



Words can't hold us back

An insight into the UK's literacy challenges in education: the findings, the obstacles UK adults face, and the opportunities technology can provide to overcome these barriers.

Introducing Texthelp's “Words can't hold us back”

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- Reading, writing and comprehension difficulties
- Practical and emotional impacts
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In August 2022, Texthelp, in partnership with Censuswide, surveyed over 2,000 Brits to find out more about the literacy challenges they faced during education. We found out the extent to which many people battle with basic literacy skills and the impact it has had on their everyday lives.

The insights within this report highlight what literacy challenges UK adults faced during their education years.

The data from the report also tells us that many people did not have access to support. A third (34%) said they did not have access to technology hardware due to availability.

¹ 36% respondents selected 'somewhat or very difficult' for at least one of the literacy disciplines including spelling, grammar, reading long pieces of text, understanding the context of the text I was reading and homework

This research found that

36%



said they struggled with some form of literacy¹ during their education.

20%



said they experienced difficulties with grammar

19%



said they experienced difficulties with homework

18%



said they experienced difficulties with spelling

Reading, writing and comprehension difficulties

When it comes to spelling, the research highlighted that UK adults struggle to identify the correct spelling of certain words.

The four most misspelt words in the UK are:

'Mispelt'

↓
'Misspelt'

36%

ironically, over a third said 'Mispelt' is correct

'Harrass'

↓
'Harass'

61%

just over 3 in 5 thought 'Harrass' was the correct spelling

'Seperate'

↓
'Separate'

38%

almost 2 in 5 Brits surveyed said 'Seperate' is spelt correctly

'Accomodation'

↓
'Accommodation'

33%

a third believed 'Accomodation' was spelt correctly

“ Learning difficulty wasn't really noticed then as it is now”

There are a number of reasons that have stopped UK adults from seeking help with their reading, writing and comprehension:

20% Fear of people thinking they're not as smart as they are

19% Fear of judgement or being bullied

18% They never wanted to seek help

17% People not understanding the challenges they face

17% Not aware of the resources available

14% Feelings of isolation and loneliness

13% They weren't motivated to seek help

13% Stigma attached to learning difficulties

“Our investment in technology has improved accessibility for all, including those learners with additional needs and English as an Additional Language learners. Increased use of such tools have also spilled beyond the classroom, helping students with their homework and facilitating independent study.”

Karen MacLeod, Education Support Officer (Digital) for South Lanarkshire Council

Practical and emotional impacts

Practical Impacts

Having literacy difficulties can feed into people's everyday life.

- Over a fifth (22%) said they find it difficult² understanding terms and conditions of applications and contracts
- Almost a fifth (18%) of Brits also admit to finding it difficult reading and filling out lengthy forms, such as medical, insurance or travel forms
- 9% did not feel confident helping children with their homework
- A fifth (20%) find understanding paperwork and contracts (e.g. rental agreements and phone contracts) difficult²

“I received help but sometimes I have been frightened to ask for help”

² using the net amount of “Very difficult” and “Somewhat difficult” added together

“No one cared when I attended school, help is a new-fangled idea, good though!”

Emotional Impacts

For those who find at least one of these everyday situations difficult² the most common feelings they experience are frustration and embarrassment.

- A quarter (25%) admitted to feeling embarrassed when they experience difficulties reading books aloud to pre-school children
- Just over 2 in 5 (41%) feel frustrated when having difficulties reading and filling out lengthy forms (e.g. a medical, insurance or travel forms)
- Just under 2 in 5 (39%) feel the same when having difficulties understanding paperwork and contracts (e.g. rental agreements and phone contracts)
- Nearly 2 in 5 (37%) who find it difficult understanding terms and conditions of applications feel frustrated
- 34% (a third) said that they agree or somewhat agree that during education, fear of making literacy or spelling mistakes has made them feel anxious when completing some tasks



Technology can support literacy barriers

It's clear there are many reasons why Brits surveyed have not sought help for their reading, writing and comprehension difficulties, including fear of judgement and people thinking they are not smart.

- Almost 3 in 10 (28%) aged 16-24 said they don't seek help due to fear of judgement or being bullied

