



An employment public legal education strategy - feasibility

Final report

May 2023





Introduction

This project derived from emerging evidence of the need to raise awareness of the way in which public legal education and information can help with the employment problems that so many experienced as a result of the Covid-19 pandemic, and existing evidence of the way in which employment problems can cluster with debt, benefit, family and health problems.

Law for Life set out to determine:

- What employment problems people are experiencing, including:
 - o Who is being affected;
 - o Roughly the scale of the problem;
 - o How people express employment problems and what they feel about them.
- Which employment related processes / problems might benefit most from being supported by a PLE intervention, including:
 - o What people need to know and be able to do to address these issues;
 - o What help is available to them;
 - o Where there are gaps in the availability of help;
 - o What the quality of that help is.





Approach

Phase One: Needs analysis

We carried out:

- A consultation with the advice sector and others, including our LIPSS and LSLIPS partners.
- Desktop research
- A feedback review of the messages we receive from Advicenow users.

Phase Two: Gaps analysis

- o We carried out a review of the public legal information available for people with employment problems in England and Wales.
- o We assessed this output against our 'Better information' criteria and review it against what we have learned from the needs analysis. This has provided us with an overview of where there are absolute gaps in provision, and where there may perhaps be issues with target audience or quality of information.

Phase Three: Action report

Here, in this report we present our findings and offer suggestions for further action.





Needs analysis

Timeline of key events

31 st January 2020	Brexit – UK leaves the EU
16 th March 2020	PM Boris Johnson tells people to avoid unnecessary travel and contact.
20 th March 2020	Furlough and other measures announced
23 rd March 2020	Full Covid lockdown announced
31 st Dec 2020	Brexit transition period ends
19 th July 2021	Many restrictions on social contact and travel end
30 th June 2021	Deadline to apply for EU settled status
30 th Sept 2021	Furlough ends
24 th March 2022	Majority of Covid restrictions end
6 th Sept 2022	Liz Truss appointed PM
8 th Sept 2022	HM Queen dies
23 rd September 2022	Mini budget
20 th October 2022	Liz Truss resigns
25 th October 2022	Rishi Sunak appointed PM

Context and emerging needs

The last few years have seen an enormous number of legal, financial and political changes which have affected many people's employment situation.

Over the next few pages we set out in more detail the impact of this context on employment problems.



Covid-19 pandemic

- As of 21st June 2020, 9.2 million jobs were furloughed; out of an active working population in Great Britain of about 33 million people.¹
- An estimated 3.8 million adults in Britain (between 6-7 per cent) were living with reduced earnings as a direct result of the pandemic and were unable to access furlough or get help from the Self Employment Income Support Scheme. Those excluded from help were often workers in insecure employment such as gig-economy and zero hours roles. Women were been disproportionately excluded from Government assistance.²
- Covid-19 related impacts have been experienced by on average 31% of households since July 2020. This includes people who were still trading as self-employed but with reduced income, permanently ceased trading as self-employed, were made redundant, laid off without pay, temporarily ceased trading or were employed on reduced earnings.³
- During the pandemic there were widespread reports of people experiencing problems such as unpaid wages, problems with the furlough scheme such as forcing permanent changes of contractual terms through furlough agreements, refusal to furlough and furlough fraud – being asked to work when on furlough.
- Law for Life also commonly heard about issues of unfair dismissal (to avoid redundancy), reduced wages and unfair treatment of shielding workers and whistle-blowers.
- In the quarter Oct 2020 to Dec 2020 thirty per cent of the advice provided by our local and regional advice sector partners was on employment matters.⁴
- Employment Tribunal receipts peaked (in comparison with other tribunal jurisdictions where receipts were below pre Covid levels).⁵

Index of Employment Tribunals single and multiple claim receipts, Q1 2018/19 to Q1 2022/23⁶

³ https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/geography/pfrc/Bearing-the-brunt.pdf

¹

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-employment-tribunal-user-group-minutes-june-2020/n ational-employment-tribunal-user-group-minutes-30-june-2020

² https://www.bristol.ac.uk/media-library/sites/geography/pfrc/2021-02_Who-are-the-excluded.pdf

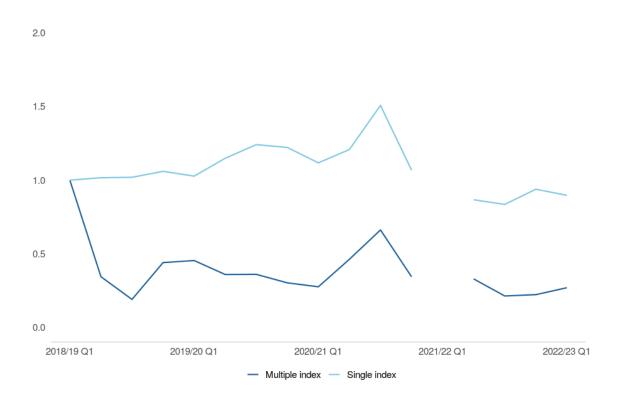
⁴ LSLIP Grant Data Report 1, 1st October – 31st December 2020

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-january-to-march-2021/tribunal-statisti cs-quarterly-january-to-march-2021#statisticians-comment

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2022/tribunal-statistics-quarterly-april-to-june-2022#employment-tribunals







- In December 2020, the anecdotal view of the Regional Employment Judges was that recent months had seen an increase in the following types of claim:
 - unfair dismissal (for redundancy reasons)
 - public interest disclosure (alleged employer misuse of furloughing)
 - public interest disclosure/health and safety (alleging inadequate PPE)
 - unpaid wages (especially from individuals alleging that they were required to work despite being furloughed)
 - o unpaid holiday (especially during periods of furlough)
 - protective award claims (alleged inadequate collective consultation ahead of large-scale redundancies)⁷

Covid-19 measures come to an end

- In the run up to the end of furlough and other support measures there was deep uncertainty for business survival and job security.
- In fact the UK avoided an unemployment crisis in the aftermath of the Covid-19 pandemic.

