



Community Legal Service Direct Expansion Project

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

ASA's Advicenow Project
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Executive summary

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

18 January 2007

Section 1: Introduction

This research reported on here was undertaken by ASA's Advicenow project during the selection and scoring of information materials for inclusion on the CLS Direct operator database. The project involved developing a database of resources for CLS Direct telephone operators to use when dealing with callers.

In order to select resources for the database we developed a set of criteria including indicators against which we scored information resources. We have taken the opportunity to analyse and report on these here.

Background

Legal Services Commission (LSC) commissioned Advicenow to provide a database of resources including leaflets and websites. The resources were intended to be used by CLS Direct telephone operators to help callers who were ineligible for specialist advice to manage their problems themselves. The operators may be unable to refer callers to specialist advice because they are:

- ineligible for legal aid on financial grounds
- ineligible because their problem is out of scope; or
- their problem is not far enough advanced.

Advicenow already assesses and summarises the wide range of available internet information for the CLS Direct website.

The LSC also commissioned other related research from us. This research was undertaken by Mark Sefton and looked at the potential for development of information resources to aid in 'self management' of legal problems. It covered six topic areas: employment, education, housing, debt, welfare benefits and immigration. We will refer to this other research in our conclusions.

Method of approach

The database uses the LAMS Content Classification Scheme (CCS) to structure information in the same way as the CLS Direct website links database. The LSC requested that we provide them with no more than three information items per LAMS CCS term. We did not assess CLS Direct leaflets because they are dealt with separately by the operator service.

Twelve subject categories were assessed: benefits, communications and media, consumer affairs, debt (assessed separately but actually part of money and tax), education and training, employment, family and personal, government, law and rights, health and social care, housing and homelessness, immigration and nationality, money and tax and police and crime.

We looked at each LAMS CCS term in turn. Because of time and budget constraints we proposed a simple approach; using the existing CLS Direct

database as a starting point, and looking further afield if we couldn't find enough quality information in a range of formats on the CLS Direct database.

Each information resource was assessed against the inclusion criteria. If the resource met the initial inclusion criteria it would then be scored against the indicators. Resources were assessed against each type of indicator and given a score out six.

If we were unable to find three resources which meet the inclusion criteria on the CLS Direct database, or we were aware that there were other resources which weren't on the database we investigated further, using our knowledge, speaking to colleagues, checking directories and carrying out internet searches.

Once we assessed a number of information resources against the criteria, we then chose which resources to include. We did this by looking at how well they met the inclusion criteria and how they scored against the indicators. We were not expecting to find information resources which included all the different indicators as some indicators may only work for some types of information¹.

However, we only wanted to select resources for the database which addressed a reasonable number of both 'information about the problem' and 'skills and support' indicators. We also had to make sure that between them the three resources covered all aspects of the term topic, that there was a range of detail and complexity on that topic for operators to select from, and that there was a range of formats available for callers with different accessibility needs. This means that we assessed many more resources than we included on the database.

Inclusion criteria

We developed database inclusion criteria to help us assess which information resources should be included. A key part of the inclusion criteria is a set of indicators which set out the different elements we would expect to see in an information resource which helps someone to manage their problem. 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

¹ We found a few examples of good quality resources that scored well against information about the problem but scored just two or three against the skills and support criteria. One such example is Help the Aged's leaflet 'Bereavement', which scored 4/2; it has a large section on the emotional aspects of bereavement and is very supportive but there is little need for it to include other skills and support information on, for instance, how and when to record.

- 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

We refer to these two different types of indicators throughout this report and use the shorthand of 'information about the problem' and 'skills and support' information to describe them.

Implicit in our approach when establishing our criteria was the view that in order to be successful in helping someone deal with a problem, information had to go beyond an explanation of the law and provide guidance on how to deal with a problem - where to go, what to do and how to do it. The evaluation of our LSC funded guides showed that this type of information is particularly valued by users².

We also wanted to look at the extent to which resources acknowledge the anxiety that legal problems caused. Other research makes clear that this is important to users. Causes of Action³ reported that, "Respondents stated that they had spent all or most of their time worrying about 40 per cent of problems."

Advicenow's evaluation of Divorce a Survival toolkit showed that the 'human' support it provides is much appreciated by users⁴. The internal LSC evaluation report⁵ into CLS Direct leaflets also illustrated the need for this type of information.

Our criteria also addressed the extent to which resources provided information on how to deal with problems including basic guidance on how to communicate effectively, the need to keep calm, plus negotiating and recording skills. The evaluation of our Self Help project in 2005 highlighted this need for the knowledge and skills required to manage the problem. We now call this 'how to' information.

² Advicenow's Self Help Project Report. www.advicenow.org.uk/selfhelp

³ Causes of Action: Civil Law and Social Justice Second Edition (2006) - Pascoe Pleasance, Legal Services Research Centre.

⁴ Advicenow guides: helping advisers and advice service users
www.advicenow.org.uk/evaluation

⁵ Review of the Community Legal Service Direct Legal Information Leaflets 2006

The Office of Fair Trading's consumer education strategy⁶ also emphasises the importance of these generic skills.

The full inclusion criteria are set out at the end of this report at appendix one. We have also included brief explanatory notes to the two types of indicators. We developed these notes shortly after the start of resources selection phase of the project as a result of discussions about assessment of resources and to help the staff involved in scoring materials to attain a consistent approach.

⁶ Consumer Education: a strategy and framework. www.offt.gov.uk

Section 2: Findings

This project had a broad scope; we had to locate and assess any information resource which could help someone solve a legal problem, and then select which ones to include on the database. We considered over 1,000 information resources but only 542 were selected for inclusion in the database. The statistics referred to in our findings reflect the 542 selected resources and therefore may overstate the effectiveness of those resources that help people manage problems. The following sections examine the key findings from this work.

