



It's All About Pictures: Putting Symbol Sets to the Test

Consumer-Testing with Service Organisations

Report



Our Funders:



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Background

In 2011, the Glasgow Good Information Group (GGIG) was awarded funding to consumer-test 5 symbol sets.

Introduction to this Report

This report covers the consumer-testing of the Symbol sets with service organisations.



Methodology

5 Symbol sets were tested: Boardmaker, Change Picture Bank, Photosymbols, Say it Works and Valuing People (Inspired Services).

See Page 3 [Event and Survey Report Appendix](#) to find out why we chose these sets.

Symbol Set [Factfiles](#)

Hands-on Sessions



We used the GGIG laptop loaded with the 5 symbols sets.

Participants had to choose a topic and then try and find pictures for 4 words using each of the symbol sets.

These are the Topics and Words we used:



Health: blood pressure, exercise, vaccination, weight



Housing: bills, furniture, insurance, tenancy



Learning: computers, reading, timetable, writing



Recreation: dancing, football, holidays, swimming



Recycling: bins, recycling, renewable energy, waste



Religion (Christian): church, praise, Jesus, welcome

Work: interviews, qualifications, training, volunteering

Online Survey

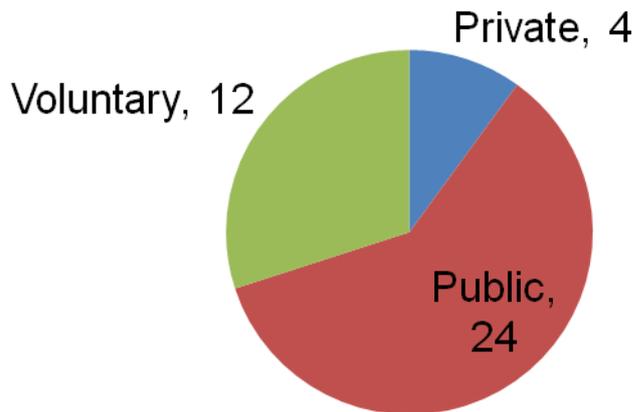
People working in service organisations were asked

- questions about their experience of using at least one of the symbol sets
- to comment on what they liked best and least about the sets they used
- for general comments on using images to produce easy read information.

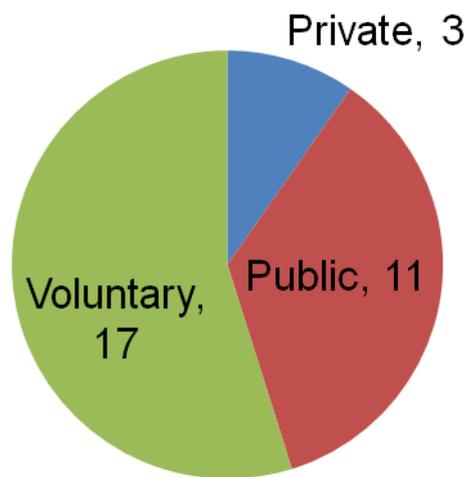
Results

Where People Worked

Hands-on Sessions and Focus Group - Where People Worked

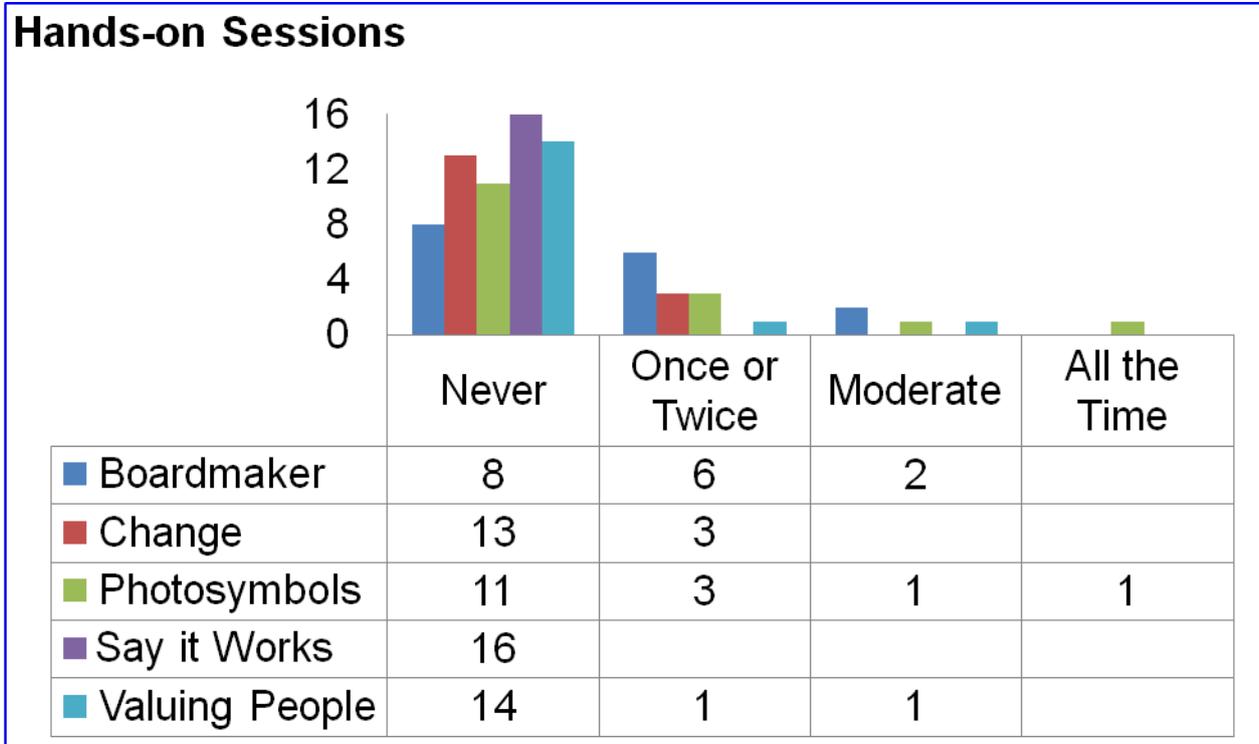


Online Survey -Where People Worked



- 29 people took part in 16 hands-on sessions
- 73 people completed the Online Survey
- 11 people from one team took part in a focus group

