



EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

Summary results of the EqIA

Title of policy/ practice/ process/ service: System letters review

Is the policy new (proposed), a revision to an existing policy or a review of current policy? Existing policy

Key findings from this assessment (or reason why an EqIA is not required):

The project aims to improve our communication with customers, including members of the public, by providing more accessible and easy-to-understand letters. This will improve our service delivery and help recipients understand what action they need to take and/or the decisions SLAB has made. Improved formatting and other accessibility features will have a positive impact on equality groups, specifically people with disabilities and for people who have English as a second language.

Summary of actions taken because of this assessment:

- End user research was commissioned to review a sample of first draft letters to inform a final draft.
- Changes have been made of the format of the letters in line with good practice. This was supported by the purchase of new software to allow more employee control over formatting.

Ongoing actions before implementation include:

- Systems testing of the new letters is being undertaken.
- Operational staff will receive training and guidance on language and explanations to be used in letters, where the content is added by individuals. This will ensure consistency with the revised fixed text.

Ongoing actions beyond implementation include:

- Further improvements to letters as suggested from the end user research and which we are currently unable to action will be taken forward under future systems re-writes. These are to be planned.
- Operational teams are to attend a Plain English course with an external provider.

Lead person(s) for this assessment (job title and department only):

Assistant Manager - Operations Delivery

Senior responsible owner agreement that the policy has been fully assessed against the needs of the general duty (job title only):



Director of Operations

Publication date (for completion by Communications): 13/04/2021



Step 1 - Framing the planned change

Discussing step 1 and step 2 with the Corporate Policy Officer (Equalities) at an early stage will help identify appropriate evidence. This may include support from the wider Policy and Development team.

1.1 Briefly describe the aims, objectives and purpose of the policy/ practice/ process/ service. *You can use the information in your project specification, business case etc.*

The review supports our 2017 - 2020 equality outcome that '*[M]inority ethnic people and disabled people experience equal access to quality accessible services and information about legal aid*', and will continue to support the delivery of our revised outcomes that '*[P]eople with disabilities and people who speak languages other than English can access our services and funding of appropriate communication support with ease*'.

Letters are one of the main methods of communication between SLAB and customers. Currently these letters are prepared through FAMS (an Oracle based system) in an automated process and are used to convey a vast array of outcomes and information to recipients. The system holds approximately 200 template letters which cover everything from application rejections to requests for more information to support an application for legal aid.

The letters are intended to provide members of the public, solicitors and other stakeholders with a user-friendly and concise explanation of SLAB's decisions and/ or other information. The diverse audience SLAB communicates with means that these letters must aim to be accessible to all and easy for people with no legal training or familiarity with legal aid legislation to understand. We recognise our duty to make reasonable adjustments where this is required and will continue to do so. SLAB intends to review and update both the template format and language used in letters to help meet these aims.

The functionality of the automated system itself will also be improved to allow us greater control over the appearance of the letters. This will include, for example, the ability to include bullet points, increase font sizes and use bold text.

This review and update will affect everyone who receives letters from SLAB.

1.2 Why is the change required? *Legislative, routine review etc.*

Work identified under our equality outcomes and in relation to feedback that our letters are too technical.

1.3 Who is affected by this policy/ practice/ process/ service? Be clear about who the ‘customer’ is.

The customers are legal aid applicants and opponents in civil legal aid and therefore are members of the public.

1.4 Policy/ practice/ process/ service implementation date e.g. *project end date, date new legislation will take effect.*

29/03/2021

Planned implementation date was delayed due the impact of Covid-19.

1.5 What other SLAB policies or projects may be linked to or affected by changes to this policy/ practice/ process/ service? The EqIA for related policies might help you understand potential impacts, and/ or your findings might be relevant to share. Refer to SLAB’s business plan, our current equality outcomes, current project list etc.

There is a link to the development of work under equality outcome 3 - gathering of information about legal aid applicants in terms of communication support needs and the development of a customer service policy.