Types of resources

There are a variety of approaches to information provision and these tend to fall into the following groups:

1. **Overview:** These provide basic, introductory, often web based information that signposts to other more detailed sources. They can be formal or informal and are usually short or short chunks of information. Examples: *Directgov*.
2. **Facts:** These are often fairly detailed, broad, comprehensive resources that present facts in a formal style. They usually have no voice and are rarely friendly or supportive in tone. They are invariably accurate, up-to-date and informative. They do not address the person directly and provide little or no skills and support information. Some may include step-by-step guides. Some providers may produce the information in other formats, for example, Braille and community languages. They are usually regularly reviewed and updated to take account of small changes. Examples: *Adviceguide, some government websites, Shelter (Shelter has some 'how to' tools on its website but does not integrate them on its main information pages)*.
3. **Information with a sprinkling of skills:** These resources vary in length. They may address the user directly and often deal with a specific situation. They include a medium level amount of information and some skills and support information such as suggested questions and key points to consider, and acknowledge stress. Examples: *Adviceguide factsheets, some OFT and Advisory Centre for Education (ACE) leaflets*
4. **Aimed at a niche audience:** These resources are written for specific audiences, often young people. They have an informal style. They usually have basic or mid level information and can contain a good range of support and skills material. They may not be updated regularly. Examples: *theSite, urban75, some Youth information pages*

5. **Awareness raising information:** These are usually short leaflets or web pages that provide a small amount of information in a highly designed format, using lots of images. They address the person and their emotions directly. They often have a campaign or rights based message to convey as well as information. They are often supportive and positive.
Examples: *Stonewall's discrimination leaflet*

6. **Legal based information:** These resources provide quite detailed information and are written in a formal, serious style. They are likely to include jargon and legalistic language. The material may not be as accessible for general members of the public as other types of resources.
Examples: *Yourrights from Liberty, Thompsons Solicitors*

7. **Self help packs:** These resources are likely to be medium or long in length. They can be very detailed and include lots of skills and support information. They are usually written to help people resolve specific, complex scenarios not a broad range of problems. If online, they may include a number of resources that are linked together. They often use sample letters, tips, suggested questions and step by step solutions. They may acknowledge stress and provide support. They are often written by organisations with a distinct audience or close connections with users.
Examples: *National Debtline's Debt self help pack, BID's notebook on bail.*

We have identified these types of information to show the range of techniques and approaches that organisations use to present information. They are only illustrative and we are not using them as the basis for further analysis.

Skills and support indicators

We found a lot of information, across the broad range of categories, but little of it provides information on the skills and support people need to solve a problem. Ninety-six per cent (521) of the information materials scored three or less for the skills and support indicators.

We found that much of the information we assessed attained a more acceptable score against our indicators about the legal problem, but a lower score against the skills and support indicators. For example, Gingerbread produces a leaflet about benefits and tax credits for lone parents which scores 4 for information about the problem, but zero for skills and support. So the reader is presented with a clear and detailed overview of the benefits system, but no information on how to navigate it. This isn't unusual. From the total of 542 resources included in the database we found that:

- Only 21 resources scored four or above for the skills and support indicators – just 4% of the total.
- 149 resources scored zero for skills and support – 27% of all materials in the database.

Whilst assessing information resources it was noticeable that some skills and support indicators were employed more often than others. For example, few resources attempted to acknowledge anxiety and the need for support, or give generic 'how to' skills information. Indicators like 'Suggested questions to ask and key points to consider' were more common.

This is exemplified by the scoring in the Benefits category where we found that out of 50 resources selected for the database only two included information on how to negotiate, be assertive and stay calm. Only five explained how and when to record what you do and only six included sample letters, forms and calculations. In contrast 34 resources offered suggested questions to ask and key points to consider.

However, a couple of Benefits resources (materials by Age Concern and Action for Blind People) did attain high scores across the skills and support indicators, showing that organisations take different approaches to addressing these issues.

'Information about the problem' indicators

Generally there is information of some kind available on most topics, although in some areas (such as Immigration, Intentional homelessness and Industrial action) there are surprisingly few resources of any type. Not only do few resources attempt to include information on the skills and support a person needs to manage a problem, many resources do not do enough to explain the law. For example, out of 542 resources included in the database 294 resources score only 1, 2 or 3 for information about the problem, just over half of all resources included.

There are examples of resources which score well across both sets of indicators but they are few and far between, for example, National Debtline's 'Debt self help pack' (6/5) and ACE's 'Appealing for a school' (5/5). For more information on examples of good resources, see appendix two to this report.

Connection with audience

Our work has given us a flavour of what type of information resources different organisations provide. For example, we noticed that many resources that scored highly against our skills and support criteria are written by organisations that have a distinct audience or close connections with their users, for example, Action for Blind People, Contact a Family and Help the Aged. These kinds of organisations are often not part of the mainstream advice sector.

While some of the bigger information providers such as Adviceguide, and government departments provide detailed and comprehensive information about the legal situation, it isn't their intention to provide the skills or support information that would enable a user to manage their problems through to resolution.

However, things are not clear cut. Adviceguide produces some very good factsheets which address users in their situation rather than just explaining the law, Directgov scores well for resources on education whilst some 'special interest groups' produce dry explanations of legislation.

Resources per CCS category

We found it very difficult to select only three resources for some LAMS CCS terms. This is because we had to make sure that the included resources covered all elements of the term (for example 'School discipline' encompasses bullying and exclusion), and that there were a range of formats, particularly paper, for operators to select from. As well as this we also wanted to include resources which offered varying levels of detail and complexity, and which were tailored to particular audiences.

In practice the limit of only three resources often made this very difficult, particularly for terms which cover several problem areas such as 'Wages' (which could include deductions from wages, holiday pay, minimum wage, maternity pay etc). The need to include paper formats often meant that we had to discount web based resources with higher scores or more engaging writing styles so as not to exceed our limit of three.

There is more detailed information on our position regarding number of resources and issues in selecting resources in our paper 'Number of resources' included at appendix three. This was given to the LSC during the course of the project as part of ongoing discussions about how in practice operators would be using the database.

Presentation issues

Some information providers have tailored their information resources to suit the web and provide information in small, manageable chunks with clicks through to separate web pages to get the entire resource. However, this may be difficult and tiring for some users (there is a limit to how many 'click throughs' users can be bothered to make). If the information is not available as a whole document, then the user does not have anything to refer back to.

We also found that some information providers that publish information in different formats do not always make clear whether it is exactly the same information that is available as an HTML web page, PDF download and paper leaflet. We have noticed that some organisations give more detail on their websites and then provide shorter, summary versions as downloadable PDF leaflets or paper leaflets.

Decreasing numbers of paper resources

There appears to be a trend for information providers to stop publishing paper leaflets, and instead make free downloadable PDFs available on their websites. Some organisations that have well developed websites, with lots of detailed, free information available, appear to view that as the best way to present information and do not encourage users to seek printed copies. For example, the Council of Mortgage Lenders no longer has a printed leaflet on house buying and selling and instead they offer the booklet as a downloadable PDF.

This trend is likely to have implications for disadvantaged groups, for whom internet access is unavailable or difficult to use and instead rely on paper information resources.

For people who have internet access, lots of information is available as web pages and sometimes in downloadable formats such as PDFs, text files and Word documents. PDF is the more common format for a download. A good information provider (CLS Direct is an example) gives the information item as a web page but also has a link to a download of the item as a PDF.

The next section looks in more detail at what we found for each category.

Section 3: Analysis by subject

Benefits

There is quite a lot of fairly good information here, particularly for specific groups such as older people and disabled people. There is lots of government information. Some government leaflets scored 2 rather than 1 on support because they included sample forms and calculations. In this subject area it was an easy way to gain more points. There is lack of paper information. Much of the information in this subject is quite technical.