Experience of Using Symbol Sets



8



8 groups had used Boardmaker

5



5 groups had used Photosymbols

3



3 groups had used Change

2



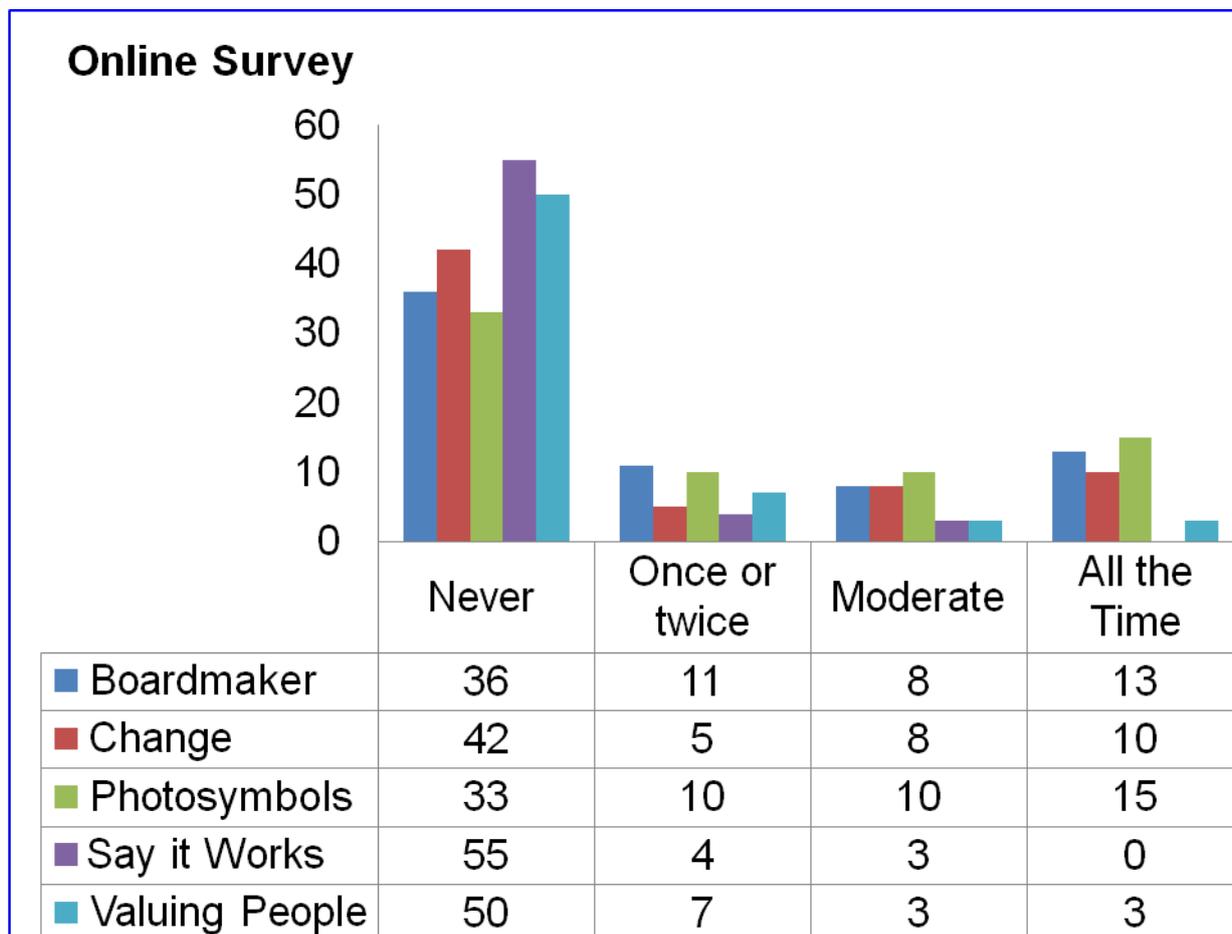
2 groups had used Valuing people

0



No-one had used Say it Works

Experience of Using Symbol Sets (continued)