Step 2: Consider the available evidence and data relevant to your policy/ practice/ process/ service

The information you gather in this section will:

- help you to understand the importance of your policy/ practice/ process/ service for different equality groups,
- inform the depth of equality impact assessment you need to do (this should be proportional to the potential impact on equality groups), and
- provide justification and an audit trail behind your decisions, including where it is agreed an equality impact assessment is not required.

2.1 What information is available about the experience of each equality group in relation to this policy/ practice/ process/ service? Stay focused on the topic and scope of your policy/ practice/ process/ service. Does the policy/ practice/ process/ service relate to an area where there are already known inequalities? Refer to the EqlA guidance for sources of evidence.

Note: If you proceed to a full EqlA you should continue to add to this section as you develop the policy/ practice/ process/ service, come across new evidence and/ or **undertake a consultation**.

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
Age	Internet search on literacy in Scotland	The average reading age in Scotland is around 11 years.
	Age UK	Using FRS measures, in 2013/14, at age 60-64 a little under 30% of older adults have a disability but this doubles to

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		around 60% for those aged 80 and over. See Disability for further consideration of the impacts.
Disability	<p>A Fairer Scotland for Disabled People - Delivery Plan to 2021 for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/12/3778</p>	<p>In reviewing the evidence to set our equality outcomes in 2017, we determined that improving our communications would have most impact on people with disabilities and people from minority ethnic groups, specifically where English is a second language. The document notes the importance of clear communications and information to ensure people can access public services</p>
	<p>Principles of Inclusive Communication</p>	<p>Communication accessibility and physical accessibility are equally important. All people who use public services have the right to access them on an equal basis. To make your services fully accessible means considering communication accessibility as well as physical accessibility in the traditional sense.</p>
	<p>2018 Criminal Applicant survey</p>	<p>Data from the 2018 Criminal Applicant survey told us that 94% of those who engaged with the survey were from a Scottish, other British or Irish ethnic background. When asked if there was anything from an equalities perspective that impacted on their ability to engage with their solicitor, the most common answer was that their mental health condition</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		made it more difficult to access help or understand what was happening with their case.
	Enable Scotland	There are an estimated 120,000 people who have a learning disability in Scotland. Learning disability is lifelong and affects around 1 in 50 people
	RNIB Scotland	RNIB Scotland estimates that there are 170,000 people in Scotland living with sight loss (36,000 medically registered). The needs of this group will also need to be considered (e.g making sure letters are formatted correctly for screen readers) as part of this review. There are lots of different ways to read paperwork e.g. audio, large or giant print, braille and Moon.
	National Literacy Trust	1 in 4 (26.7% / 931,000 people) adults in Scotland experience challenges due to their lack of literacy skills
	Deaf Action: Advisory Services Good Practice Guide 2016	There are some assumptions and misconceptions about Deaf people. For example, writing things down is not always effective as English is often not a Deaf person's first language (BSL is) and they may struggle to understand. If Deaf people think a service is inaccessible then it is unlikely that they will contact the service. As many Deaf people are not comfortable with written English, they may not understand letters from agencies and therefore fail to take

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
	<p>SAMH</p>	<p>any necessary action. Even if they are able to understand letters they may struggle to respond as many agencies rely on telephone contact, which is inaccessible for deaf people.</p> <p>1 in 4 people will experience a mental health problem at some point in their lives. The symptoms and impact on day to day life will vary enormously depending on a person's mental health condition. Some experiences can include disorganised thinking, difficulty concentrating, low motivation, overwhelming anxiety, disrupted sleep and many more. All can make it difficult to manage day to day life and therefore to with public services.</p>
Race	<p>Race Equality Framework for Scotland - http://www.gov.scot/Publications/2016/03/4084</p>	<p>In reviewing the evidence to set our equality outcomes in 2017, we determined that improving our communications would have most impact on people with disabilities and people from minority ethnic groups, specifically where English is a second language. Both documents note the importance of clear communications and information to ensure people can access public services</p> <p>Our 2017 survey of civil applicants found that of the 21 respondents who stated they had found legal aid more difficult to access due to a protected characteristic; four</p>