Action for Blind People's Disability living allowance resource was very detailed with guidance on the law. Despite being a bit wordy it scored 4/3 as it gave skills info on preparing for the assessment, key points to consider and some support and acknowledging stress. But for disability benefits the highest scorer was Age Concern's factsheet on Attendance allowance and disability living allowance. This is clearly written, detailed and helps people to fill in the form. It is a useful practical self management item.

Help the Aged provides a very good leaflet called 'Can you claim it?' which scored 5/3. Age Concern also publishes information that is good but it is sometimes low on support for example, 'A brief guide to money benefits' scored 4/1. Their guide to the state pension was better (4/2) because they included worked out examples.

Communications and media

The information content in some of the publications under this subject area is fairly dull. We suspect that this may be because it is quite a technical area and that information resources do not always relate to problems that callers may ring CLS Direct about.

However, terms that involved consumer issues bucked the trend, for example, Electronic shopping and Internet. Many resources in these terms were written in a lively style and provided a guide to action on how to prevent problems as well as how to deal with them. For example, in Electronic shopping, every resource assessed scored against two skills and support criteria: 'How and when to record what you do' and 'Suggested questions to ask and key points to consider'.

There are not many resources available in this area. We published just one item each for the terms Communications and Information technology. We selected only two for email: one resource on spam from the OFT and the other on monitoring email and internet usage from the TUC's WorkSMART website; both resources scored 4/1. There were many more resources in the 'Mobile phones' and 'Electronic shopping' terms.

Some of the resources are available as downloadable PDFs. We found only two resources available on paper: the OFT's 'Your rights when shopping from home' and 'How to recognise a scam'. Both leaflets cover a broader range of information than that required for the terms they were selected for.

There were no resources here that were of an excellent standard but ones that scored well included Adviceguide's 'Buying over the internet' factsheet (5/3) and the Information Commissioner's Office 'Data protection – your rights' (4/3).

The main providers are OFT and Adviceguide. Other providers include Advicenow, Ofcom, DfT and the Information Commissioner's Office.

Consumer affairs

There are some very good information resources in this subject category. In the terms consumer goods and consumer services we selected Adviceguide's standard information resource and more consumer focused, shorter factsheets. They include 'how to complain' sections which means they attracted good skills and support scores. 'Shoppers' rights – your quick guide' from the OFT is well-written, clear, includes tips and scored 4/2.

The quality of resources in the utilities terms was average. Most of the selected resources scored just 1 against the skills and support information criteria.

We selected lots of Adviceguide resources for this category; some were Adviceguide's fact sheets. There are hardly any resources that are available in paper format; the OFT and Age Concern are the only information providers that publish resources on paper for this subject.

We were particularly looking for resources that covered debt issues relating to utilities but there was not very much available. National Debtline has a factsheet about water rates (it scored 3/1) but nothing specifically on electricity and gas. Directgov has a short information resource about overdue utilities bills which was included under the utilities term.

The telephones term is an example of a term with quite a few resources but almost all are ones that cover very specific aspects such as checking a premium rate number, information about the Telecommunications Ombudsman and prisoners and phone calls. This makes selection very difficult. We selected a broad resource on telephones from Adviceguide, a specific resource on the telephone preference service and a factsheet for older people about telephones that has some information that may be relevant to a wider audience.

The main providers here are Adviceguide, OFT, Energywatch and the government's trading standards central website. The latter publish lots of information in this area, it is not very detailed and sometimes the materials

contain jargon and difficult language but the resources are of an acceptable standard.

Debt

This subject area has some very successful information packages that scored well against our indicators. National Debtline is the leader in this field. However, their debt self help pack is extremely long and doesn't always tell users how to do all the things they need to do. Some websites offer interactive debt management tools that may help some people assess or take forward their debt problems.

Education

There is a fair amount of information available from a few information providers (ParentsCentre and Youth Information are examples). Like other subject areas, there was surprisingly little available in formats other than HTML. ACE makes a small charge for many of their publications. They are good but we had problems accessing their leaflets. We tried to buy 'Attendance at school' as a download using BTclick but failed. It was a lot of effort to obtain a short leaflet that many organisations would make available free of charge as a PDF download. This shows the importance of, wherever possible, providing free and easily accessible information.

There is a lot of government information in this area and it is informative but often formal and not supportive in tone. Some government information was more interesting, for example, DfES's 'The facts – how to get financial help as a student' (This scored 5/2.) and ParentsCentre which includes discussion forums for parents.

School discipline is an example of a term for which there are many information resources covering a range of different topics within the term: detentions, school rules, bullying, suspensions and fixed and permanent exclusions. Since we are limited to including only three items per term, this means that there are useful resources that we have not been able to include.

Within school discipline the following providers have information on bullying: ACE, Children's Legal Centre, ParentsCentre, Adviceguide, bullying.co.uk, Stonewall, and Childline. Most of these include practical steps and support to tackle the problem. But we were only able to include the resource from ACE since we needed to include resources that covered the other issues within this term.

Another example of a term where much material is available is special educational needs. Two good items on this were the Teachernet PDF guide and Contact a Family's paper guide.

Employment

There was a lot of information available in Employment from a few main information providers: Adviceguide, Worksmart from TUC, ACAS, Thompsons Solicitors, Coventry Law Centre, Yourrights from Liberty and the DTI (this is not a comprehensive list). But there was a lack of resources available on paper. Hardly any resources in this subject scored well for skills and support.

Some of the information materials within discrimination were very good. Age Concern's guide on age discrimination scored 5/3 and the Advicenow feature: 'Discrimination: raising a grievance' scored 6/5; it was comprehensive, supportive and included tips. Stonewall's 'Discrimination at work – it's so over' was a rare example of an item that scored higher on skills than information: 2/3. Its purpose is awareness raising so the information content is minimal. Instead it uses powerful imagery and carefully chosen words: *'The law now means you don't have to put up with grief over your sexual orientation. Not anymore.'* It is probably an example of an information item that wouldn't work for all topics but works well for this. It is also an example of an information provider giving information that has an awareness raising, pre-emptive early action component – one of the elements that Advicenow is identifying as part of self management materials.

Family and personal

Family and personal covers a very broad area ranging from birth, children and death to domestic violence, elderly people, marriage and divorce. It includes thirty-nine terms. Some of the resources here are very long and detailed; for example, Help the Aged's 'Bereavement – coping with a death' (4/2).

This is a subject area where there is a large pool of information providers to draw from, which sometimes made the selection difficult. For example in the term death there are resources from Adviceguide, Help the Aged, Age Concern, theSite, National Debtline, BBC, Inquest and Advicenow.