https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-employment-tribunal-user-group-minutes-december-2 020

lawforlife



- Unemployment is well below 4%, however there are still more people out of work than before the pandemic began.⁸
- This is explained by higher 'economic inactivity' (people not looking and/ or not available to work), driven by more older people leaving work and more people out of work with long-term health conditions.⁹

Brexit and longer term Covid impacts

- Older people leaving the workforce and more people out of work with long-term health conditions is attributed to longer term effects of the pandemic.¹⁰
- Nearly 15% of all young people are neither in employment nor full-time learning. Recent figures suggest that young people may be finding it harder to get jobs when they leave education, or may not enter the labour market at all, or leave it.¹¹
- This together with migration impacts as a result of Brexit mean that there is a labour shortage.
- The government has responded to labour supply issues by creating a series of Temporary Migration Programmes which are known to produce conditions by which labour exploitation can proliferate, for example, debt bondage.¹²
- EU citizens now have to prove their right to work with more complicated digital status evidence.¹³
- There are fears that the government's bill to sunset EU retained law could weaken basic employment rights, as well as our ability to counter modern slavery. In addition, by unsettling decades of case law, the bill will create uncertainty and add to the inaccessibility of the justice system for low-paid workers.¹⁴
- The HMCTS <u>Reform Programme</u> moves into the employment jurisdiction, beginning work on digitising the process for litigants in person to <u>make a claim</u>.

⁸

https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/IES%20briefing%20-%20Labour%20Marke t%20Statistics%20April%202023.pdf

⁹ https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/working-future

¹⁰ https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/working-future

https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/system/files/resources/files/IES%20briefing%20-%20Labour%20Marke t%20Statistics%20April%202023.pdf

https://www.labourexploitation.org/publications/risks-exploitation-temporary-migration-programmes-flex-res ponse-2018-immigration-white

¹³ https://the3million.org.uk/node/1100851408

https://www.labourexploitation.org/publications/retained-eu-law-revocation-and-reform-bill-%E2%80%93-res ponse-public-bill-committee-call





Inflation and cost of living

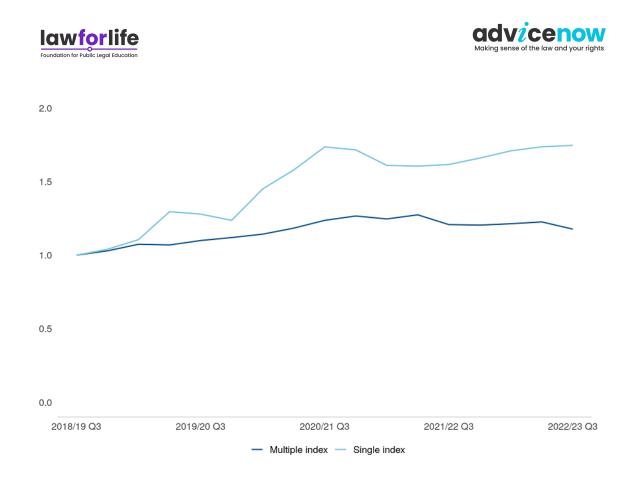
- Inflation is so high that real terms pay is down.¹⁵
- Surveys suggest business leaders are considering cutting down on flexible work, skills development, and employee wellbeing as the economic situation worsens.¹⁶
- The cost of living crisis means that some people are finding it hard to afford work related expenses. For example, fuel mileage allowances for some workers are not covering their expenses,¹⁷ and increasing numbers of people are opting out of pensions.¹⁸
- There is increasing use of algorithms, for example in the gig economy to rank people,¹⁹ and digital monitoring, for example, delivery drivers.²⁰
- There are increasing numbers of disputes over pay, conditions, pensions and redundancy leading to industrial action.²¹
- Long term sickness is at record highs.²²
- In September 2022 more than half of low-paid workers in the UK said they had used food banks in the last 12 months. This equates to 2.7 million workers.²³
- There is a backlog of outstanding tribunal cases:

Index of Employment Tribunals single and multiple claims outstanding, Q3 2018/19 to Q3 2022/23

- ¹⁶ https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/content/news/inflation-threatens-workplace-progress-made-in-pandemic/ ¹⁷
- https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/content/news/unison-demands-higher-fuel-allowance-for-public-sector-worker s
- ¹⁸ https://www.hrmagazine.co.uk/content/news/cost-of-living-leads-workers-to-opt-out-of-pensions
- ¹⁹ https://www.bristol.ac.uk/news/2022/november/gig-economy-worker-research.html
- ²⁰ https://www.fleetpoint.org/logistics/last-mile-deliveries/uk-delivery-drivers-under-increasing-pressure/
- ²¹ https://www.reuters.com/world/uk/which-british-workers-are-heading-industrial-action-2022-07-21/
- ²² https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/labour-market-statistics-november-2022
 ²³

¹⁵ https://www.employment-studies.co.uk/resource/working-future

https://www.livingwage.org.uk/news/78-low-paid-workers-say-cost-living-crisis-worst-financial-period-they-ha ve-ever-faced



Needs analysis - findings

Consultation and surveys

We consulted with advice agencies, ran online surveys of advisers and individuals, and reviewed feedback to the Advicenow website and found that people were seeking help with the following employment related problems:

Advice agencies

There were eight respondents to our survey (six lawyers and one adviser). Five worked for law centres, one in a barristers chambers, and another in a charity providing free legal representation.

We asked them to think about the situation since April 2022. Advisers and lawyers told us that they had seen all of the following issues, many of which had been exacerbated by the pandemic:

- Redundancy
- Unfair dismissal
- Unpaid wages
- Health and safety issues
- Zero hour contracts
- Gig economy issues
- Discrimination
- Victimisation
- Harassment
- Issues around reasonable adjustments





Advisers most commonly encounter was disability discrimination, followed by maternity, sex and race, age and sexuality.