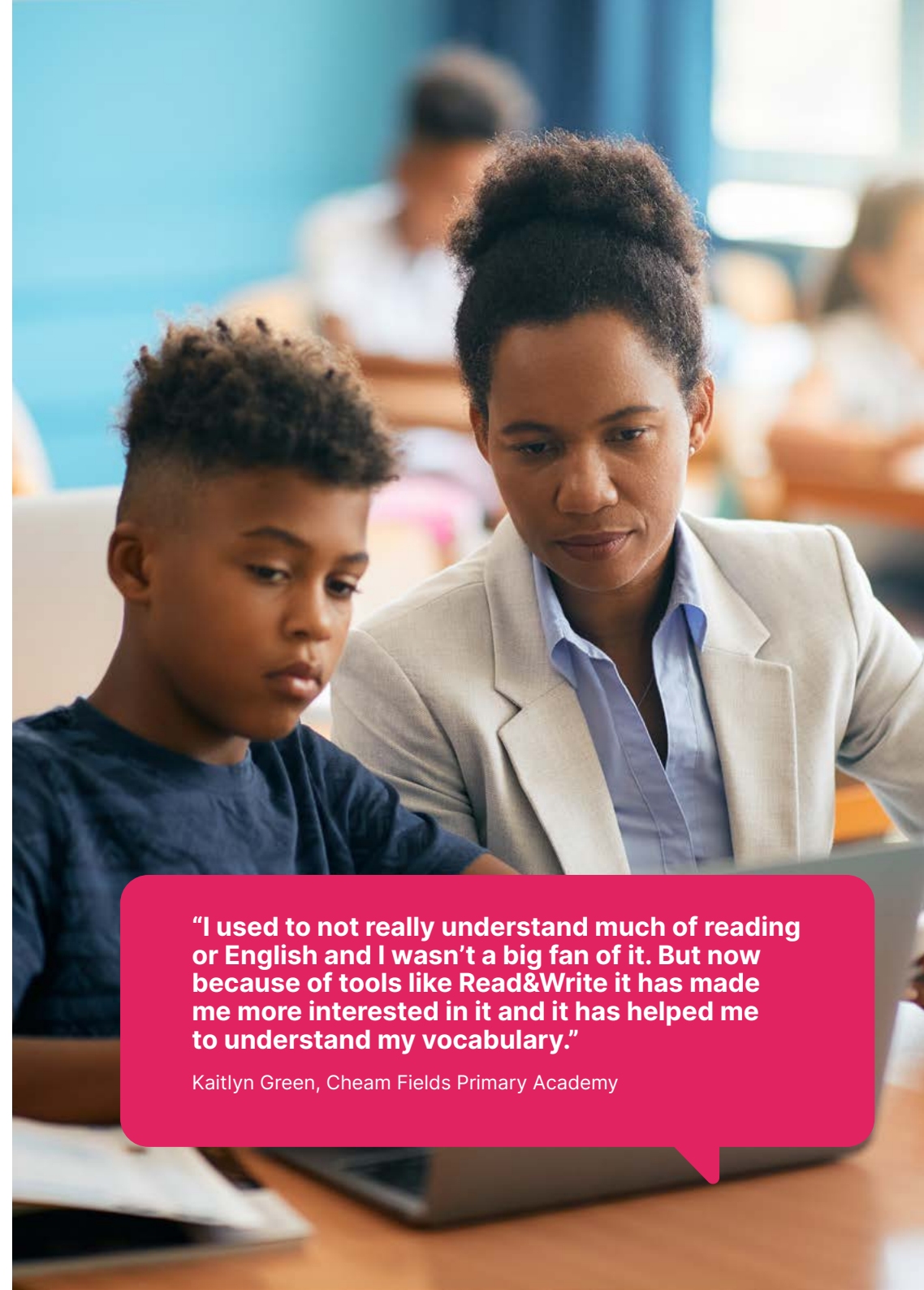
Understanding these reasons for not seeking help is important.

- 1 in 12 (8%) Brits surveyed said they give up entirely on a task they are having difficulties with

“These technologies didn't really exist during my time at school”

Although it's clear that UK adults experienced these challenges from a young age, many didn't get the support they felt they needed.

- Almost 7 in 10 (68%) did not have access to technology hardware (desktops, laptops, tablets, smart phones, etc.) during their education that could help with their reading, writing, and comprehension needs
- Nearly 2 in 5 (37%) said during their education they did not feel there were enough resources and technology to support their reading, writing, and comprehension needs



“I used to not really understand much of reading or English and I wasn't a big fan of it. But now because of tools like Read&Write it has made me more interested in it and it has helped me to understand my vocabulary.”

Kaitlyn Green, Cheam Fields Primary Academy

Texthelp understands the importance of technology in helping everyone to understand and be understood. If at school we are not able to reach our full potential, that's a problem for everyone.

“ When I went to school, technology consisted of a pencil and a sheet of paper”

Encouragingly, it seems access to technology in education has been steadily increasing over the years.

21%

Just over a fifth of Brits aged 45-54 said they had access to technology hardware in education

36%

Over a third of those aged 35-44 said the same

62%

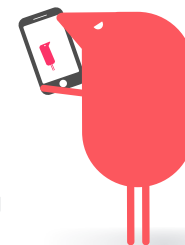
Over 3 in 5 aged 25-34 said they had access to technology hardware in education

Many people felt technology could have helped during their education.

- A third (33%) said a spell checker which would identify and highlight misspellings would have been beneficial

We find these conclusions promising to see, especially that there has been an increase in technology available and used to make people feel supported.

It's also encouraging to see there is a growing need for technology within education to help with the reading, writing and comprehension difficulties.

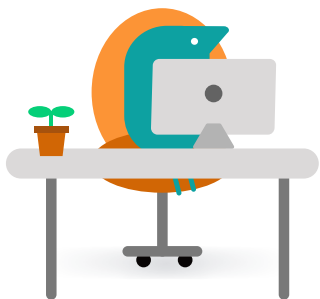




**Martin McKay,
Founder and CEO at Texthelp**

"By carrying out this research, we have found out more about how adults in the UK feel about literacy challenges. We have learned how these barriers impact people everyday. We are continuing to provide new

products in education, and will ensure words won't hold people back. We are helping in both education and in the workplace. We are committed to helping everyone understand and be understood by providing a suite of literacy and numeracy tools to more people across the globe."



All figures, unless otherwise stated, are from Censuswide. Total sample size was 2081 National Respondents between 26.08.22 - 30.08.22.

The survey was carried out online.



With over 50 million users worldwide, the Texthelp suite of products includes Read&Write, EquatiO®, WriQ®, OrbitNote® and many more. These products work alongside existing platforms including Microsoft Office and G-suite, enabling them to be integrated quickly into any classroom or workplace.