35



35 people had used Photosymbols

32



32 people had used Boardmaker

23



23 people had used Change

13



13 people had used Valuing People

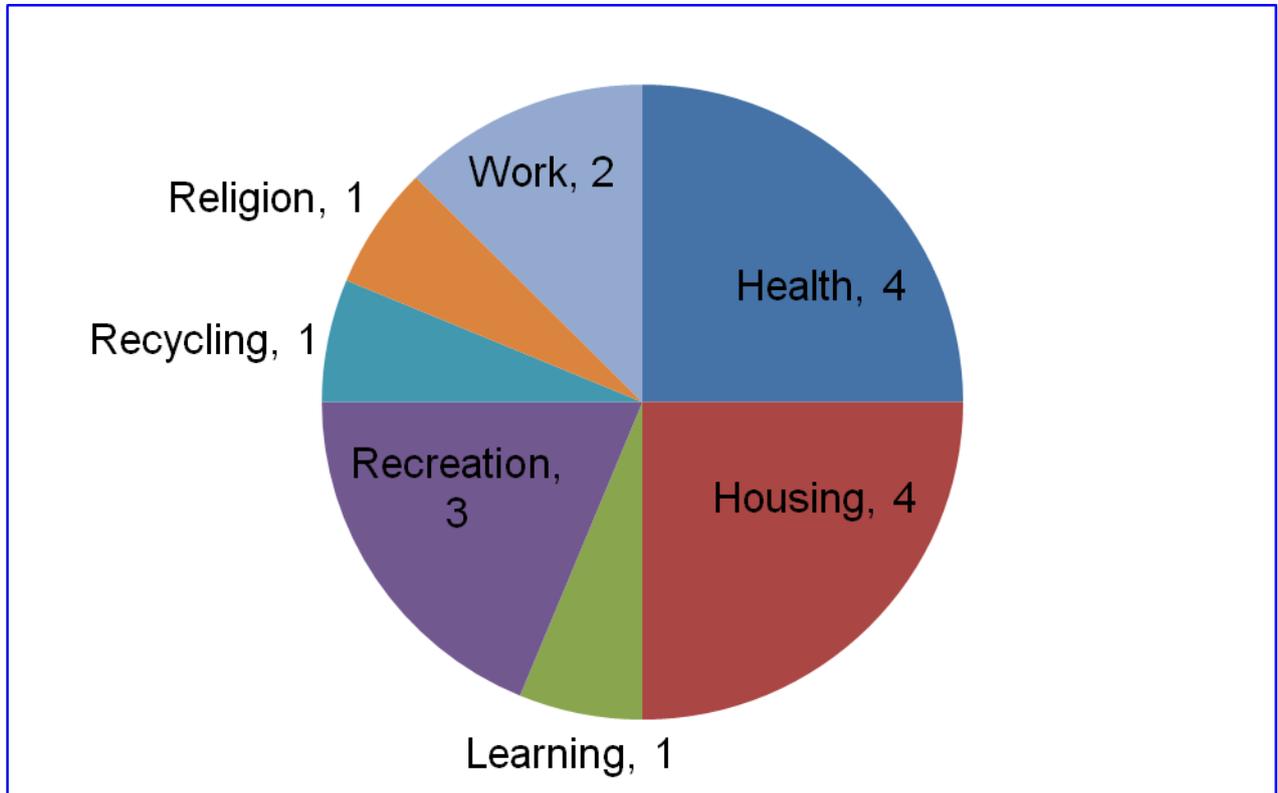
7



7 people had used Say it Works

Hands-on Sessions Finding Pictures

Topics Chosen



Health and Housing were each chosen 4 times



Recreation was chosen 3 times



Work was chosen twice

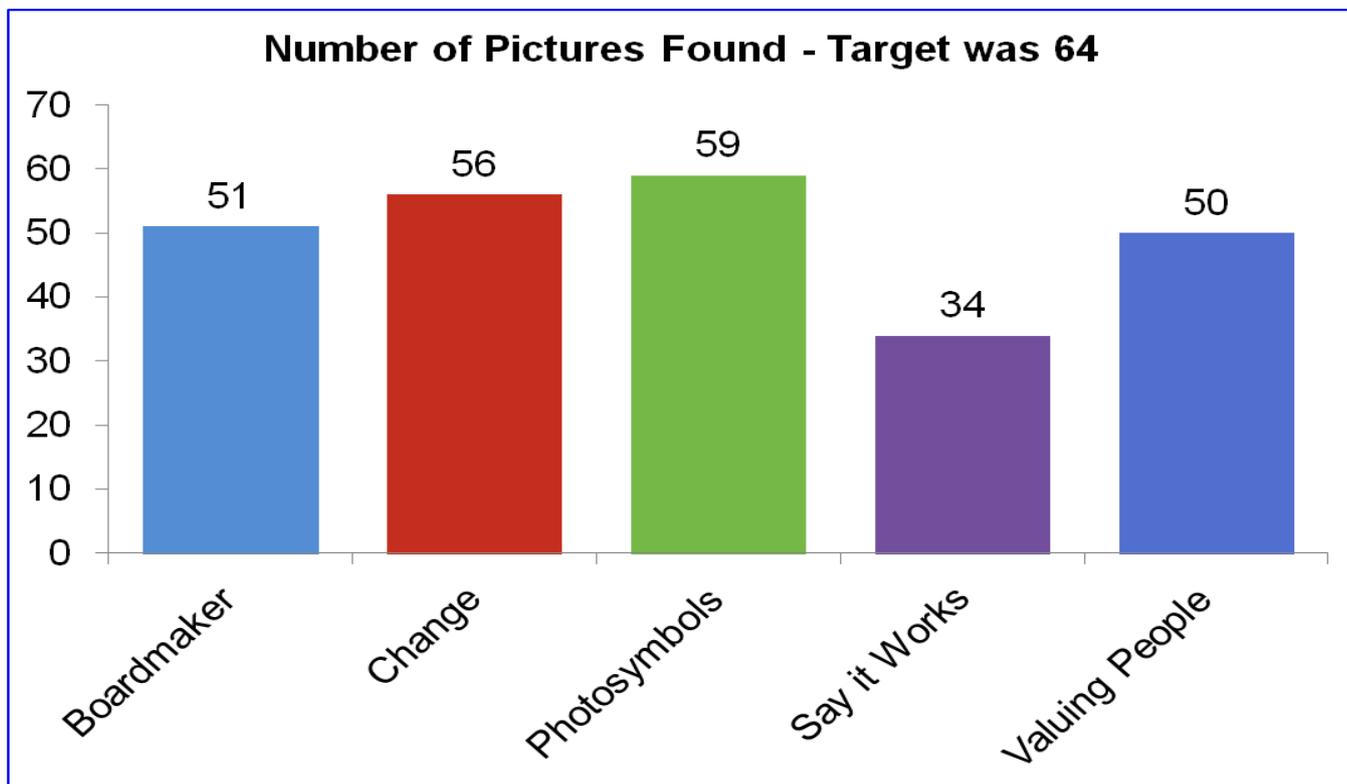


Learning, Recycling and Religion were each chosen once.



Hands-on Sessions Finding Pictures (continued)

Pictures Found



59



Photosymbols Pictures found 59 times

56



Changes pictures found 56 times

B
51



Boardmaker Pictures found 51 times

50



Valuing People Pictures found 50 times

34



Say It Works Pictures found 34 times

Pictures Found (Continued)

Some groups used pictures they did not like very much



"Confusing image for Blood Pressure - a few themes in one."