Fourteen per cent of advisers had seen clients with right to work issues, all of which were related to Brexit.

Lawyers and advisers reported long delays with the tribunal service, with listings as far ahead as 2024.

We learned from our consultation and survey that advice agencies often see clusters of problems from particular employers, for example, the same care home or distribution centre.

They also told us that the employment problems they were seeing were more complex than in the past, and that clients were more in debt and experiencing more mental health problems.

Individuals

We carried out a survey of individuals with employment problems. The response level was not high (36 respondents), but the responses were detailed and provided lots of insight.

Individual survey respondents came from a range of working backgrounds, for example, account manager, civil servant, train driver, poultry worker, trainer, welder, charity worker, admissions officer and barista.

- The most common problems they experienced were around perceived unfair dismissal and health and safety issues. But also reduced and unpaid wages and zero hour contract problems.
- 41% said they had experienced discrimination.
- 14% said they had experienced issues around reasonable adjustments.
- 58% said that they had complained or raised a grievance with their employer.

Respondents told us about their experience of complaining or raising a grievance:

- Repeated requests to deal with a problem, such as short wages.
- Grievance procedures not being followed or being dragged out.
- Complaints being ignored and being threatened and harassed.

"I was told if I don't sign then they will fire and rehire me."

• Employers not taking the complaint seriously or engaging in the process:

"When attending the meeting I found they hadn't even read my letter of complaint and weren't willing to hear anything I had to say."

• Respondents feeling victimised for complaining.





"I was dismissed, fobbed off and openly discriminated against on basis of sex and victimised by redundancy after raising a query."

Respondents told us about issues such as:

- Confusion over worker status, especially for people who thought they were self-employed.
- Probationary periods being repeatedly extended.
- Being ignored / employers not engaging in processes.
- Health and safety whistleblowing.
- Struggling to get the help they need.

They also talked about how they feel:

"Very stressful and upsetting"

" I shall be retiring ... partly because of the stress this manager has subjected me too."

"I'd like my tribunal to actually mean something to show how mental health issues are still very much stigmatized."

When asked 'what information would you like or wish you had had, to help you with your employment problem?' respondents said:

- How to understand your employment status worker, employee or self-employed.
- How to deal with a disciplinary process, especially when you think you have been discriminated against.
- How the complaint / grievance procedure is supposed to work, including if you think you have been discriminated against.
- How to understand if you have grounds for a claim, including around reasonable adjustments.

"I'd like to be able to establish what is reasonable behaviour and when to take action"

- What are the chances of getting compensation?
- How to take an employment tribunal claim.
- If I have rights as a contractor / freelancer?
- Where to get free legal advice and representation.





A complete summary of our survey responses are contained in <u>appendix 1</u>.

Employment feedback review

April to October 2022 summary

We carried out a review of the unsolicited messages that we receive from Advicenow site users to find out how many of them related to employment and what kinds of issues were raised.

Most users come to a specific guide on Advicenow from Google after searching using key words about their legal problem. Therefore most of our feedback tends to be about issues which we provide content on. We do not currently provide a lot of content on employment, so we would suggest that the fact of people getting in touch with us to ask about employment issues is an indication of information need in itself.

Here are our findings.

From April to October 2022 7 % (33 out of 462) of all unsolicited messages from Advicenow users about legal problems, were from people asking about employment issues.

Below we set out the issues people raised in broad terms. Some people had more than one issue:

- Accidents at work / health and safety
- Advice looking for
- Bullying
- Breach of employment contract
- Defendants problems identifying
- Disciplinary process
- Discrimination
- Employment status self-employed?
- EU settled status
- Harassment
- Holiday leave
- Holiday pay
- Legal aid
- Long term health conditions
- Pension dispute
- Raising a grievance
- Redundancy
- Solicitors unhappy with
- Tribunal enforcement insolvent defendant
- Tribunal support
- Unlawful deductions
- Unfair dismissal
- Unpaid wages
- Victimisation
- Whistleblowing





Gaps analysis

In this section we set out what we learned by reviewing available public legal information on employment issues against the information needs we set out in the <u>previous section</u>.

Approach

Scope

We set out to 'carry out a review of the public legal information available for people with employment problems in England and Wales'. This is obviously a very large undertaking. In order to set the scope and provide a structure for the review we decided to adapt the content classification scheme with underpins the Advicenow website. It divides public legal information into 14 broad subject areas. Information within each category is then subdivided into more focused subject areas (called 'mid terms'), which are, in turn, sub-divided into even more focused subject areas (called 'leaf terms'). It also includes synonyms; the other terms people might use to search for a heading, mid or leaf term. We update the scheme on an ongoing basis. Indeed we used what we learned from the needs analysis to update and improve the employment mid and leaf terms, and to add new synonyms. You can view the employment classification scheme in <u>appendix 2</u>.

We used this updated and improved classification scheme to form the basis of the search terms we used to help us identify relevant public legal information, or the lack of it.

Criteria

Once we had identified what information is available we assessed it against a set of criteria. The criteria have been adapted from a set of criteria Advicenow has developed and refined over many years to help us select public legal information from across the web for inclusion in our 'top picks' service and the Community Legal Service (CLS) helpline database.

'Better information' quality criteria

Public legal information:

- Should be aimed at people with an employment problem rather than employers, experts or lawyers. It can be targeted at a specific audience, for example, disabled people, or younger people.
- Should be user friendly and written in plain language.
- Must be up to date.
- Should state clearly who is responsible for the website. The website must give contact details, for example, address, telephone number, email or a complaints facility.
- Should apply to all of England and/or Wales rather than only being relevant to a local area.
- Must be free of charge. Where there are charges for services provided via the website the charges must be set out clearly, before the service can be accessed.