This subject area has the same issues as many of the others namely, the lack of paper resources and a simple lack of resources. Examples of resources that are available on paper include 'Contraception' from the Family Planning Organisation and 'Putting your children first: a guide for separating parents' from the DfES. For some terms, such as cohabitation, we struggled to find resources to include. While for other terms (such as concessions for elderly people) there are plenty of materials, many of them on specific aspects of the subject term so that choosing three resources was difficult.

The quality of resources here is very good and many information providers have included supportive and skills information within their publications (though an exception to this was terms within birth where all the resources had skills and support scores of nought, one or two).

Perhaps not surprisingly, as Advicenow has produced specialist information within this subject area, Advicenow materials scored very well here. For example, the Divorce toolkit scored 6/5, the leaflet on Wills 5/3, 'What is parental responsibility?' 6/3, Parents apart 5/3 and 'What is mediation?' 4/3.

In the term children's welfare, the DfES pack 'Putting your children first' scored 4/4. It is a very good resource with focus on the emotional and support aspects of problem solving as well as information on the law. In community care, Age Concern's Local authority assessments and Help the Aged's Help in your home both scored well: 5/3 and 4/3 respectively. Directgov has a good resource for retirement (4/3) and Under Parenting, the BBC resource Your kids scored 4/2.

Here we also found an online diagnostic tool: Marie Stope's online counselling guide, which has a series of questions to answer, links to leaflets and provides tailored, supportive information after the online form is submitted. (This resource was not chosen for inclusion in the database under the term Abortion itself, but is mentioned in the operator notes to the 'Abortion' resource from Marie Stopes' website.)

Government, law and rights

A group of terms in this subject, discrimination and its six sub categories were scored under the Employment category.

We found a lack of resources in this subject area; partly due to the fact that many of the terms such as accidents, legal aid and human rights have CLS leaflets or sections from leaflets as resources that we would have chosen for the database.

The quality of resources in this area is acceptable but with few examples of very good or excellent materials. The main information providers here are CLSdirect (whom we did not use), Adviceguide, Advicenow, ADRnow and HMCourts.

There are not many resources available within some terms in this area. We published just one item for accidents and damages and two for personal injuries litigation. Despite a lack of quantity within this section of the subject area, we included a resource of very good quality: 'Claiming compensation' an Advicenow guide, scored 5/4 and includes case studies, ten 'steps to success' and a jargon buster. There are no other resources in this subject with excellent or very good scores but the following resources are good: Advicenow's 'Do I need a lawyer?' (4/3), Bar Council's leaflet 'You and your barrister' and ADRnow's mediation part of its website both scored 4/2.

In the small claims term there are resources that offer a clear focus on an identified 'life situation' of relevance to a clearly specified user. This means that they are likely to be of great benefit to people in that situation. 'What happens if you are taken to court for money you owe' (for defendants) and 'Going to court' (for claimants) are both good Adviceguide fact sheets (downloadable PDFs)

looking at the same situation from different points of view. Here Adviceguide has provided different resources on the same topic to cater for different client information needs. Both resources scored 3/2.

Health and social care

Within this small category of just eight terms, there is a fair amount of information available about the NHS and NHS complaints, and fewer resources on clinical negligence and mental health.

The quality of resources in this category is better than for some other categories. Resources tend to be long and detailed, reflecting the complex nature of some of the subject areas within the category.

Residential care is an example of a term with lots of good quality materials from organisations that provide trusted information: Help the Aged, Alzheimer's Society and Age Concern. We selected Help the Aged's leaflet (4/3) for its friendly style, Help the Aged's information sheet because it presents detailed, complex information in a clear, readable way and gives case examples (4/1) and Alzheimer's Society's web page on selecting a care home, which is easy to read, includes a useful checklist of questions and has links to other relevant leaflets and downloads (4/2).

Age concern's factsheet 'Continuing NHS health care' is an example of a factsheet that seems more appropriate for advisers and professionals in its style and length. The information is very good but it is dense and perhaps too long for some people. It scored 5/1. Other very good resources in this category include in the social services term, Contactafamily's 'A guide to assessments and services in England and Wales' (4/4), which has good introductory information about social services duties and quite detailed information about assessments. To assist in self management it includes practical tips about preparing for an assessment and attending meetings with social services. Under the clinical negligence term, Action against Medical Accidents' online leaflet, 'Your rights if you have been injured as a result of an accident' (5/3) scored against three skills and support criteria: it gave information on how to record, acknowledged the stress of the situation and gave key points to consider.

Key information providers here include Action against Medical Accidents, BBC, Mind, Adviceguide, NHS UK, Help the Aged, Alzheimer's Society and Age Concern.

Housing

Shelter's Advice Online section of their website is the key player here. Their information is good and detailed. But it is low on skills and support. They offer a few questions to consider but for people considering taking action themselves, there is little to help them. If users by chance click on the 'free downloads' section of the site, they will find useful tools such as a flowchart about finding

private rented accommodation with tips on what to do and encouraging the taking of notes etc:

<http://england.shelter.org.uk/files/seealsodocs/13235/finding%5Fprivate%5Frented%5Facc%5Fflowchart%2Epdf>

We relied fairly heavily on Shelter's leaflets (called Shelter guides) such as 'Finding a place to live' because of the lack of printed material available. Their information content is at quite a good level but they often score low on support. The above leaflet scored 4/1.

Immigration and nationality

We produced a specific research report on the potential for development of information resources to aid in 'self management' of legal problems in respect to immigration in November 2006. We have reproduced appendix one of that report here as it examines our findings from work on the database.

Fewer resources than other categories

Immigration and nationality appears to be the one area where there really is a 'gap' in information in the traditional sense. There were far fewer resources to assess and our impression is that the quantity is declining. During our research we spoke to a number of providers to try to track down resources that used to exist, or resources in other formats. The problem of updating materials frequently and the difficulty of funding this came across quite strongly during these informal conversations.

Finding resources which are available in hard copy was also very difficult. Again it seems that the cost of printing and distributing leaflets which need to be frequently updated is considered too expensive.

Low scores against both sets of indicator

Resources were scored out of six for each type of indicator. Unlike other categories we assessed where many resources attained an acceptable score against our indicators about the legal problem, immigration resources were average at best. For example, out of 28 resources selected for the database only nine scored four or above for information about the problem. No resource scored six.

Scores against skills and support indicators were even worse:

- Only one resource scored four or above.
- Eight resources scored zero for skills and support.

We were particularly struck by how unsupportive many of the resources are, particularly when you consider how alien many immigration processes must appear. Only four resources out of thirty assessed acknowledged stress or tried to boost confidence. Few resources attempt to provide route maps or step by step guides to processes, and few provide generic 'how to' information on the

skills people may need to help them solve their problem. When you consider that many people with immigration and nationality problems will be newcomers to this country and may be used to different cultural norms it's disappointing that resources don't address these issues.