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		<p>people linked this to their ethnicity with one stating that the ‘language barrier’ was an issue. Also in this survey, 15 respondents linked their disability to finding legal aid difficult to access. Some examples of the issues experienced include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attention Deficit Disorder affect ability to concentrate and engage with paperwork • Hard to spell and read • Communicating in a hearing world as a BSL user.
	2011 Scotland Census	<p>In 2011, nearly all (98 per cent) of the population aged 3 and over in Scotland reported they could speak, read, write or understand English, with 92 per cent reporting that they could speak, read and write English. However, this does still mean that there are groups of people in Scotland lacking in English language skills. For example Glasgow City had the highest proportion of the population aged 3 and over reporting no ability in English (3 per cent).</p>
Sex	n/a	No evidence found to suggest specific issues for this equality group.
Gender Reassignment	SLAB	Evidence that people need to be able to change their name on correspondence in line with their gender identity/ when

Equality characteristics	Evidence source (e.g. web link, report, survey, complaint)	What does the evidence tell you about the experiences of this group in relation to the policy/ practice/ process/ service? Lack of evidence may suggest a gap in knowledge/ need for consultation (step 3).
		transitioning. SLAB can already accommodate this. No further evidence found to suggest specific issues for this equality group.
Sexual orientation	SLAB	We have already updated wording to remove gendered references e.g. for same-sex couples. No further evidence found to suggest specific issues for this equality group.
Religion or Belief	n/a	No evidence found to suggest specific issues for this equality group.
Pregnancy or maternity	n/a	No evidence found to suggest specific issues for this equality group.
Marriage or civil partnership	n/a	No evidence found to suggest specific issues for this equality group.
Care Experienced (<i>corporate parenting duty</i>)	n/a	No evidence found to suggest specific issues for this equality group.

2.2 Using the information above and your knowledge of the policy/ practice/ process/ service, summarise your overall assessment of how important and relevant the policy/ practice/ process/ service is likely to be for equality groups.



Our letters have the potential to impact on equality groups in terms of both physical appearance/ layout and the language used by SLAB in these communications. The equality groups where we believe there is most impact include Disability and Race.

Note: the scope of this EqlA is concerned with the content and format of our letters only.

2.3 Outcome of step 2 and next steps. Complete the table below to inform the next stage of the EqlA process.

Outcome of Step 2 following initial evidence gathering and relevance to equality characteristics	Yes/ No (Y or N)	Next steps
There is no relevance to equality or our corporate parenting duties		Proceed to Step 5: agree with decision makers that no EqlA is required based on current evidence
There is relevance to some or all of the equality groups and/ or our corporate parenting duties	Y	Proceed to Step 3: complete full EqlA
It is unclear if there is relevance to some or all of the equality groups and/ or our corporate parenting duties		Proceed to Step 3: complete full EqlA



Step 3 - stakeholder involvement and consultation

This step will help you to address any gaps in evidence identified in Step 2. Speaking to people who will be affected by your policy/ practice/ process/ service can help clarify the impact it will have on different equality groups.

Remember that sufficient evidence is required for you to show ‘due regard’ to the likely or actual impact of your policy/ practice/ process/ service on equality groups. An inadequate analysis in an assessment may mean failure to meet the general duty.

The Policy and Development team can help to identify appropriate ways to engage with external groups or to undertake research to fill evidence gaps.

3.1 Do you/did you have any consultation or involvement planned for this policy/ practice/ process/ service?

Yes

3.2 List all the stakeholder groups that you will talk to about this policy/ practice/ process/ service.

Scottish Accessible Information Forum: good practice guidance on accessible communications

Supporting Offenders with Learning Disabilities Policy Officer: Scottish Government funded project engaging with criminal justice organisations

SLAB’s own primary research with end users: Commissioned research with end users; people with a reading age of approximately 11 years of age - both people for whom English is their first language, and learners of English for whom it is a second language.