Public legal information should cover information about the problem including:

- 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

advicenow Making sense of the law and your rights

- Step-by-step content that follows the journey of the user
- Where to get more information, advice or support

Public legal information about skills and support to help solve the problem including:

- Sample / interactive 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

These 'Better information' criteria are underpinned by the concept of legal capability. So we also took into account the relevant domains of legal capability as set out in the Law for Life and University of Bristol 'Public Legal Education evaluation framework'²⁴:

- Recognising and framing the legal dimensions of issues and situations
- Finding out more about the legal dimensions of issues and situations
- Dealing with law-related issues and situations

This has provided us with an overview of the type, range and quality of public legal information to help with employment problems in England and Wales. It has helped us to identify where there is existing helpful information (which you can view on <u>Advicenow</u>) and where there are gaps in provision, particularly in relation to some of the quality issues set out above.

Gaps analysis - findings

We found a variety of approaches to providing public legal information on employment. Below, we use the first three <u>domains of legal capability</u> as a framework for discussing them.

Recognising and framing the legal dimensions of issues and situations

Information which helps people to develop and exercise this first domain of legal capability should help them to recognise that their work problem is a legal issue. It should highlight the basic legal principles which apply to the work problem. For example, that they are entitled to a contract, or to holiday and sick pay, or that they cannot be dismissed for no reason. Traditionally we might think of this type of information as awareness raising or 'early intervention'. Information of this type is often produced in response to a specific need, for example, new legislation, or by an organisation with a close connection to its user group. The best information of this type starts with the problem the person is experiencing and then links it to the law.

Examples of information which helps people to recognise and frame the legal dimension of their employment problem include content from The Mix, an organisation that provides support to under 25s. Its resource <u>Can my employer reduce my hours at work?</u> starts with the question the young person has and then locates it within the relevant legal principles. <u>Covid vaccine: can workers be</u> <u>forced to have the jab?</u> from Legal Choices is an example of information which is raising awareness of new laws or circumstances.

²⁴ https://lawforlife.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2011/12/core-framework-final-version-nov-2011-v2-370.pdf





Whilst there is some information of this type there are gaps in the topics covered. In particularly there is very little awareness raising information aimed at migrant workers, despite the overwhelming need for it. This however may not be a surprise given it also falls into the immigration law category - which is complex and ever changing. Potentially there are also language barriers which information providers are unsure how to overcome.

Finding out more about the legal dimensions of issues and situations

This is the domain of legal capability into which the majority of employment information falls - we were able to find some information on most of the <u>search terms</u> we identified. This is because in addition to a number of smaller or specialist organisations, there are also a few well-funded providers of information with an employment remit, for example, ACAS, Citizens Advice, gov.uk and TUC. Information in this category often provides a broad overview, explains what rights apply in a particular situation and provide basic information on legal processes and procedures. The reader can rely on them to be accurate and up to date. Whilst they are written in plain language, they tend to be neutral and 'official' in tone, rather than friendly or supportive, and in the case of ACAS and gov.uk provide information to both employers and employees. <u>Dismissal: your rights</u> is an example from gov.uk. Another is <u>How much do you know about discrimination? Take our quiz</u> from Legal Choices. In common with other information under this domain, both these examples set out the law helpfully and clearly, but do provide the type of content which can help people to apply these facts to their own employment problem, or explain the skills and attitudes they need to take the next steps.

Dealing with law-related issues and situations

Public legal information which helps people to develop and exercise this domain of legal capability has to go beyond setting out *what* people need to do to solve an employment problem; it also needs to explain *how* to do it. For example it should:

- Help people to apply the facts to their own situation.
- Help them to decide what outcome they want.
- Help people to understand what they might need to plan ahead for, and how to do it.
- Help them to identify and assess different courses of action
- Explain the different skills they may need to deploy, for example, record and evidence keeping.
- Explain the attitudes that they may need to adopt, for example, confidence, calmness and emotional detachment.

Information of this type is often in the form of step by step guides, or include a number of resources that are linked together, they use sample letters, tips, suggested questions and interactive forms. They should acknowledge stress and provide support.

During our gaps analysis we found some information which achieves some of these elements. For example, <u>Preparing for a disciplinary or dismissal meeting</u> by Citizens Advice. It asks questions to help the reader plan ahead, and highlights opportunities, such as your right to take someone to the meeting with you, potential obstacles, such as the availability of evidence to support your case. And includes some information on skills, for example around record keeping and negotiation.

Information which explains *how* to deal with law-related issues (rather than just what to do) is particularly important for key employment processes such as disciplinary and grievance procedures and taking a case to a tribunal.





However, we found large gaps across our <u>search terms</u> for information which supports people to apply the law to their own situation, make decisions, and adopt relevant skills and attitudes. This may be because other than gov.uk information output from three of the four main information providers in the employment sphere is predicated on access to a personalised service - the ACAS helpline, Citizens Advice Bureaux and trade union representatives and advice. Gov.uk signposts out to organisations like these. None of these 'big four' information providers sets out to provide people with the knowledge, confidence and skills that they need to deal with the whole of a process or problem on their own, which unfortunately many people have to do.

In other topic areas there are often smaller niche organisations with a direct connection to a specific user group who provide this type of information because of their ability to identify the real needs of their audiences. There are fewer of these in the employment sphere. Working Families is a notable exception, providing in-depth information on <u>taking a claim to an employment tribunal</u>. More content on skills and attitudes would make this resource even more useful.





Conclusion

There is a great deal of need around employment problems, which public legal education and information could support people to avoid, or if not possible, to deal with. This need ranges from the predicted consequences following the pandemic, which is most visible in the Employment Tribunal backlogs. In addition we identified emerging need in the form of a changing workforce profile as older people and those with long term health conditions leave the workforce; poor practice in sectors where there are labour shortages, often filled by migrant workers, for example, distribution and care; and risk of exploitation in sectors where the government has introduced short term visa scheme such as agriculture. In addition the government's reform programme to digitise employment tribunal processes will add a layer of complexity and exclusion for some.