For all of the above reasons the standard of resources selected for inclusion in this category was therefore lower than for other categories. However, surprisingly this category does include one of our highest scoring resources. Bail for Immigration Detainees (BID) believes that there should be advice and representation available for anyone in detention but are aware that this is not always possible. Despite being long their 'Notebook on bail - Part 1' is excellent in that it contains a variety of material that would prove a guide to action for a client; standard letters, action lists, how to record and how to behave. It scored five for information about the problem and six for skills and support.

Key providers in this subject are the Immigration Advisory Service; Refugee Council and the Immigration & Nationality Directorate of the Home Office and Yourrights from Liberty.

Money and tax

The debt element of this subject category has been covered separately above. There are more resources available on paper in this subject area than some other subject areas.

This subject category has some good quality resources, for example, in the term banking, Adviceguide's 'Banks and building societies' fact sheet scored 4/4. It is easy to read, fairly detailed and includes problem solving skills information. Others are Low Income Tax Reform Group's 'Tax help if you are employed and on a low income' which scored 4/2 and National Debtline's 'Bailiffs and council tax' (4/2).

In the terms credit, consumer credit and loans, there is quite a lot of information available - National Debtline and Adviceguide have factsheets and the FSA and OFT also have materials. But surprisingly, not very many of them provide substantial 'how to' information. National Debtline and OFT have material that scored three against the skills and support criteria: OFT's 'Money and credit' (3/3) and National Debtline's 'How to deal with Hire purchase debt' (4/3). In this subject category, the resources that cover specific topics seem to have higher skills scores than the broader resources, for example, Adviceguide's resource 'Credit' scored 3/1.

Insurance and income tax are examples of terms that encompass a broad range of subjects making it difficult to choose three items that reflect them all. For example, income tax includes types of income tax, tax returns, allowances and tax relief. Adviceguide alone produce nine guides to the different aspects of income tax plus a general income tax information resource.

Key providers in this area include Adviceguide, National Debtline, OFT, trading standards, FSA and HM Revenue and Customs.

Police and crime

In this subject category, there are very few information materials in formats other than HTML. We included just four resources that are available on paper for the 22 terms that comprise Police and crime. They are the Home Office's 'Be safe, be secure – your practical guide to crime reduction' (3/1), IPCC's 'How to make a complaint against the police' (4/1), Rights of Women's 'Report to court' (4/2) - a handbook for adult survivors of sexual violence and the CJOnline's 'Victims of crime – support and advice' (4/1)⁷.

We found examples of organisations that charge for some of their resources and thus limit access to information: NACRO's Resettlement.info is a subscription service, and to gain access to the majority of the information in Young Citizens Passport online, there is a licence fee.

Many of the resources have acceptable scores against our indicators for legal problems but lower scores against the skills and support indicators. For example, Youth Information and Adviceguide both scored 4/0 for their resources on youth crime. And the materials selected under the terms drug offences and parole scored either nought or one against the skills criteria.

Similar to other subject categories, for some terms there is a lot of information available which made selecting just three items difficult, for example on prison and prisoners and victims. But some other terms had very few relevant and useable resources. In some cases this led to multiple use of information materials; Youth Information's resource on Sentences and penalties was selected for three terms: juvenile crime, sentencing and detention centres. This may partly be because the CCS terms overlap in this area, highlighting the need to review and refine the CCS in some areas of the classification.

Key information providers include theSite, Youth Information, Yourrights from Liberty, Adviceguide, Criminal Justice Service Online, Metropolitan Police, HM Prison Service and Victim Support.

⁷ NACRO have a series of paper leaflets that are also PDFs on topics such as employment and ex-offenders but it seems they do not fit into the LAMS CCS terms used for this project and so they were not chosen for the database: <http://www.nacro.org.uk/publications/adviceleaflets.htm>

Section 4: Conclusions

Our conclusions fall into two parts: firstly specific conclusions about the suitability of resources for inclusion in the CLS Direct operator service database; flowing from the work of creating the database.

Secondly, we have drawn more general conclusions as a result of the work arising from the wide variety of approaches we've seen in the course of making our selections.

Specific conclusions about suitability for inclusion in the database

- The clear main conclusion of the work to select resources for the database was that there are not enough information resources that score well across the full range of indicators to help callers manage their problems. Few resources include information on the skills and support people need to solve a problem, and many don't do enough to help readers understand the law.
- In general there is information of some type available across all CCS categories, despite pockets of terms where information provision was patchy. The main exception is the LAMS CCS category Immigration and Nationality where there is a lack of resources across the category.

There are two minor conclusions:

- It was difficult to choose only three resources for some CCS terms. This was partly because the CCS term was too broad and partly because it was difficult to cover a range of levels of detail, complexity and formats to suit the needs of different callers in only three resources.
- Some organisations are choosing not to make their information available in hard copies but instead are relying on the internet for dissemination. This is a cause for concern as it reduces access for information, particularly for the large percentage of the population, including disadvantaged groups, who don't have ready access to the internet.

The form resources should take

It is clear from our work selecting resources for the database that there is a lack of resources which support users in managing a problem and explain to them how to go about it. There is a need to fill this gap and Mark Sefton's work has identified those issues which would benefit from this approach.

The question then arises as to what form this material should take. We need to draw on findings of this and other research and experience, to set a template for resources which will meet user needs and are achievable at reasonable cost.

In the course of the work we became aware of the obstacles information providers face including complexity and updating issues. Providing sufficient detail to enable someone to solve their own legal problem can be a massive task. For example, National Debtline's debt self help pack runs to 64 pages and as we noted in our findings, requires confidence to use. The updating overhead is a serious issue - every change in the law and processes has to be replicated. There is a further issue with this type of self help material if the user's problem differs slightly from the standard model. If the user's problem doesn't quite match with ours, then they are likely to be confused and get stuck. They need the knowledge and understanding required to adapt the standard package to their needs.

As a result, we conclude that self management material should combine an overview, with an outline of the key issues and processes to give understanding and provide 'realistic' material which includes clear routing and step by step guides together with elements like standard letters and forms. Resources also need to need acknowledge stress and provide support.

This material should be supplemented by 'how to' material to provide help on skills and knowledge needed to manage the problem. This is often generic information and so can be a standard part of a pack - reducing duplication of effort.

Early intervention

A proportion of callers to the CLSD will be at an early stage in their problem. It is important to intervene effectively and provide resources that can help deal with their problem at an early stage. We believe this package approach will have the advantage of meeting these callers' needs.

So information to help manage a problem should:

- include an overview to orientate the person dealing with the problem
- have key legal points and cover procedures and processes
- be applicable at an early stage in a problem – to enable early intervention to prevent a problem escalating
- deal with the recognising when and how to get help where a problem is complex or critical
- acknowledge the emotional aspects to problems and have supportive statements and use positive language
- offer detailed step by step guides, route maps and standard letters
- incorporate guidance on generic issues around managing a problem like communication, negotiation, representation and record keeping – 'how to' information

This, of course, assumes that these resources will be well-written, accurate, up-to-date, with a good structure and appealing design etc.