3.3 What did you learn from the consultation/ involvement? Remember to record relevant actions in the assessment action log.

We received a great deal of information on both the structure, content and language used in our letters.

SOLD and the end user research gave us feedback on letters we had already reviewed and improved in terms of language and format. They provided invaluable feedback on further changes to unclear wording, information that should be contained in the letters and their format. We also got positive feedback about some of the changes we'd made in our first round of review. We have included a summary table in Appendix A of the feedback we received and those that we are able to implement and those we cannot implement.

Step 4 - Impact on equality groups and steps to address these

You must consider the three aims of the general duty for each protected characteristic. The following questions will help:

- Is there potential for discrimination, victimisation, harassment or other unlawful conduct that is prohibited under the Equality Act 2010? How will this be mitigated?
- Is there potential to advance equality of opportunity between people who share a characteristic and those who do not? How can this be achieved?
- Is there potential for developing good relations between people who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not? How can this be achieved?

4.1 Does the policy/ practice/ process/ service have any impacts (whether intended or unintended, positive or negative) on any of the equality characteristics?

In the tables below, record the impact of the policy/ practice/ process/ service, as it is planned or as it operates, might have on each equality characteristic and describe what changes in policy/ practice/ process/ service or actions will be required to mitigate that impact. Copy any actions across to the project action log.

Age	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impact	Negative impact	No impact	
potential for discrimination			x	

potential for developing good relations			x	
potential to advance equality of opportunity	x			<p>Any acquired disability on account of age is considered in that section. The drive to improve font sizes and use Plain English will support disabilities commonly acquired with older age groups, such as loss of sight.</p> <p>We do not have separate letters for children applicants. The new letter format and wording is intended to be accessible to people aged 11 years plus. Where we are informed about a child applicant's guardian, the guardian will receive the letter.</p>

Sex	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			x	
potential for developing good relations			x	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	

Disability	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	x			See below for key points which also relate to advancing equality of opportunity.
potential to advance equality of opportunity	x			<p>We have set a standard font (sans serif) and font size (12pt or 14pt where possible/ for important information) for our letters in line with good practice guidance e.g. from Scottish Accessible Information Forum.</p> <p>We have simplified the language we use in our letters and have removed jargon or provided explanations for terms we have to use. This aims to improve the accessibility of the letters and help people understand what we are asking them to do. We are adhering to Plain English principles.</p> <p>We have introduced bullet points, section headings and bold font to highlight important information and make our letters easier to read. We have also made them shorter.</p> <p>We can email letters to members of the public if required as a manual process. Sending information in this electronic format will allow people with visual impairments or learning difficulties to use assistive technologies (e.g. screen reading software) to access the information.</p>

				<p>We have included logos and symbols for SLAB contact details e.g. phone symbol next to telephone numbers and email symbol next to email addresses. We have also included the Contact Scotland BSL service logo on all our letters so that BSL users know they can use this service to contact us.</p> <p>We are unable to make all the information in our letters targeted to an individual's circumstances at this time. However consideration of this work will be taken forward as part of future system changes where possible.</p>
potential for developing good relations			x	

Gender Reassignment	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			x	We already use the gender identity pronouns and preferred name in correspondence and can change these if requested.
potential for developing good relations			x	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	

Race	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination	X	X		The changes we are making to the letters we send to members of the public should produce positive equality outcomes in terms of people from minority ethnic groups, specifically where English is their second language.
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity	X			<p>Simplifying the language and structure we use in letters will improve understanding of the actions we are asking people to make and/ or the information we need people to know. The updated letters will also minimise any errors we may make with ensuring the correct name order is on each letter, an issue we've identified in the past,</p> <p>In the updated letters we have updated the language we use to be more inclusive of different cultures e.g. use 'correspondence address' rather than 'address' to reflect the fact that an applicant who comes from the travelling community might not have a fixed address. This could also help recent immigrants who may be housed in temporary accommodation.</p>

Religion or Belief	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)	
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	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
potential for discrimination			x	
potential for developing good relations			x	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	

Sexual Orientation	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			x	
potential for developing good relations			x	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	

Pregnancy & Maternity	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)	

	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
potential for discrimination			X	
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			X	

Marriage & Civil Partnership	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			X	
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			x	We already use spouse/partner rather than wife/husband so we anticipate no new equality issues arising.