"Not one I would use for Vaccination"



"It would be good to show a person as well"

"Too specific. Would not use this in context of Autism because it's MMR"



"this is the picture for Insurance but to us it does not convey this well"

"Meaningless Image"

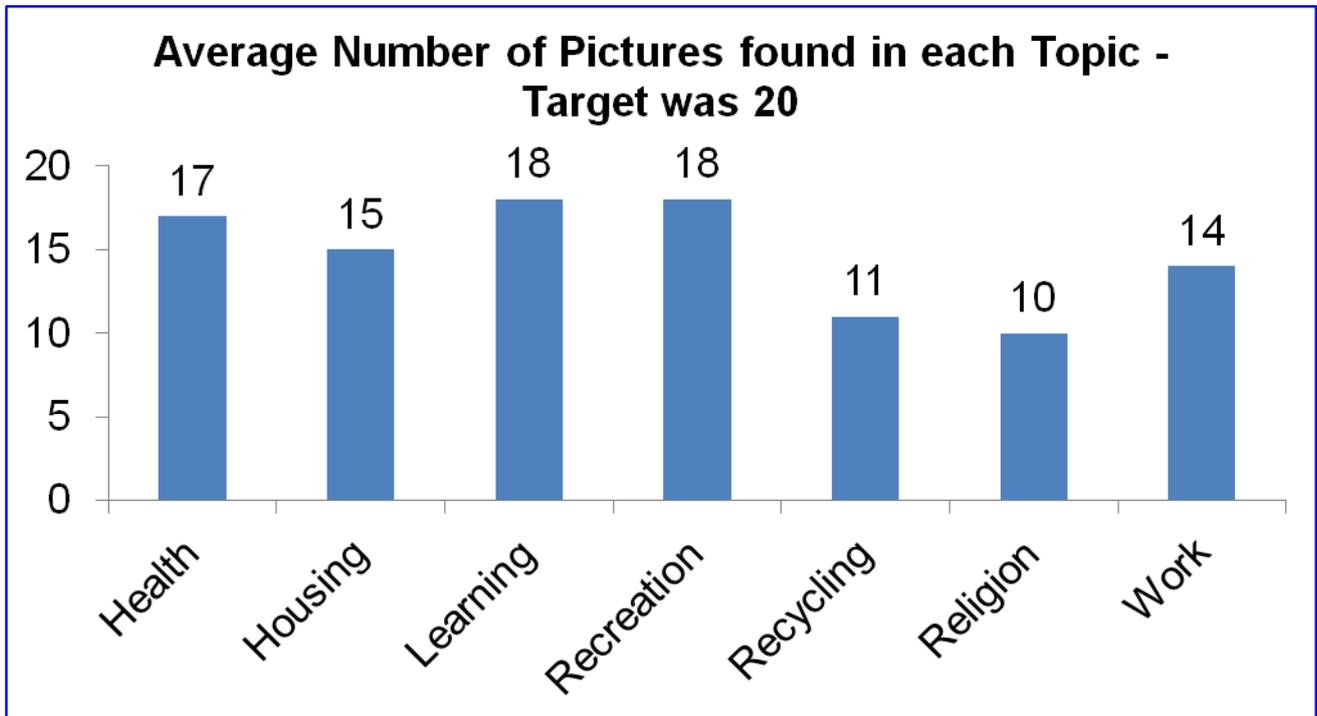
" Furniture best we could find -but did not really think there was a suitable image



In this symbol set, the other 3 groups said "no suitable picture found"

This means the numbers of pictures found does not mean that participants always thought they were good pictures

Pictures Found (continued)



Each group could have found 20 pictures for the 4 words in their topic

The highest number of pictures any group did find was 18 for



learning, and



recreation.

The lowest number of pictures found was 10 for



religion

Pictures Found (continued)

The only words that all the groups found pictures for were:



- "tenancy" (some with 2 or 3 pictures),
and



- "computers" (some old-fashioned)

The most difficult words to find pictures for were:



- "insurance" (Valuing People was the only set with a picture for insurance)



- "volunteering" (Change was the only set with a picture for voluntary work)



- "Jesus" (Boardmaker was the only set with a picture for Jesus.)

Focus Group



GDSS

We held a Focus Group with 11 members of the Glasgow Dyslexia Support Service



- Some of them had experience of using Boardmaker to produce learning materials
- All of them recognised Boardmaker Pictures
- None of them had any experience of using the other symbol sets.

photo symbols⁴



We showed them how to find pictures in each of the other sets. They liked Photosymbols the best out of the 4 other sets.



They had never thought of using more realistic pictures, especially with young people leaving school.

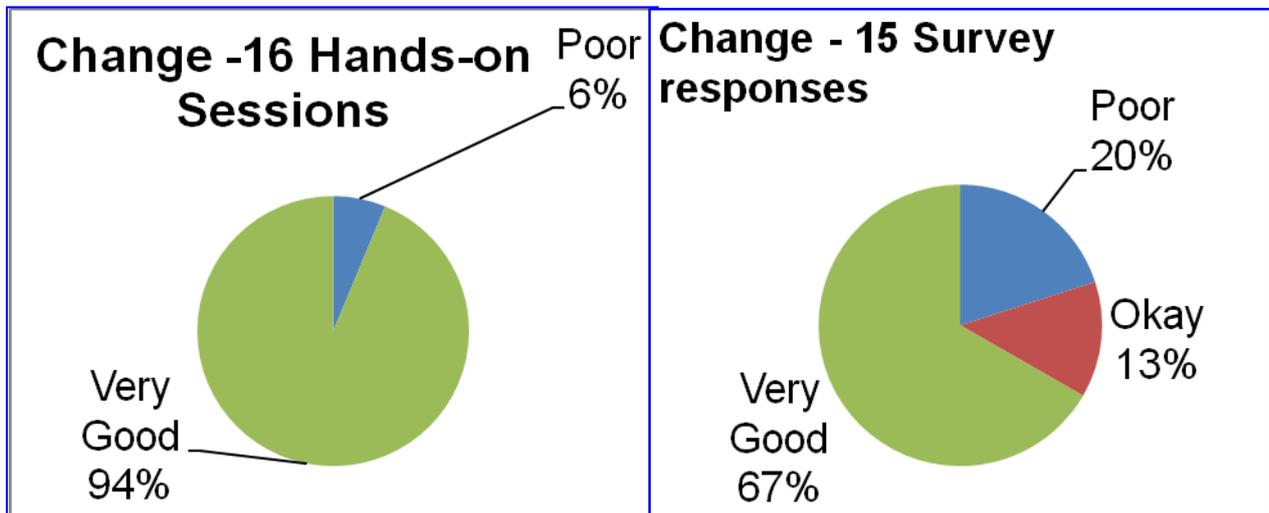


We talked about whether it was a good idea to

- keep using Boardmaker because people knew them, or
- change to pictures designed for adults.

