this area.

Table 4 Known Usage using “Health-related” domains

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“HEALTH RELATED”</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>National Health Service</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>British Red Cross</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dumfries &amp; Galloway Health Board</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National Autistic Society</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cornerstone Community Care</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Thistle Foundation</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scottish Recovery Network</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sense Scotland</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total Unique Browsers</td>
<td>126</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Conclusion

This is the final report on the usage data on the version of KG097 that was launched in April/May 2013. In November we were able to report that KG097 had been widely used in Scotland and in this report we have seen that growth in usage widen and deepen throughout Scotland. Within this picture we can discern particular ‘spurts’ of growth in particular geographic regions at particular times against a background of steady growth. It is evident that within an overall picture of growth in greater Glasgow the growth is less substantial than in the other major population centre Edinburgh. Particular enthusiasms, e.g. in Shetland and Dumfries and Galloway have also been noted. Separately we have seen encouraging growth in awareness of KG097 in the FE sector and in the NHS but both of these areas will need further promotion work.

Dr Sandy Fraser
Associate Dean (Curriculum and Qualifications)
Faculty of Health and Social Care, The Open University
Wednesday, 12 March 2014
Appendix 1.1

KG097 Unique Browser Worldwide as at 3rd March 2014 (absolute numbers)

Unique visitors in Scotland

WEEK 1 10 JUNE 2013

WEEK 15 16 SEPTEMBER 2013

WEEK 29 23 DECEMBER 2013

WEEK 39 3 MARCH 2014

Legend:
- UK
- Europe (excl. UK)
- North America
- South America
- Asia
- Australasia
- Middle East
- Africa
- Caribbean
- Orkney
- Shetland
- Highlands
- Moray, Aberdeenshire & Aberdeen city
- Perth & Kinross, Angus, Fife
- Stirling & Falkirk
- Argyll & Bute
- Inverclyde incl Glasgow
- Ayrshire
- Lanarkshire
- Lothians incl Edinburgh
- Borders
- Clackmannanshire
- Dundee city
Appendix 2 – Semi-structured questionnaire (2015)

Evaluation of the use and impact of KG097

Foundations of self-directed support in Scotland

Name (optional)
Contact detail (optional)
Date of interview
Place of interview
Workplace if relevant to SDS

1. Role in relation to SDS
2. What is most important to you in relation to your role and SDS?
3. How have you used, or been involved with this course?
5. In what context?
6. With whom? How many? -1-5, 6-10, 11-20, 21+
7. How much of it did you use? How much time?
8. What did you hope to get from it?
9. What outcomes were achieved?
10. Did you like it?
11. How did it make you feel?
12. Did you tell other people that you were studying / working with it?
13. What did you learn from it?
14. About the law/structures?
15. About yourself?
16. About your work?
17. About your life?
18. About the lives of those around you?
19. About how to use what you learnt in your everyday life? (application in context)
20. What is different after using the course?
21. For you
22. For those around you
23. For colleagues (where appropriate)
24. Other?
25. Do you do anything different as a result of studying/working with this course?
26. Does anyone around you do anything different as a result of you studying/working with this course?
27. Has your organisation changed in any way as a result of this course?
28. Have there been any changes to the things that matter most to you in your life and work?
The Open University in Scotland promotes a dynamic learning culture that enables people and communities across Scotland to raise their aspirations and realise their full potential. Our learning development activity provides a creative interface between The Open University’s supported distance learning offer and the distinctive context of Scotland’s educational environment, economy and society.

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