Care experienced young people	Place 'X' in the relevant box(es)			Describe the changes or actions (if any) you plan to take. E.g. to mitigate any impact, maximise the positive impact, or record your justification to not make changes despite the potential for adverse impact.
	Positive impacts	Negative impacts	No impact	
potential for discrimination			X	
potential for developing good relations			X	
potential to advance equality of opportunity			X	

4.2 Describe how the assessment so far might affect other areas of this policy/ practice/ process/ service and/ or project timeline?

There is potential for some equality groups to face barriers in accessing our services where our letters do not meet accessibility good practice and are difficult to understand. This project will mitigate these risks through careful consideration of the issues, reference to best practice guides and consultation with specialist groups or equality organisations. There is a significant opportunity to help advance equality of opportunity for people with disabilities and people from minority ethnic groups.

There will be a cost implication of research (agreed to be met from the current research budget) which will also have an impact on initial timescales. Timescales were subsequently reconsidered by the project group so that all feedback was received and used to inform the final letter format and content.

4.3 Having considered the potential or actual impacts of your policy/ practice/ process/ service on equality groups, you should now record the outcome of this assessment below. Choose from one of the following (mark with an X or delete as appropriate):

Please select (X)	Implications for the policy/ practice/ process/ service
	<p>No major change Your assessment demonstrates that the policy/ practice/ process/ service is robust. The evidence shows no potential for unlawful discrimination and that you have taken all opportunities to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations, subject to continuing monitoring and review.</p>
X - necessary steps taken	<p>Adjust the policy/ practice/ process/ service You need to take steps to remove any barriers, to better advance equality of to foster good relations. You have set actions to address this and have clear ways of monitoring the impact of the policy/ practice/ process/ service when implemented.</p>
	<p>Continue the policy/ practice/ process/ service with adverse impact The policy/ practice/ process/ service will continue despite the potential for adverse impact. You have justified this with this assessment and shown how this decision is compatible with our obligations under the public sector equality duty. When you believe any discrimination can be objectively justified you must record in this assessment what this is and how the decision was reached.</p>
	<p>Stop and remove the policy/ practice/ process/ service The policy/ practice/ process/ service will not be implemented due to adverse effects that are not justified and cannot be mitigated.</p>



Step 5 - Discuss and review the assessment with decision makers and governance structures

You **must** discuss the findings of this assessment with senior decision makers during the lifetime of the project/ review and before you finalise the assessment. Relevant groups include, but are not limited to, a Project Board, Executive Team or Board members. EqlA should be on every project board agenda therefore only note dates where key decisions have been made (e.g. draft EqlA sign off, discussion about consultation response).

- 5.1 Record details of the groups you report to about this policy/ practice/ process/ service and impact assessment.**
Include the date you presented progress to each group and an extract from the minutes to reflect the discussion.

Template Letters Review Project Group - January 2019 to March 2020 - ongoing oversight of work

Executive Team - 30th May 2019 - initial sign off

Executive Team/ Director of Operations - 8 April 2021 - sign off of EqlA update.

Step 6 - Post-implementation actions and monitoring impact

There may be further actions or changes planned after the policy/ practice/ process/ service is implemented and this assessment is signed off. It is important to continue to monitor the impact of your policy/ practice/ process/ service on equality groups to ensure that your actual or likely impacts are those you recorded. This will also highlight any unforeseen impacts.

6.1 Record any ongoing actions below. This can be copied from the project action log or elsewhere in this assessment and should include timescales and person/ team responsible. If there are no outstanding items please make this clear.