Rating Symbol Sets

Change



Pictures from Change were given a high score by 15 out of 16 groups in the hands-on sessions.

12 out of 15 people in the Online Survey said they were good or very good.

What some people liked



- black and white good for photocopying
- clear pictures
- good selection
- cover broad client group
- easy to find



"Best one of the selection"



"Appropriate and large symbol. Looks like it would be easy to reproduce and resize"



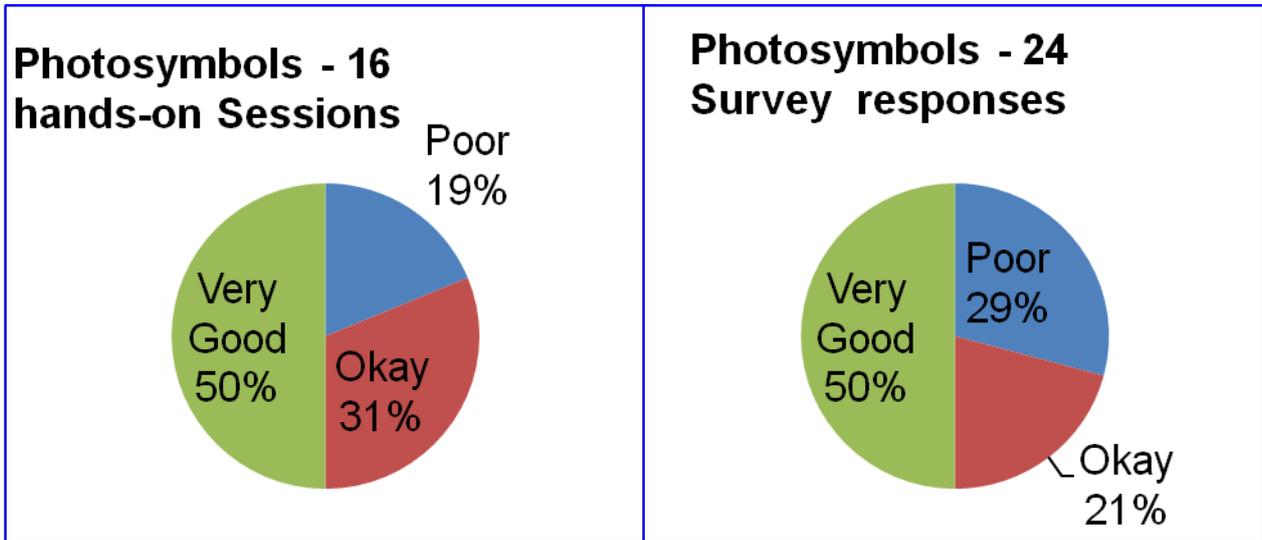
"Clear picture, represents blood pressure being taken. Was easy to find."

What some people did not like



- No keyword search and can be difficult to know which group and sub-group to search under.
- Pictures not labelled. Sometimes difficult to know what picture means.
- Some pictures are too complicated
- Pictures quite large and need to be resized

Photosymbols



13 out of 16 groups said that pictures from Photosymbols were good or very good.

17 out of 24 people In the Online Survey. thought the pictures were good or very good...

What Some people liked



- real photos, real people
- good range of topics
- high quality pictures
- site is easy to navigate



"Very good. Clear. Obvious. Shows all colours of bottles. Good colour contrast."



"Good clear good quality pictures. Easy to see what they represent"



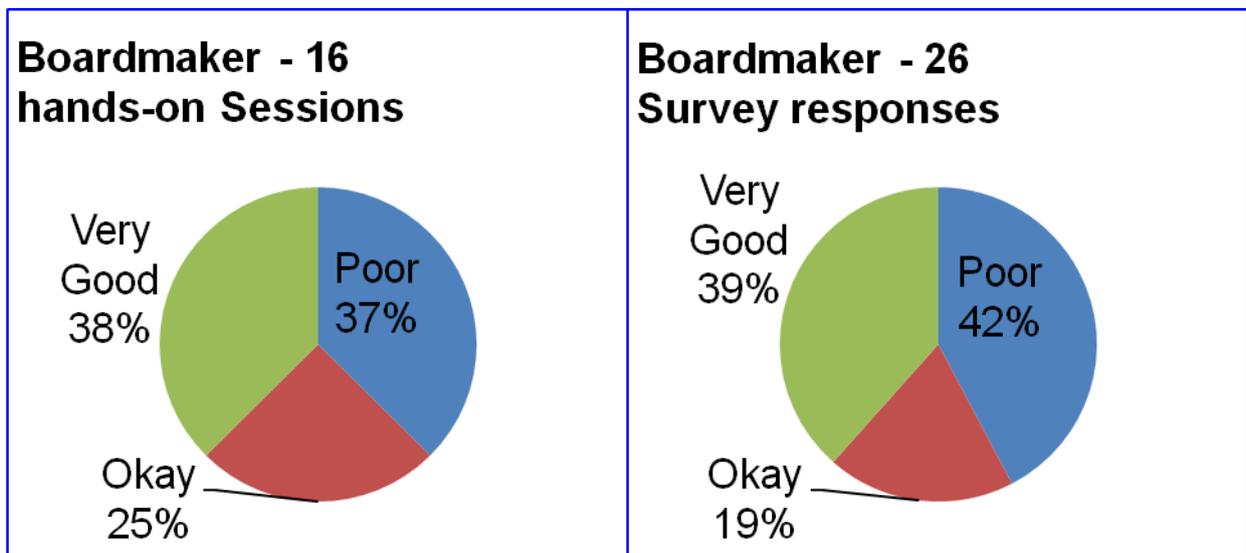
"I like this symbol for holidays. Good use of photos and is generic enough to use in a variety of settings."

What some people did not like



- keyword search – inconsistent, e.g.
"holiday" brought up 8 pictures;
"holidays" brought up 1.
- regional photos not always good for Scotland
- limited choice, e.g. "no walking photo"
- too much detail, can be distracting
- pictures not labelled. Not always clear what they mean.

