

## **Research report on the selection and scoring of information materials for inclusion on the CLS Direct operator database**

### **Executive summary**

#### **1. Introduction**

Advicenow was commissioned by the Legal Services Commission to produce a database of resources to be used by CLS Direct telephone operators to help callers manage their problems. We scored information resources against a set of criteria, and have analysed this data to provide a measure of the effectiveness of available resources.

#### **2. Inclusion criteria**

A key part of the inclusion criteria is a set of indicators which set out the different elements we would expect to see. There are two types of indicators:

##### **Information about the problem:**

- An overview of the issues
- An outline of the key legal points
- Guides to processes and procedures
- Route maps of where to go, what to do and who to see
- Step-by-step guides
- Where to get more information, advice or support

##### **Information about skills and support to help solve the problem:**

- Sample letters, forms and calculations
- How to prepare for an event such as a visit, interview or assessment
- Suggested questions to ask and key points to consider
- How and when to record what you do
- How to negotiate, how to be assertive or how to remain calm
- Acknowledge stress and give support and boost confidence

Resources were assessed against each type of indicator and given a score out of six. We assessed over 1,000 resources and selected 542 for inclusion in the database. Here we report only on those 542. This means that these findings generally overstate the quality of available information.

#### **3. Our approach**

Implicit in our approach when establishing the criteria was our view that information resources should provide guidance on how to deal with a problem, not just explain the law. We were particularly interested in the extent to which resources acknowledge the anxiety that legal problems cause and whether resources provided information on how to manage problems.

## **4. Key findings**

### **Skills and support indicators**

We found few resources that provide information on the skills and support people need to solve a problem. Each item was scored out of six.

- Only four percent (21) resources scored four or more for skills and support indicators
- 27 percent (149) resources scored zero for skills and support.

### **Information about the problem indicators**

There is information of some kind available on most topics, although in some areas such as immigration there are surprisingly few resources. Many resources do not do enough to explain the law:

- Less than half, 46 percent (294) scored 4 and above for information about the problem.

There are a very few resources that score well across both sets of indicators.

### **Paper information**

There is a growing tendency for organisations to rely on the internet to deliver information and not make it available in paper form.

## **5. Conclusions**

### **Specific conclusions**

There is a need to provide new information resources that score well across the full range of indicators. These should support users in managing a problem and should:

- include an overview to orientate the person through their problem
- have key legal points and cover procedures and processes
- be applicable at an early stage in a problem
- deal with recognising when and how to get help
- acknowledge emotional aspects to problems
- offer step-by-step guides, route maps and standard letters
- incorporate guidance on the skills needed to manage a problem

### **General conclusions**

Resource provision is patchy; much information is incomplete and inadequate.

The lack of consensus on what makes for effective information and the absence of any agreed quality criteria is a real weakness for the sector.

## **6. Recommendations**

We recommend that new self management resources be commissioned for use by CLS Direct and these materials are developed and evaluated in partnership with frontline agencies

Further work should take place to develop a framework to form the basis of quality standards with full discussion within the sector on the purpose and effectiveness of information materials.

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