Action	Owner	Timeline
End user research to be used in further case management system rewrites - specifically improved personalisation and addition of new letters	Projects Office and Operations	On-going through 2021 - 2023
Training and guidance to be developed and delivered to operational teams to ensure revised style of writing and format used in template documents is replicated in free text additions to any letter.	Assistant manager - Operations Delivery	By September 2021
Testing and launch of new civil legal aid letters	Projects Officer and Operations	By June 2021

6.2 Note here how you intend to monitor the impact of this policy/ practice/ process/ service on equality groups. In the table below you should:

- list the relevant measures,
- Identify who or which team is responsible for implementing or monitoring any changes
- Where the measure will be reported to ensure any issues can be acted on as appropriate.

Measure	Lead department/ individual	Reporting (where/ frequency)
Ad hoc feedback via operational teams from people who receive the letters	Civil legal aid Merits & Civil Financial Assessment Teams	Quarterly reporting through ET reporting

Solicitor survey feedback	Research Team	Survey report to Executive Team and relevant operational managers
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6.3 EqlA review date. This EqlA should be reviewed as part of the wider post-implementation review of the policy/ practice/ process/ service. The date should not exceed 3 years from the policy/ practice/ process/ service implementation date.

28/04/2023

Step 7 - Assessment sign off

All equality impact assessments must be signed off by the Executive Team, even where an EqlA is not required. Note the relevant meeting date here:

09/04/2020

Approved: the Chief Executive's Office will pass the assessment to Communications for publication on our website. All assessments must be published on SLAB's website as early as possible after the decision is made to implement the policy/ practice/ process/ service.

Not approved: you must review this assessment in line with the Executive Team's comments.

Appendix A: Summary of Progressive's Suggested Changes - Working Groups recommendations

Suggested Change	Accept	For Later	Reject	Undecided	Comments
Replace jargon with plain English	✓				<p>Where possible we will look to simplify the language used in our letters even further, however there are some words or phrases we must use or there are no simpler alternatives, e.g. Financial.</p> <p>We have however taken on board some of the word suggestions e.g.:</p> <p>Seek - get</p> <p>Documentation - information</p> <p>Difficulty - problem</p> <p>Some of the words identified in the report did not come from standard text in the letter, but instead came from text inserted by the person generating the letter following a specific action. When launching the new letters, Civil staff will need to be made aware of the recommended changes to the language we use.</p>
Better distinction between personal and generic content - suggestion to use a paper apart for generic content.				✓	<p>We have included important “generic” information that we think the applicant or opponent needs to be aware of in our letters and not in a paper apart as suggested by Progressive. The working group did this because they felt that any important information should be contained within the letter and not in a separate paper apart, as in their view paper apart were less likely to be read.</p> <p>We also inserted paragraph headings - in bold - to highlight important generic information.</p>

					We have used headings, bold font, and bullet points in our revised letters to break up lengthy letters and to help draw the important things to their attention.
Better distinction between personal and generic content	✓				We have compiled standard paragraphs, used bold font and paragraph headings to try and separate generic/standard content from personal content.
Keep letters as short as possible.	✓				Agreed.
Be specific about actions required		✓			<p>Until we have more system functionality to produce more bespoke letters - we cannot be as individually specific as Progressive are recommending. We would need much more system development to create letters, which could be compiled individually based on the particular circumstances of the application.</p> <p>For example, when we refuse civil legal aid on the merits, regardless of whether Regulation 18 work has been carried out or not, we tell the applicant to co-operate with any requests from us to give us financial information because we try to carry out a means assessment despite the application being refused. Going forward we would ideally only show that text where Regulation 18 work had been carried out in the case. We can take this proposal into the development of the new case management system.</p>

<p>Bear in mind the importance of letter format</p>	<p>✓</p>				<p>Progressive liked our use of bold, bullet points and headings to break our letters up and to keep the format of the letters the same.</p> <p>There was comment about the letter headings (SLAB logo, addresses etc.) being too much. We have already removed the fax number and DX & LP address details from the heading on our letters and feel the remaining information is needed. Contact details have been moved to the end of the letter and we have used graphics to make it easy to understand.</p>
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