Boardmaker



10 out of 16 groups said that Boardmaker pictures were good or very good.

In the Online Survey 15 out of 26 people said the pictures were very good or good.

What some people liked



- pictures good quality and uniform size
- simple, unambiguous
- can be adapted
- people recognise the pictures
- pictures labelled



"Good colours".



"good generic picture "

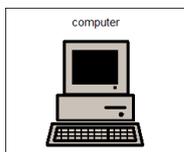
What some people did not like



- keyword search not very effective
- old-fashioned pictures
- topics to do with work - difficult to find any suitable pictures
- better for children than adults
- can't cut and paste directly into Word document

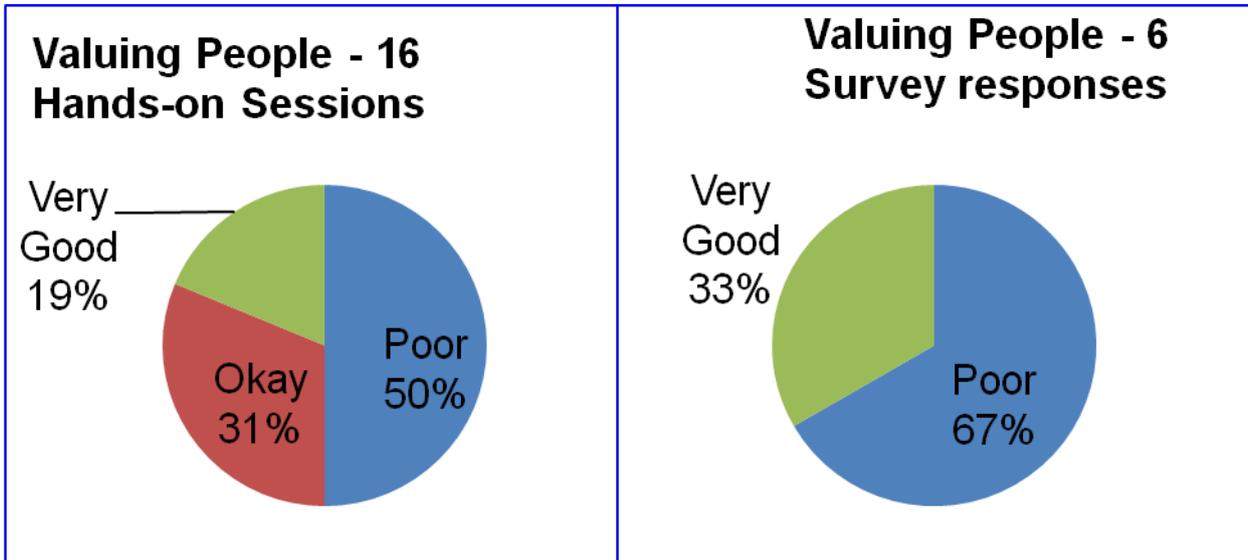


"not a very good image"



"out-of-date computer"

Valuing People



Only 8 out of 16 groups said that Pictures from Valuing People were okay or very good.

Only 2 out of 6 people in the Online Survey said that they were very good.

What Some people liked



- Searching for pictures using topics
- Good range of generic pictures, e.g. calendars, clocks
- Updating service



"Interviews - best picture for word"

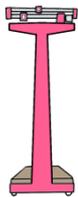
What some people did not like



- Poor quality pictures – "I was surprised at the poor quality"
- Some pictures very big
- Pictures not labelled
- Keyword search not very successful
- Basic pictures such as Blood Pressure missing
- Old-fashioned pictures

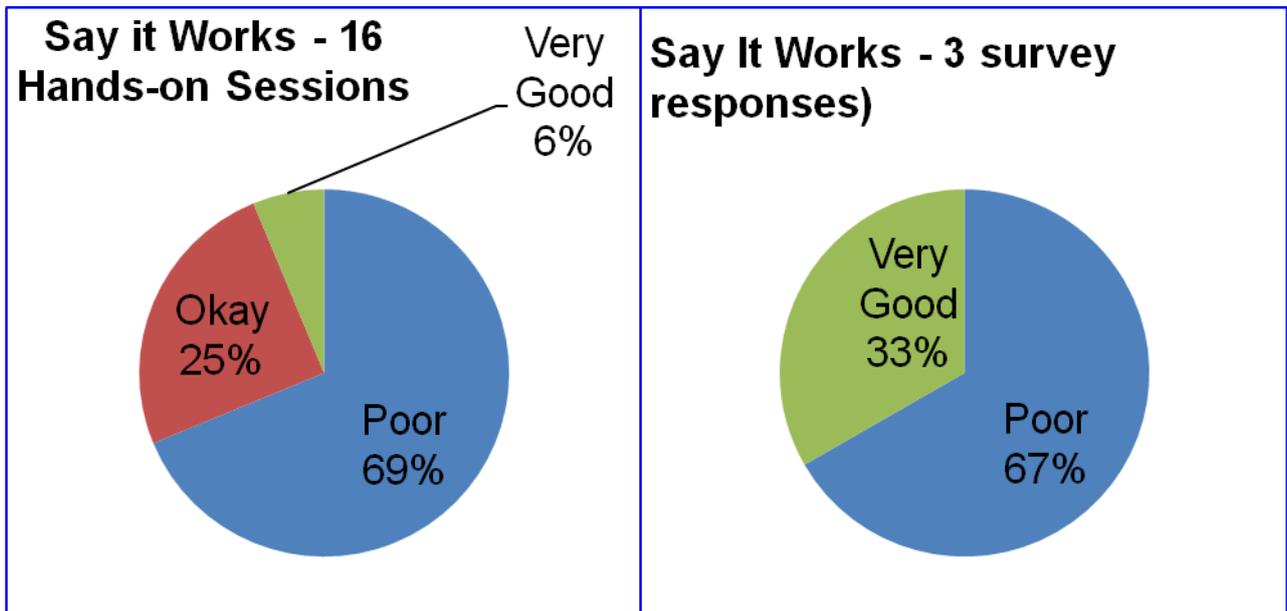


"Most appropriate symbol in set for dancing but could be issues reproducing because of poor quality"



"Weight - Only one could find, but would not use this. It looks like a lady shaver!"