Mark Sefton's report⁸ emphasised the limitations of self help. The law is complicated and the cost of failure is high. Many users who attempt to deal with their problems will at some point need further help. We do not see self help as 'sink or swim'; and our model includes information to help users assess when they are out of their depth and signpost to further sources of help.

We have chosen to call these 'self management' resources to distinguish them from the narrower concept of self help. This is discussed in more detail in the report⁹ and more work is required to refine the concept.

Implementation

Mark Sefton's report¹⁰ draws attention to the kind of challenges involved in producing effective materials.

Successful production of good quality self-help resources requires a range of skills and knowledge. There is a need for the knowledge and understanding of client need that comes with work in a topic area, combined with expert knowledge of the law and procedures in that area. This knowledge provides the starting point for production of a resource but must be supplemented by writing, editing and publishing skills needed to deliver an effective product to the user.

Further there is a need to monitor the use of the materials in practice, evaluate effectiveness and incorporate the lessons learned into revised versions and subsequent commissions.

Our findings that some of the most effective material is produced by agencies that know their client group well suggests that the production of material should be undertaken in partnership with front-line services in close touch with their client group. Their involvement in the ongoing use of materials would provide invaluable feedback on the effectiveness of the material to inform further development.

We have set out issues for consideration when producing self management resources in appendix 4.

General conclusions

Our findings highlight the wide variety of approaches to the provision of information by the different agencies to undertaking this work.

- While some providers do offer information giving guidance on skills and support, less than half of providers scored well on this element of their information.

⁸ Potential for development of information resources to aid in 'self-management' of legal problems
- Mark Sefton

⁹ *ibid* page 14

¹⁰ *ibid* page 50

- There is wide variation on what information is provided about the problem
- The biggest contrast occurs with respect to recognising anxiety and providing support. Some providers do this well but many don't deal with this issue at all.
- Many information resources don't deliver 'how to' information on managing problems.

These findings are a cause for concern. It is often assumed that there is an abundance of good quality information available to the public to assist them in dealing with civil justice problems. This research is, as far as we know, the first attempt to look systematically at available information and it challenges this view.

Our findings show that provision is patchy and that much information is incomplete and inadequate.

Of course, providing organisations differ in their style and approach and have different objectives for their resources. But the unevenness and disparities in existing resources does warrant further work. There is a need for debate and discussion within the sector on what we are trying to achieve and the best methods of achieving that. There is, of course, a need for more evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the different approaches. Most crucially there is a need for agreement on quality criteria. 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.

Section 5: Recommendations

1. The LSC should commission new self management resources following the model for self management material outlined in our conclusions.

There is scope for the development of a template of generic application for resources that have a broad self management approach.

There is a need for ongoing evaluation of the use of these materials and revision and refinement of the material in the light of this experience.

We recommend that the production of resources takes place in partnership with front-line agencies and these agencies are involved in the ongoing use and monitoring of the materials to allow their refinement.

The LAMS CCS needs to be updated to take account of terms which are too broad.

2. Information providers within the advice and legal sector need to address the concerns and questions raised by this report.

Providers should initiate debate and discussion about the purpose and effectiveness of published material.

Further work should be undertaken to clarify and confirm these findings including evaluation of the effectiveness of these resources.

Work should be undertaken to develop an agreed model for information materials to provide the basis of quality standards.

Advicenow
16 January 2007

Section 6: Appendices

Appendix 1 - Inclusion criteria

- Information resources should provide information for:
 - CLS Direct callers who are financially ineligible
 - CLS Direct callers whose problem is 'out of scope'
 - CLS Direct callers for whom advice is inappropriate, ie, not yet at the stage where they need advice, not exhausted process.
- Information resources must cover the relevant categories of law / CCS headings
- Resources must contain substantial information which will help callers manage their problem themselves. This will include the following 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

We will look for a significant 'guide to action' component within included material. We are not expecting material to meet all these criteria - but we will only include resources that successfully address a reasonable number from both categories.

- Information resources must be accessible to individuals, for example, easily obtainable in a range of formats and written in plain English.
- Information resources must be up to date and accurate.
- Information resources can come from a range of sources including government departments, voluntary organisations and private companies.

But it must be balanced and should not be used to sell products or services.

- You must be able to identify the organisation responsible for the information resource and contact details must be provided.
- Ideally the information resources should be free. However if there is a lack of free quality materials on a particular topic we will include a good paid-for resource.
- Information resources should cover England and Wales.

Explanatory notes to problem and skills indicators

Information about the problem:

An overview of the issues

An introductory paragraph summarising what will be covered. A good overview will also address emotional factors around the problem. The classic mistake is to just produce a heading, contents list and launch straight into the detail.

An outline of the key legal points

The outline doesn't have to be in one place. The key legal points can be spread throughout the information.

Guides to processes and procedures

How to take the law forward in practice. Also to include information on how to solve the problem, which isn't laid down in law.

Route maps of where to go, what to do and who to see

To give more detail than 'Guides to processes and procedures'. For example, rather than just saying 'to get this benefit apply to the DWP' here we are looking for 'to get this benefit you can apply to the DWP by visiting your local office, calling the helpline, who will fill the form in for you on the phone and post it to you to sign or get help from a local advice agency'.

The format doesn't have to be graphical, although this works well for important information, or as well as text to offer readers a choice.

Step by step guides

Manageable chunks of information which take the reader through the situation.

Where to get more information, advice and support

A list of useful contacts is important, but organisations should also be mentioned in relevant places in the text. Good information will offer details about the

contacts so that readers can feel confident that they are approaching a useful organisation.

Information about skills and support to help solve the problem:

Sample forms, letters and calculations

How to prepare for an event such as a visit, interview or assessment

Information such as working out what you want to achieve, keeping a diary, taking relevant documents with you etc

Suggested questions to ask and key points to consider

For example, legal action might cost you more than you win, ask them how long you'll have to wait etc.

How and when to record what you do

For example, 'it's a good idea to keep a file with all the information about your complaint in one place. Make a note of who you speak to' etc

How to negotiate, how to be assertive or how to remain calm

For example, 'If they ignore your refusal, politely say 'no thank you' and put the phone down.

Acknowledge stress and give support and boost confidence

For example, 'You are entitled to help from the government after all your years of paying NICs so put it in a claim' or 'Losing your job can be a very worrying and upsetting time...'