Our gaps analysis identified a good supply of clear and accurate content which passed on helpful information about the law. But there was a dearth of awareness raising and early intervention information, particularly for some audiences, such as some groups of migrant workers who have little knowledge of how the law underpins their problems with work. There is also a lack of information which supports people by being relatable, 'on their side', and which acknowledges emotions and addresses how these impact on people's ability to take in information and maintain a detachment which will help them to sift the facts of their employment problem from how they feel about it. Also lacking in some areas is information which explains *how* to deal with a problem, in reality, rather than how the process is supposed to work, and what skills you will need to deploy to do this.





Recommendations

There is great potential for public legal education to address the need we have identified.

In this section we set out the priority areas which we recommend could be approached and evaluated first.

Awareness raising and early intervention

• Information on **basic employment rights** and the **legal framework**, particularly for people in precarious sectors and situations vulnerable to exploitation such as migrant workers.

"The people who are being recruited [migrant workers], have no idea of the law. Absolutely none. And so you do see use of zero hours contracts. You see the fact that they're unaware of what they might do, or be able to do, excludes them from the legal system... So this was a guy who had been over here for more than 12 years, and knew his way around, as did his wife, who works for a local charity, had no idea, absolutely none, about how to engage with the law. None." - Advice agency volunteer

• Relatable information to help people understand whether they are a worker, employed or self-employed, to make sure they know which rights they should be able to rely on:

"I feel this is an attempt to push me out of working for them as they have made it very uncomfortable for me to continue... I am beginning to wonder if I am in fact a worker and how this changes things."

 Multimedia content, particularly aimed at those in precarious sectors and situations vulnerable to exploitation, keeping records and documents to help them navigate problems and hopefully prevent them from escalating:

"Sometimes clients have very limited paperwork, and what I've noticed is since Covid things have been much more electronic as well, people have even less access. So if their employment ends or something, often they've not saved any payslips and they're locked out of the system. And so you feel a bit like Sherlock Holmes sometimes, trying to figure out who they actually worked for." - Advice agency worker

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Support to engage effectively with processes at an early stage

- Information to give people the knowledge, confidence and skills they need to raise issues with their employer, to know the legal position, to engage effectively in disciplinary and grievance processes, negotiate effectively and to access help across a wide range of employment issues, before they escalate. Employment disputes can provoke strong emotions so the stress and upset should be acknowledged.
- Realistic information to explain not only how processes such as a grievance procedure is supposed to work, but what to do when it does not. Employees need tools to make these processes work for them. For example, a digital tool which helps people to write a really effective 'professional standard' grievance statement, underpinned by legal capability principles, so that knowledge of the rules is also gained by the user.

"Nothing happened, multiple occasions I raised issues and they ignored me." - Individual survey respondent

• Tailored information which gives examples, ask questions or gives prompts to help people understand how and if laws on discrimination, particularly disability discrimination, apply to their own situation. There is also a clear need for information to help people understand how and if the law on reasonable adjustments applies to their situation.

"Did not implement any reasonable adjustments that O.Health suggested for my mental health issues. Insisting I had to work from the office when others in my position all WFH."

• Resources to support contractors and freelancers, often in the gig economy, first to confirm their status, and then to know how to enforce their rights.

Support to prepare for and take part in an employment tribunal

People need relatable and easy to understand resources to help with:

- Time limits this is a complex area and often not well understood.
- Identifying the defendant we have heard of examples of corporate structures causing problems with claims.

"Yesterday I was the claimant in a case against my previous employer. The defendant had completed a form N244 which was referred to by the judge. The case was a telephone hearing. The defendant stated under section 10 of the form that there was no connection between the Company and me. They have never employed, contracted or had any dealings with anyone by my name. This is a fictitious claim which is why we have no version of events in our defence."



- Applying the law to their own situation and evaluating it.
- Understanding the tribunal process.
- Weighing up whether they should settle, particularly in the light of long waits for hearings.
- Understanding tribunal documents and correspondence, including what to do if you need extra support to take part, for example, because of a disability.

"I got some documents from Employment Tribunal Service Court and I am not sure clearly understand what have to do."

• Developing skills such as setting out the facts, preparing evidence, and speaking succinctly and confidently.

"I have been asked to complete a Particulars Of Claim document for my disability discrimination employment tribunal. Please could you send me a template?"

• Adopting attitudes such as objectivity and confidence.

"I'd like to be able to establish what is reasonable behaviour and when to take action - its confusing and has taken me a few months to sort out what is emotion and what is fact."

• Understanding if a defendant can pay / help with enforcement.

"I'm looking for some help basically I took my old employer to a tribunal because of failed holiday pay I won my tribunal and the defendant was ordered to pay a sum of money into the courts but there was still a over due balance that she's now refusing to pay the law courts gave me this website to ask for some advice on what to do next this has now been going on 4 years and I really just want it over and done with."





General recommendations

- The <u>public legal education evaluation framework</u> legal capability principles should underpin all approaches to address employment problems. This will help with evaluation.
- New public legal information on employment problems should be set within the context of the legal journey in order to reinforce an understanding of basic employment rights and remedies.
- Ideally new employment public legal education and information would be available in a range of languages, as migrant workers are at particular risk of poor practice and exploitation.





Appendix 1 - Survey summaries

Consultation with individuals, the advice sector and others, including LIPSS and LSLIP partners

What we wanted to find out

- What employment problems people are experiencing
- A sense of volume
- Which employment related processes / problems might most benefit from being supported by a PLE intervention

What we did

- Survey of employment advisers
- Survey with individuals

What we found

Survey of employment advisers

- Asked respondents to look at the situation from April 2022
- Eight respondents six lawyers and one adviser
- Five worked for law centres, one in a Barristers Chambers, and another in a charity providing free legal representation.

Below we set out a summary of the answers to our survey questions. Some answers have been removed, or paraphrased to ensure anonymity:

Are you aware of any upcoming changes to the service your organisation will be providing on employment? For example, because of funding issues.