Say It Works



Only 5 out of 16 groups said that pictures from Say It Works were okay or very good.



Only 1 out of 3 people in the Online Survey said they were very good.

What people liked



- Easy copying and pasting
- Pictures labelled
- Adult themes

What people did not like



- Pictures too complicated – "blood pressure and smoking" but no "blood pressure"
- A lot of negative messages e.g. drug misuse, smoking, drinking
- Limited choice
- Keyword search not always successful
- Pictures poor quality if copied directly from the screen.
- Some pictures need to be cropped to remove blank space round image.



"Picture requires in-depth interpretation skills."



"Confusing image, a few themes in one."

Summary



Good Practice Guide Project



29



11



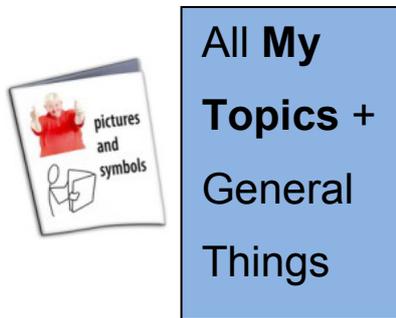
73

This report is the 2nd part of our Good Practice Guide Project. It covers the consumer-testing of 5 symbol sets with people who might use pictures to produce easy read materials.

- We observed 29 people from 16 service organisations using our Laptop to find pictures.
- We showed the symbol sets to 11 people from another organisation
- We used feedback from our online survey from 73 people who had used at least one of the symbol sets.

From the results we can highlight what people from service organisations:

- are looking for in symbol sets, and
- what they found when using the 5 symbol sets we tested.

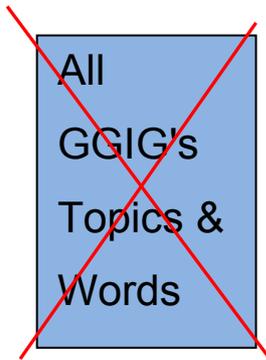


Coverage of relevant topics

People want simple easy to understand pictures covering the topics they are interested in and general things like clocks.

What they found:

- None of the symbol sets have suitable pictures for all the topics and words we used in the hands-on sessions.

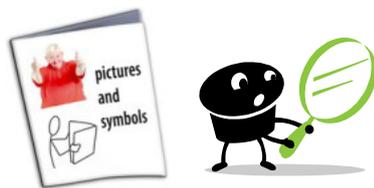


Finding Pictures

People want a simple and successful method of searching for pictures.

What they found:

- Keyword searching was often frustrating and time was spent thinking of other words to search under, often unsuccessfully.
- Scrolling through pictures without labels on the screen was time-consuming and confusing.

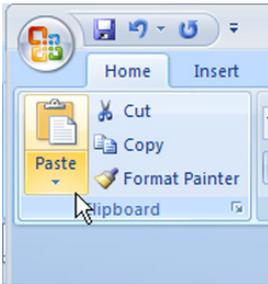


Copying and Pasting

People want an easy straightforward method of copying and pasting pictures into documents.

What they found:

- In general people did not find it difficult to copy and paste pictures from any of the sets into a Word document.
- Even Boardmaker which was the most complicated was fairly easy once people were shown what to do.



Quality and Size



d quality pictures of
same size.

ere very big and
ized to fit the space.
ing and time-

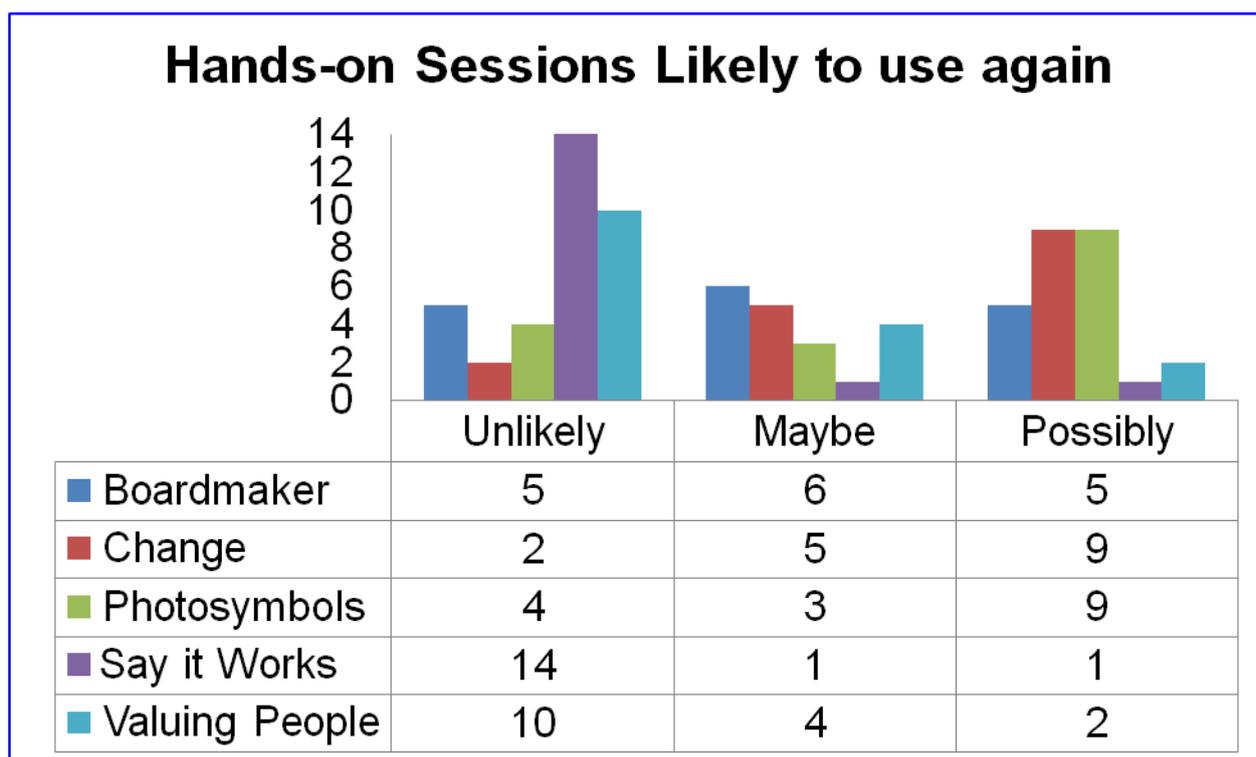
me pictures was

Discussion

Symbol sets are designed to make it easier to produce written information for people who need information in an easy read format.