Appendix 2 - Examples of good resources

Employment

1. **Discrimination - raising a grievance** - Advicenow
[http://www.advicenow.org.uk/fileLibrary/pdf/Discrimination - Raising a grievance.pdf](http://www.advicenow.org.uk/fileLibrary/pdf/Discrimination_-_Raising_a_grievance.pdf)
Formats: PDF, HTML

This resource scored 6 against our information criteria and 5 for skills and support. It is supportive (*'Facing problems at work can be daunting...But no one should have to suffer discrimination...'*), addresses the user directly and uses informal language: This resource includes:

- case studies and examples
 - pros and cons of taking action and points to think about
 - how to record and negotiate (*'Keep a diary...Keep safe any other evidence, like emails'* *'Try to maintain a professional tone in your letter'*)
 - a step-by-step table
 - jargon buster
 - cartoons
 - tips (*'It's important to take steps to deal with it before it gets out of hand, and to act with a clear head so you get the best result.'* *'Prepare to be blocked and discouraged...'*)
 - information on how to raise a grievance – three step procedure
 - a flowchart to determine whether a person is ready to make a claim to an employment tribunal
 - questions and answers.
2. **Changes to employment contracts** – Adviceguide
http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/e_changes_to_employment_contracts.pdf
Formats: PDF

This resource scored 4 for information and 3 for skills and support. It:

- addresses the person directly
- gives a clear summary of the key points
- provides points to consider eg 'check your contract'
- explains how to record (in this case a letter objecting to changes in a contract)
- explains how to negotiate (*'keep the tone of the letter polite'*)

Immigration

3. **Bail – Preparing applications for release – Bail for Immigration**

Detainees (BID)

http://www.biduk.org/pdf/bail_notebook/notebook_part_1_jan_2004.pdf

Formats: PDF, paper.

This resource is the first part of a two part pack. It scored 5 against our information criteria and 6 for skills and support. It is quite long and divided into chapters. It has a step-by-step chart for using the publication and gives tips on using the resource (*'Action boxes contain the advice on what you can do to make your application for bail stronger'*). It contains a variety of material that would enable a client to take action. It includes:

- supportive statements (*'It can be difficult to understand why the Immigration Service is allowed to detain you'*)
- a table defining legal jargon
- key points to consider and things to remember (*'it is important to keep trying even if it can be frustrating'*)
- standard letters and guidance on how to fill them in.
- action boxes (*'Give or send him/her information that you have collected'*)
- how to record (*'keep copies of all letters' 'write down the person's name and what he/she said to you'*)
- how to behave at a hearing (*'Always tell the truth and do not get angry with anybody. Make your case calmly and clearly.'*)

Education

4. **Appealing for a school: A practical guide to parents' legal rights -**

Advisory Centre for Education

<http://www.ace-ed.org.uk/advice/booklets/Appealing.html>

Formats: PDF (costs £1.00 to download); paper (costs £2.10)

This resource scored 5 against our information criteria and 5 for skills and support. It includes an overview and explains what the leaflet does, a jargon buster, clear subheadings, a step-by-step guide and a guide to the processes involved. In terms of skills and support to solve the problem it includes:

- sample letters
- how to prepare for an appeal (*'Think carefully. Write down in detail how each point affects your child...'*)
- suggested questions to ask and key points to consider (*'remember: if you have missed the deadline, you can generally still appeal'*)
- how to negotiate (*'This part of the meeting can be confusing. Make notes about anything that you do not understand' 'Put your case as you wish. If you forget something, ask if you can add it.'*)
- supportive statements and acknowledges stress (*'This can be an upsetting time for you and your child. Parents often feel very angry...'*)

Health and social care

5. **A guide to assessments and services in England and Wales** – Contact a family for families with disabled children
<http://www.cafamily.org.uk/assess.pdf>
Formats: HTML, PDF, paper (costs 50p each)

This resource scored 4 against the information criteria and 4 against skills and support criteria. It provides good introductory information about social services duties and has quite detailed information about assessments. Its layout and style could be improved. It includes:

- practical tips about preparing for an assessment and attending meetings with social services (*'Make a list of questions if you think that will help' 'Keep calm: Do not lose your temper if things are going wrong. Try and give reasoned counter arguments'*).
- supportive statements (*'Do not be worried about asking for clear information'*)
- how to record information (*'Keep everything in a file'*)
- frequently asked questions

A short selection of other very good resources

- **Help in your home** – Help the Aged (4/3) provides good, easy to read information.
- **Banks and building societies** - Adviceguide's fact sheet scored 4/4. It is easy to read, fairly detailed and includes problem solving skills information.
- **Your rights if you have been injured as a result of an accident** - Action against Medical Accidents' online leaflet, (5/3) scored against three skills and support criteria: it gave information on how to record, acknowledged the stress of the situation and gave key points to consider.
- **Putting your children first** – the DfES pack scored 4/4. It is a good resource with focus on the emotional and support aspects of problem solving as well as information on the law.
- **Attendance allowance and disability living allowance** - Age Concern's factsheet scored 5/4. This is clearly written, detailed and helps people to prepare for and fill in the form. It is a useful practical self management item.
- **Debt self help pack** – National Debtline's pack is very comprehensive and long. Individual sections can be downloaded. It scored 6/5.

Advicenow resources that scored well:

- Divorce toolkit 6/5

- Wills 5/3
- 'What is parental responsibility?' 6/3
- Parents apart 5/3
- Young workers 4/4
- Discrimination: raising a grievance 6/5
- Bailiffs and debt collection 5/5
- Getting your deposit back 6/5
- Trouble at school 5/3
- Working parents 5/3
- 'What is mediation?' 4/3.

Appendix 3 - How many resources per term?

We think it is important to provide operators with more than one resource so that they can quickly match the needs of the caller to the information resource. No one resource will be able to answer every caller's question. There are a number of factors which operators will need to consider when signposting a caller to a resource:

Level of detail

How much information about an issue does a caller need to know? For example, under the term 'Disability benefits' does the caller just want a rough idea of which benefits they might be able to get to help them with the disability, or do they need detailed information on how to make a claim for Disability Living Allowance?

Complexity

Different callers will need information resources with different levels of complexity. For example, the National Debtline self help guide is an excellent resource and scores highly but is quite demanding of its readers. To get through the pack you need to have the confidence and capability to read and digest 64 pages, gather, understand and record information about your own debts and learn about new topic areas such as benefits. Not all callers will want or be able to use this pack, and so it is important that operators can signpost to a simpler resource. For these people we have selected the Adviceguide factsheet which gives a more basic introduction.

Scope

Sometimes it is difficult to cover the whole of one term in one resource. An example of this is 'Tax credits'. We have selected a resource that gives an overview of tax credits, and also resources that look at elements of tax credits; overpayments and how to appeal. If we only chose one resource you would lose this more specific, problem focused information.

Particular audiences

Few resources cover the situations of all audiences, for example, disabled people, younger people, older people, lone parents etc. In 'Employees rights' we selected a broad overview resource, plus resources specifically aimed at some disadvantaged groups; young employees and employees from outside the UK. Callers are more likely to trust and act on information which addresses their particular problem and is specific to their rights. It would be a shame if operators were unable to signpost callers to the most relevant information for them.

