MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL OF THESE AND SIMILAR MATERIALS

When to use
Materials such as these lend themselves to consolidation activities, and can most usefully be used after new language elements have been introduced and practised with the teacher, but before learners begin to engage with the language 'proper' (reading, listening, speaking, writing). By the time learners come to use the materials alone, in pairs and in groups, they should have already encountered all the words and structures that will form the basis of the activities, and have heard them spoken. The activities will provide opportunities for learners to become accustomed to manipulating the elements of language for themselves and to seek repletion or further explanation if they find they need it. By the time they come to engage with real texts, they should be more familiar with the core elements of the topic and more confident of their ability to cope with the more extensive demands of the texts.

What to use
Which elements to use should therefore be decided before work on a new unit is begun, and they should be selected for their potential to consolidate the core vocabulary and structures which embody the outcomes of the unit.

How to use
The pictures lend themselves to photocopying and so can be produced in whatever numbers are required. Many activities can be devised using the pictures as whole sheets or as composite new sets of pictures. The books contain a good deal of advice on this.

Dice and cards are enjoyable to handle but less easy to reproduce. One way round this, without buying additional sets, is to devote one or more lesson periods to a 'carousel' of different consolidation activities, so that everyone gets to use each set of materials in turn. Suggestions for activities are included in with the materials.

Working in groups
If pupils are not used to working in co-operative groups, expectations and ground rules need to be discussed before any activity is undertaken. This is an opportunity to develop social skills and skills for work and can be presented as one of the learning outcomes for this unit. Skills that may need to be developed include:

- turn taking, including taking turns to speak
- contributing to the work of the group
- listening skills, including listening with respect to others' contributions
- taking responsibility for an aspect of the group's work
- taking responsibility for one's own behaviour and for the successful working of the group

Inclusive approaches

Working co-operatively in groups also provides opportunities for individuals to undertake responsibilities which will help all members of the group to progress. Individual members of the group can be allocated different responsibilities, depending on the nature of the group and the task in hand. Here are some examples of 'jobs' that learners can volunteer for, or be allocated (some classes respond well to use of badges):

Scribe:	writes down the examples that are generated, with help from the rest of the group.
Reader:	reads out the instructions for the activity and re-reads them as required.
Resource manager:	responsible for collecting, distributing, collecting and returning materials used.
Verifier:	has access to whatever help sheets, checklists, answer sheets, etc. are provided, and consults them when the group decides it is necessary, but only after an answer has been suggested and discussed.
Encourager:	makes sure that everyone participates in the activity and receives encouragement for contributions made.
Communications manager:	consults the teacher if the group gets into difficulties, or tells the teacher what answer has been arrived at in the group.

Other uses for the materials

Illustrating worksheets, help sheets, posters, booklets, etc
Building picture dictionaries for display, to record topics covered, or for individual use.
To provide picture prompts to support oral work.

Assessment is for learning

All the points covered above are in line with AifL's aims to improve learners' active participation in the learning process.