- Stopping all pro bono work
- Halved our staff in emp and discrimination.
- Potential lack of staff due to funding issues
- Funding under the ATJF LSLIP programme is due to end on 30.9.22. We don't know whether we will be able to bid successfully for future similar funding. If we do not, our service will be reduced.

[Note, the new Access to Justice Foundation HALS programme has funded some organisations to deliver employment advice. This funding runs until June 2023. Organisations will then have to apply to a new Access to Justice Foundation grant programme.]

Since April 2022 have you seen clients with any of the following employment problems:

	Yes	If yes, was the issue caused or made worse by the pandemic?
Redundancy	100%	57%





	Yes	If yes, was the issue caused or made worse by the pandemic?
Unfair dismissal	100%	14 %
Unpaid wages	100%	86%
Reduced wages	100%	57%
Health and safety issues	86%	83%
Zero hour contracts	57%	0%
Gig economy issues	57%	25%

Since April 2022 have you seen clients with any of the following employment problems:

	Yes	If yes, were they caused or made worse by the pandemic?
Discrimination	100%	71%
Victimisation	71%	20%
Harassment	86%	17%
lssues around reasonable adjustments	86%	50%



If you have seen discrimination cases, please could you tell us more about what type of discrimination cases you are seeing:

- Maternity, race and disability
- About half is disability discrimination followed by pregnancy and maternity and then race
- All sorts. Largest number disability esp failure to do reasonable adjustments
- Disability, race
- Disability, race and sex discrimination
- Indirect sex discrimination in one case everyone had to come into the office, no flexible working and no furlough option. Disability discrimination forced to move to different location which was further away from home
- Mostly disability discrimination, followed by maternity, sex & race, then age & sexuality. We rarely see people who say they have been discriminated against on the ground of other protected characteristics

Since April 2022 have you seen clients who have had problems with the right to work?

Yes	14%
No	86%

Please could you tell us more about the clients you have seen with right to work problems?

	Yes	No
Were they caused or made worse by the pandemic?	0%	100%
Were they caused or made worse by Brexit?	100%	0%
Have you seen EU nationals with right to work problems?	100%	0%
Have you seen people with refugee status with right to work problems?	0%	100%

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If you have seen any clients with self-employment related issues, please could you tell us the types of problems they are having?

- False self employment when actually workers and so entitled to NMW, holidays etc.
- Worker status being denied so no access to paid holiday, protection against dismissal. Also issues with agency workers
- We don't usually advise self employed people

Please tell us about any issues you have seen with tribunals. For example, delays etc.

- Delays with early conciliation. Severe delays with tribunals even to get to preliminary hearing stage Delays. Lost papers. Lack of judges
- Delays, lack of judges, papers getting lost
- Delays. One case where discrim took place in 2019 will not be heard at final hearing until 2023! One case where it took over six months for et1 to be processed
- Huge delays in tribunals. Now listing into 2024
- Preliminary hearings listed in error and vacated with only 24 hours notice. Postponements due to judicial availability and cases listed in 2023
- There are extensive delays at the Employment Tribunal. They existed before the pandemic, got worse in the months following March 2020 and have barely improved since then. This puts pressure on parties to settle rather than wait what can be years for a hearing. The length of time it takes Tribunals to deal with correspondence makes it difficult to progress cases.

Please tell us anything else you would like to about the types of employment problems you have seen since April 2022.

- More complex
- Clients in more debt, more mental health issues
- Access to free advice. Long waiting lists
- Furlough and sick pay disputes

Please could you give us a sense of the volume of employment problems you are seeing since April 2022?

- 1/2 a week
- Our service sees about 3 per week
- 3 x weekly
- Increased from 1/2 to 2/4 and would go higher if we had resources to manage increase
- I am a full time practitioner but appears to be a high demand
- 5 new cases a week
- 300 since 1.4.22 [answered 14th July 2022]

Over the last few months has demand for your employment service changed? For example, has it remained stable, decreased or increased?

- Increased particularly discrimination issues
- Stable but funding reduced
- Remained stable



- Increased
- Increased
- Stable, it has always been quite high
- It's been fairly stable.

We are also interested in who is being affected. Are you commonly seeing people in similar situations experiencing employment problems? For example, disabled people, part-time workers, etc?

- Disabled people: people working for nhs and people working for local authorities.
- Disabled people
- Disabled people, people in insecure employment (agency workers and outsourced workers.)
- Disabled employees particularly those with mental health issues
- We only take 2-3 days work so we commonly see employees with unfair dismissal or UDW cases and then a few discrimination cases (pregnancy, disability, age, sex)
- A lot of our clients have underlying health conditions. Many are in unstable work: on short-term contracts, zero-hours contracts, part-time contracts, with low pay & unsocial or variable hours.

Are there any particular employment related processes or concepts which clients often find particularly difficult or confusing?

- Discrimination always confuses people
- Difference between reasonable adjustment and flexible working requests
- Time limits, levels of compensation (vento scale), confusion between reasonable adjustments and flexible working
- Tupe and rights that transfer. Discrimination on particular relating to disability and dismissal
- ACAS early conciliation and what constructive dismissal means.
- Many believe the day in tribunal will be justice and redemption and sort everything out. They don't like but do understand that it all comes down to money
- Enquiries/cases vary a great deal in complexity. The more complex the issues, the harder and more confusing it is for clients to take action themselves. Unfortunately it isn't always clear just how complex an issue is for instance, holiday pay or wages appear simple but can be very complicated in certain circumstances. Discrimination claims are always complex.

Do you see clusters of problems when people come in with an employment issue? Are other areas of their lives affected?

- Disability discrimination usually alongside a host of issues including poor mental health (which was not the original issue).
- Same employers. Recently care home employees
- Clusters of care workers from same establishment
- Benefits. Housing
- Typically underlying mental health issues affect all areas of their lives
- Many are on benefits post dismissal



• Employment issues impinge on all areas of clients lives: economic, emotional, health etc. We refer clients for advice in other areas of law where they need it - internally when we can or externally when we can't.