We carried out this research to obtain objective feedback from service organisations about using the symbol sets we were testing

What We Found (1)



 	<p>Overall, Change and Photosymbols were the most popular with participants at the Hands-on Sessions. 14 out of 16 groups said they would use Change again while 12 said they would use Photosymbols again.</p> <p>These 2 symbol sets were also the most popular in the online survey</p>
	<p>The popularity of Change does not match the results of the consumer-testing with people who need information in easy read format.</p>

	<p>We counted the number of times each symbol set came 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th & 5th</p>					
		1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th
	<p>Change Picture Bank</p>	2	2	5	2	5
	<p>Photosymbols</p>	9	3	2	1	1

Extract from Table in Event & Online Survey Report 1

	<p>Why the difference?</p> <p>We think there is one good reason for the difference. (There may be others.)</p>
<p>It's All About Pictures</p>  	<p>We found in Part 1 that most people who need information in easy read format like coloured pictures.</p> <p>This was the most common reason for not choosing Change Pictures.</p> <p>"I would have liked to see the colour of the fruit"</p>
<p>Consumer Testing Symbol Sets</p> 	<p>We found in Part 2 that many people working in service organisations like black and white pictures.</p> <p>The reasons given are practical.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <input type="checkbox"/> "Black and white better for photocopying" <input type="checkbox"/> "We are not allowed to copy in colour."
	<p>We do not think there is an easy answer to this problem but,</p> <p>"On balance good quality black and white easy-read is better than no easy-read."</p>

What We Found (2)

Everyone thinks differently when it comes to choosing pictures.

People are not even consistent between 1 symbol set and the next.

These are the choices by 3 groups from 2 of the symbol sets for holidays.



Group 1



Group 2



Group 3

Labelling pictures on the screen would help people make informed choices.

These are the choices 2 groups made for vaccination and blood pressure



Vaccination

These 2 pictures are of a blood test.

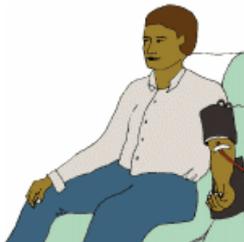
In both sets there is a picture for vaccination



Blood Pressure

This is a blood transfusion

In this set there was no picture for blood pressure.



People act differently if they cannot find a suitable picture.

- More experienced people might choose more than one picture.

- Some choose something they do not like or do not think is suitable.
- Some only use pictures they think are "spot-on".

If everyone had done this during the hands-on sessions the results for each symbol set would have been poorer than those recorded.

Conclusion

During this research we consumer-tested 5 symbol sets with service organisations.

The results show that all the symbol sets could improve:

- their coverage of ordinary things such as work, housing and health.
- their search methods to make it easier to find pictures.

It also shows that, while symbol sets are an invaluable aid to helping people produce easy read material, it is very unlikely that any one symbol set will ever:

- meet all the needs of all the client groups who need information in easy read format.
- produce pictures liked by everyone, either client groups or service organisation.
- cover every topic, word or idea people might be looking for.

Service organisations wanting to produce easy-read versions of their material are looking for pictures directly related to their specific services, e.g. health, housing, recycling, religion etc.

What they need is:

- a good coverage of pictures related to that interest.

- ❑ a collection of general pictures such as clocks, calendars, telephones etc. (The symbol sets were not tested for these)

They do not necessarily need pictures covering all topics and ideas.

Option 1

Rather than buying 1 general symbol set, organisations could consider gathering together a bank of pictures from a variety of sources:

- ❑ free images, e.g. clipart, Google images (although there may be copyright issues with some of these), Bonnington symbols, screenshots
- ❑ their own photographs
- ❑ pictures from different symbols sets. Some allow people to purchase individual pictures. Change also has topic specific collections (see Symbol Set Factfile).

Option 2

They could buy one 1 general set and fill in the gaps as above and/or tell the symbol set producer when they cannot find suitable pictures for a specific topic e.g. Christianity. This will help these producers to design more pictures to help fill gaps in their coverage.

Appendix

Quotations from participants

"No one symbol system would work"

"No one-size fits all"

"To mix & match is best"

"The symbols I have seen are not always clear and can be open to misinterpretation"

"I usually have to move between Change, Boardmaker and clip art to build up what I am attempting to put together."

"I think one big problem is that choosing images is so personal. Sometime with all the sets, I find that if I use a search term the images that are offered do not really fit the bill but often if I scroll through the collection images I'll find something that suits."

"Easy read language is equally important. People should not use a graphic for the sake of it - if you can't find one, better to do without."

Acknowledgements

GGIG would like to thank the following organisations who took part in the hands-on sessions and focus group

Public Sector

- East Lothian Council: Enjoy Life: (1)
- Glasgow City Council: Autism Resource Centre (2)
- Glasgow City Council: Social Work North West PPF (4)
- Glasgow City Council: Dyslexia Support Service (11)
- NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde: Health Improvement (2)
- South Lanarkshire Council: Occupational Therapist (1)
- Strathclyde Fire & Rescue: Equality & Diversity (2)
- West Lothian Council: Disability West Lothian (1)

Private Sector

- Caledonian Health Care Ltd: Support Worker (1)
- Morisons Solicitors (2)
- Nicki Souter Associates: (1)

Voluntary Sector

- C-Change: (1)
- Lead Scotland: (3)
- Prospects in Scotland: (1)
- Quarriers Good Information Group (4)
- Scottish Refugee Council (1)
- The Advocacy Project: (2)

We would also like to thank to everyone who responded to the Online Survey