

Advicenow response to "'Turned down for DLA/AA? Think you're not getting enough?' AND 'How to handle an interview under caution' - An evaluation on Advicenow self-management guides" by John Seargeant

We are pleased with the evaluation report into the self-management guides. It is very thorough, reassuring and raises lots of interesting questions. We are glad to see that users liked the guides, could make good use of them when experiencing a problem and that they could be used as a model for future self-management material on other topics. The point the report raises about advisers needing support and training to understand self-management is worth following up, as is the role for resources for other professionals such as GPs and social workers.

We intend to make amendments to the guide based on specific comments and suggestions in the report, but we also want to use this brief paper to respond to broader issues and some of the more fundamental issues raised, as well as what we think we should do about them.

Suggestions or comments made in the report

Use of 'illustrative' effects - case studies etc

- It seems to us that the issue with the front page case studies in particular is that they are too long for an 'action guide'. We use case studies to raise awareness, draw readers in and reinforce key points. Users of an action guide will already know that they have a problem and want to do something about it. We still believe that case studies are very useful but feel that we need to look again at the format and length of case studies for different types of information materials.
- Users and advisers seem to differ in their feelings on Rose's statement in the DLA/AA guide. Advisers thought it was a 'clever and clear' way to put across information whilst users didn't understand the relevance of it. This suggests that there is some value in techniques like this but that we need to make the purpose clearer. One option is to make it available as a separate document for those who want an example statement which would shorten the guide for others.
- Users and advisers like the use of Steve's story on the front page of the IUC guide. But the scenario used may not have been the best choice, particularly as there were differing views on whether or not the situation

constituted fraud. In future it may be better to pick a more clear cut example, that reflects the seriousness of the situation and reinforces key points.

- Most of the concern around illustrative effects seems to be about the language. John Seargeant's report makes the point about the shift in voice. Perhaps for updated or future action guides (which take the reader through a process) we need to look at maintaining the same 'voice' or tone throughout.
- Supplementary documents (in this case for family members, doctors etc) could be provided separately although providing separate documents would have its own difficulties.

Splitting the DLA/AA guide up or producing separate guides on Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance

- Separate guides on AA and DLA could be produced if funds were available or one guide could be broken up into sections. A separate guide would increase production, publication and distribution costs substantially and a guide with different sections would increase length significantly.
- There are very few differences between AA and DLA and those that do exist don't really affect the process of appealing.
- Given the restraints it might be better to explain the differences between the two benefits and make it clearer that the appeals process is the same.

Specific suggestions or comments from users and advisers

- Interviewees made a number of specific points on the text which we will look at. We're aware that some of them reflect regional differences in procedures, the differing political views of the professionals on each side of the problem, or the experience of just one or two users (for example, the involvement of OT's) so we need to consider how or whether to reflect this.
- If readers have concerns about any particular comments in the report, we will be happy to discuss them in more detail.

Overall, we are very pleased with the report. We feel that although there were difficulties involved in trying to conduct an evaluation which seeks feedback from people with a problem within such a short timeframe we learned a lot from doing so. We will use this learning to improve the guide and to inform future work.