Please tell us about the employment issues / processes that you think it would be helpful to produce public legal information on:

- Reasonable adjustments
- Whole process of an employment claim with tips re evidence collection and retention. Eligibility for legal aid discrimination. Difference between self employed and employed and worker. Employers ability to control employees private life and freedom of expression. Why to tell employer about disability and request reasonable adjustments
- There are lots of good resources out there but people need help with actually enforcing their rights in tribunal which is hugely daunting to individuals particularly with complex discrimination/tupe cases
- Flexible working, right to reasonable adjustments especially for deemed disability like cancer.
- Quick informative guides on running different types of claims as an LIP. Information on settling vs tribunal hearing and how it is not always a bad thing to settle The ET rules and complying with them / how to understand them (copying in R) Time limits are a big thing we have to do a lot of out of time applications as claimants don't know when to bring the claim
- There is very little free or low-cost specialist legal employment advice in England & Wales. Therefore there is a need for accessible information on all areas of employment advice. This information will not replace specialist legal advice, but it might help those who can't access it. CitA have lots of useful information on their website, and this could be used as a starting point - perhaps through a partnership to create a one-stop shop for public legal information.

Survey of individuals with employment problems

- Promoted the survey on social media and on our website.
- 36 respondents
- Survey ran 27th July 2022 to 19th April 2023

Below we set out a summary of the answers to our survey questions:

What is or was your job?

Respondents were working across all sectors and at a range of levels, for example:

- Bookkeeper
- Freelance trainer
- Civil servant
- General manager
- Administrative officer
- Teacher
- Court usher
- Product marketer
- Maintenance engineer
- Executive assistant
- Account manager

<u>lawforlife</u>

Foundation for Public Legal Education



- Warehouse operative
- Train driver
- Poultry worker
- Welder
- Charity worker
- Catering supervisor
- IT worker
- Barista

How long did you work there?

People worked for the organisation from a couple of months to over twenty years.

Is your problem about any of the following:

(Respondents were able to pick more than one option or none.)

	Yes
Redundancy	8%
Unfair dismissal	50%
Unpaid wages	8%
Reduced wages	8%
Health and safety issues	17%
Zero hour contracts	6%

Have you experienced any of the following:

(Respondents were able to pick more than one option or none.)

	Yes
Discrimination	41%

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	Yes
lssues around reasonable adjustments	14%
Harassment	8%
Victimisation	11%
None of the above	25%

Please tell us in what way you were treated unfairly, and why you think you were treated unfairly.

Respondents talked about:

- Being bullied, complaining about bad conditions and then being victimised for doing so, for example by being excluded from team meetings and having duties removed.
- Being told that they are not performing because they need adjustments for a disability, or are older, despite getting good feedback on their work.
- Being sacked without any warning or process.
- Being sacked for discussing pay with other staff.
- Disability discrimination.
- Failure to provide reasonable adjustments for mental health and physical health conditions, including not being allowed to work from home when others are.
- Cultural insensitivity.
- Racism and racial harassment, including not protecting staff from racial harassment by customers.
- Lack of discussion around less favourable changes in shift patterns.
- Unequal pay.
- Health and safety concerns that were ignored.

Did you complain or raise a grievance at work?

Yes	58%
No	42%

Please feel free to tell us about your experience of complaining to your employer, or raising a grievance.



Respondents talked about:

- Repeated requests to deal with a problem, such as short wages.
- Grievance procedures not being followed or being dragged out.
- Complaints being ignored and being threatened and harassed.

"I was told if I don't sign then they will fire and rehire me."

• Employers not taking the complaint seriously or engaging in the process:

"When attending the meeting I found they hadn't even read my letter of complaint and weren't willing to hear anything I had to say."

• Respondents feeling victimised for complaining.

"I was dismissed, fobbed off and openly discriminated against on basis of sex and victimised by redundancy after raising a query. I finally went to grievance and was told there was no comparison role and that my terms should be less than I was currently on. The decision letter was insulting and intimidating."

Have you been in touch with Acas?

Yes	53%
No	47%

How would you rate the help you got from Acas?

Stars rating scale	1	2	3	4	5
No of respondents	2	3	4	3	7
Average rating of 2 E				-	

Average rating of 3.5





Please tell us more about your experience with Acas if you would like to.

There was a wide range of response from 'biased' and 'cold' to 'helpful but couldn't give me all the help I needed' to 'great' and 'very helpful'.

The main theme of the responses was that the help Acas could offer felt limited, either because it was not specific to people's individual circumstances or did not answer specific questions.

Another theme which ran all the way through the survey was the difficult situation of freelancers and contractors, and confusion around worker status etc. Respondents who identified themselves as freelancers or contractors said that Acas could not help them because of their status.

Have you tried to get advice from an advice agency?

Yes	44%
No	56%

What was your experience of getting advice?

A clear theme from respondents trying to get free advice, for example from a Citizens Advice Bureaux was lack of access, either because there is not a service in their area or because advice agencies are too busy.

One person who did get advice found it very helpful, whilst some other respondents said it was general and 'not very clued up on legal advice for employment matters'.

Respondents who accessed specialist advice such as a union solicitor and the Fawcett Society advice service found it very helpful.

Have you had any experience with the employment tribunal service?

Yes	14%
No	86%

Please tell us more if you would like to:

Only five respondents had taken their complaint to tribunal. All were still waiting.

What information would you like or wish you had had, to help you with your employment problem?

Respondents talked about:

• Understand your employment status - worker, employee or self employed.



- How to deal with a disciplinary process, especially when you think you have been discriminated against.
- How the complaint / grievance procedure is supposed to work, including if you think you have been discriminated against.
- How to understand if you have grounds for a claim, including around reasonable adjustments.