Format and language

Many callers to CLS Direct will not have internet access. It is important that operators can signpost callers to a helpful resource in a language or format they

can use. We have already discussed the problems of finding non-web formats of sufficient quality. The fewer resources included the less likely that there will be a resource which is available in the relevant format, for example, in Welsh or on paper.

Selecting the best resource

If an individual were looking at a list of resources they would instinctively select the one that met their needs using some of the criteria mentioned above. A good operator will be skilled at identifying caller's needs in a similar way and should be able to quickly select the best resource for that caller based on their own experience, the resource score and rank and the operator notes.

Score

We have developed quality criteria, agreed with CLS Direct, for assessing resources for inclusion in this database. The criteria are split into two elements; how well the resource provides information about the problem and how well the resource provides information about the skills and support needed to solve the problem. Each resource is assessed against this criteria and a score given.

Operators can use this information to help them decide which resource to signpost the caller to. For example, 'Tackling bullying' by Advisory Centre for Education scores highly across both sets of criteria, so operators know that this is a quality all-round resource which clearly explains the law around the problem as well as explaining what action they should take to solve the problem.

'Discrimination at work - it's so over' by Stonewall scores 2 for the problem criteria and 3 for skills and support. This means that there is less information on the legal situation and more information which is supportive about tackling the problem. Operators may feel that this is appropriate for someone who is at the early stage of dealing with their problem but lacks the confidence to take it further.

'Benefits and tax credits: information for lone parents' scores 4 for the problem criteria but zero for skills and support. This score tells the operator that the resource is a good overview of the benefits available but that there is no supportive information on what action to take and how. Operators might feel that this information would be appropriate for a caller who simply wants to know what benefits are available for the future rather than needing to solve an immediate problem.

Rank

We rank the resources from general to specific, so resources with the broadest appeal appear at the top of the list and resources aimed at specific audiences or about particular elements of a topic appear lower down. This order should also help operators to match resources to callers. For example, resources for the term 'Mortgages' are ranked in the following order: 1. 'Mortgages', 2. 'How mortgages

work', 3. 'What to do when you can't meet your mortgage payments'. Operators will know that if they are looking for a resource on a specific element of a problem or for a particular group it will be lower down the list.

Operator notes

Sometimes there is extra information which we think is useful for operators in helping them to select the best resource for their caller. It ranges from information about the quality of the resource ' Useful examples, some legal language is used, but is explained', the audience the resource is aimed at 'For young people only but useful tips across a range of employment areas' to information on how to get the resource 'You have to pay for this; either to download or pay more for a paper copy.'

Appendix 4 - Implementation issues

As a result of our assessment of resources during the selection process for the database, we observed that self management type resources may raise some implementation issues. But the following points may also be applicable to the production of all types of information resources.

- **Purpose:** There is a need for providers to be clear about the purpose of their information resources. For example, an awareness raising publication will have require a very different approach from one intended to support self help. Clarity on objectives - what we want the user to do when they have read the leaflet - will assist in determining content.
- **Audience:** There is a need for providers to know their audience. Resources tend to work better where there is only one identified audience rather than multiple audiences, for example, a leaflet aimed only at carers rather than one for carers, carers' advisers and other professionals.
- **Planning:** These resources require careful planning and editing as they can be long, detailed and have complex information content.
- **Practical advice knowledge:** In order to provide useful and realistic skills and support elements (such as how to negotiate or prepare for a meeting, and acknowledging the emotional aspects of problems), these resources need input from workers who can provide practical experience of advising and resolving issues in the subject area.
- **Realistic legal information:** The key legal points and procedures relating to the problem need to be written to ensure that the information mirrors situations people really face rather than what the legislation says should happen. Information should also be realistic about people's skills and time. For example, a resource could both explain how users can do a calculation themselves, and state that they can contact the organisation for help with doing it.
- **User testing:** These resources are likely to need to be tested with users, where possible, prior to publication of a final version. Providers need to feel confident that users find the skills and support elements (such as how and when to record) useful and useable.
- **Funding:** Providers may consider special funding for self management type resources as they are likely to require more staff input and time than other information resources.

Appendix 5 - Statistical analysis

Inclusion criteria

We developed database inclusion criteria to help us assess which information resources should be included. A key part of the inclusion criteria is a set of indicators which set out the different elements we would expect to see in an information resource which helps someone to manage their problem. 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

Scores

There are a total of 542 resources included in the database. Each resource was assessed against each type of indicator and given a score out of six. Resources selected for the database had the following scores against our indicators:

Scores for problem indicators

Score	Number of resources
0	0
1	0
2	43
3	251
4	205
5	37
6	6
Total	542

Scores for skills and support indicators

Score	Number of resources
0	149
1	235
2	96
3	41
4	13
5	7
6	1
Total	542

Headline statistics

Information about the problem:

- 46% scored four or above for the information about the problem.
- Just over half (54%) – 294 resources scored 1, 2 or 3 for information about the problem.

Information about skills and support:

- Ninety-six per cent of the resources scored *three or less* for the skills and support indicators.

- Only 21 resources – just 4% of the total – scored four or above for the skills and support indicators.
- 27% of information resources scored zero for skills and support indicators.

Illustrations of spread of skills and support indicators

Whilst assessing information resources it was noticeable that some skills and support indicators were employed more often than others. For example, few resources attempted to acknowledge anxiety and the need for support, or give generic 'how to' skills information. Indicators like 'Suggested questions to ask and key points to consider' were more common.

This is exemplified by the scoring in the Benefits category where we found that out of 50 resources selected for the database only two included information on how to negotiate, be assertive and stay calm. Only five explained how and when to record what you do and only six included sample letters, forms and calculations. In contrast 34 resources offered suggested questions to ask and key points to consider.

The full picture for the Benefits, Education and Employment subject categories are given below:

Benefits

The 50 information resources selected include the following skills and support criteria:

Sample letters, forms and calculations:	6
How to prepare for an event such as a visit:	11
Suggested questions and key points:	34
How and when to record:	5
How to negotiate, be assertive, remain calm:	2
Acknowledge stress, give support:	11

Education

10 terms within Education subject category.

The 29 information resources selected include the following skills and support criteria:

Sample letters, forms and calculations:	2
How to prepare for an event such as a visit:	9
Suggested questions and key points:	21
How and when to record:	1
How to negotiate, be assertive, remain calm:	2
Acknowledge stress, give support:	12

Employment

The 90 information resources selected include the following skills and support criteria:

Sample letters, forms and calculations:	4
How to prepare for an event such as a visit:	15
Suggested questions and key points:	53
How and when to record:	14
How to negotiate, be assertive, remain calm:	12
Acknowledge stress, give support:	11