"I'd like to be able to establish what is reasonable behaviour and when to take action - its confusing and has taken me a few months to sort out what is emotion and what is fact."

- What are the chances of getting compensation?
- How to take an employment tribunal claim.
- If I have rights as a contractor / freelancer?
- Where to get free legal advice and representation.

Please tell us anything else about your employment issue, and your experience of trying to resolve it, that you would like to add:

Respondents told us about issues such as:

- Confusion over worker status, especially for people who thought they were self-employed.
- Probationary periods being repeatedly extended
- Being ignored / employers not engaging in processes.
- Health and safety whistleblowing.
- Struggling to get the help they need.

They also talked about how they feel:

"Very stressful and upsetting"

"I shall be retiring ... partly because of the stress this manager has subjected me too."

"I'd like my tribunal to actually mean something to show how mental health issues are still very much stigmatized."

One respondents also told us that letter templates are very useful.





Appendix 2 - Employment classification search terms and synonyms

	Mid term		Leaf term	Synonym
5.1	Disciplinary procedures			 Disciplinary Disciplinary hearings Disciplinary process Misconduct at work
5.2	Discrimination at work	5.2.1	Age discrimination at work Disability discrimination at work	 Direct discrimination at work Equal opportunities at work Equal treatment at work Equality and Human Rights Commission Harassment at work Indirect discrimination at work Victimisation at work Unfair treatment at work Ageism at work Disability Discrimination Act Disabled people (discrimination) Guide dogs at work Mental health discrimination at work Reasonable adjustments at work
		5.2.3	Gender reassignment discrimination at work	Trans discrimination at work
		5.2.4	Marriage and civil partnership discrimination at work	 Civil partnership discrimination at work Marriage discrimination at work





		5.2.5	Pregnancy and maternity discrimination at work	 Breastfeeding discrimination at work Maternity discrimination at work Pregnancy discrimination at work
		5.2.3	Race discrimination at work	 Ethnic discrimination at work Nationality discrimination at work Racial harassment at work Racism at work
		5.2.4	Religious discrimination at work	Religion and belief discrimination at work
		5.2.5	Sex discrimination at work	 Gender discrimination at work Sexism at work Sexual harassment at work
		5.2.6	Sexual orientation discrimination at work	 Gay rights at work Homophobic discrimination at work Lesbian rights at work
5.3	Dismissal and redundancy			WhistleblowWhistleblowingWhistleblowers
		5.3.1	Dismissal	 Constructive dismissal Fired Fire and rehire Fired and rehired Garden leave Getting the sack Gross misconduct dismissal Payment in lieu of notice Protection against dismissal Sacked Sacking Summary dismissal





				Unfair dismissal		1
				Wrongful dismissal		
		5.3.2	Redundancy	Laid off		
			,	Lay offs		
				Notice period		
				 Redundancy pay 		
				 Redundancy payments 		
				 Redundancy payout 		
				 Redundancy selection 		
				Suitable alternative employment		
				Voluntary redundancy		
5.4	Employees rights			Agency workers		
				Apprentices		
				Casual workers		
				Employees		
				Employee rights		
				Employment status		
				Interns		
				 Monitoring at work 		
				Workers		
				Worker status		
				Young workers		
		5.4.1	Annual leave and sick	Annual leave		1
			leave	Bank holidays		
				Public holidays		
				Sickness leave		č
				Sick leave	*_	
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				Statutory sick pay	Page PAGE	
		5.4.2	Employment contracts	Casual work	age	





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				•	Homeworking		
				•	Hybrid working		
				•	Remote work		
				•	WFH		
				•	Working at home		
				•	Work from home		
				•	Working from home		
				•	Working outside of the office		
		5.4.7	Working hours	•	Overtime		
				•	Shifts		
				•	Shift patterns		
				•	Sunday working		
				•	Time off in lieu		
				•	TOIL		
				•	Weekend working		
				•	Working time regulation		
5.5	Employment			•	Discrimination case		
	tribunals			•	Discrimination claim		
				•	Early conciliation		
				•	Employment Appeal Tribunal		
				•	ET		
				•	ET1		
				•	Interim relief		
				•	Vento scale		
5.6	Grievance			•	Bullying at work		-
	procedures			•	Greivance		
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5.7	Job seeking	Jobmatch
	benefits	Job related benefits
		 Jobseekers agreement
		 Jobseekers allowance
		Jobseekers direction
		 Jobseeking benefits
		 JSA
		Reduced earnings allowance
		Severe hardship payments
		Unemployment benefits
		Work related benefits
5.8	Pay	Bonus payments
		Bonuses
		 Bonuses (Pay)
		Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme
		Deductions from wages
		Employment benefits
		Equal pay
		Furlough
		Furloughed
		Holiday pay
		Guarantee pay
		Living wage
		Low pay
		Minimum wage
		National living wage
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		NMW Overtime pay Performance related pay
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5.11	Trade unions and industrial relations	 Self Employed Income Support Scheme Self Employment Income Support Scheme Self-Employment Income Support Scheme Subcontractors Closed shop Collective bargaining Convenors (Trade unions) Employee participation Employee representatives Industrial action Industrial disputes Industrial relations Lockouts Shop stewards Overtime bans Picketing Secondary action Strikes Trade union membership 	
		Works councilsWorking to rule	
5.12	Unemployment	 Employment support schemes Government schemes for unemployed Schemes for the unemployed Unemployed Unemployment schemes 	
5.13	Voluntary work		ORMAT 21
5.14	Working in the UK	Voluntary sector Accession Worker Card Debt bondage	MERGEFORMAT





	Highly skilled migrant programme
	Human trafficking
	Migrant workers
	Points based scheme
	Right to work
	Right to work checks
	Seasonal agricultural workers scheme
	Sectors based scheme
	Shortage occupations
	Skilled worker visa
	Temporary migration programme
	Temporary worker rules
	Work permits
	Workers Registration Scheme
	 Working holidaymakers