

# Frequently Asked Questions about ICIS

## How many enquiries does ICIS receive each year?

The figures up to March 2009 indicate that ICIS information has supported approximately 30,000 enquiries. This includes about 3,000 direct calls to our Enquiry Line, and over 25,000 searches of our online public and subscriber databases.

## Who funds ICIS?

We have a contract with West Sussex Adults and Children's Services and a grant from West Sussex Primary Care Trust to provide an enquiry service and facilitate information provision in the county to support people's health, wellbeing and independence. We also raise funds through information project work, research and consultation for other organisations.

## Where is ICIS promoted?

We make the best use of our budget by aiming to reach people in the greatest need. For that reason the service is mostly promoted via front line service providers (voluntary, statutory and independent) who can ask ICIS directly for information, or give out our number to people. ICIS contact details and website are included in West Sussex Adults and Children's Services publications, and in many other service providers' newsletters and publications. Leaflets are displayed in public access points such as libraries, GP surgeries, CABx, and parish councils. Approximately 30,000 leaflets are posted to organisations each year, or distributed at events. ICIS staff attend meetings and give presentations about the service.

## What information does ICIS have?

ICIS has information about services, groups, businesses and activities that could support a person in West Sussex experiencing difficulties in their life. This information is stored in a database (ICISbase) specially built for the purpose. We also maintain a library of leaflets and reference material which provide additional resources to enhance our responses to enquiries.

We subscribe to specialist databases which are used to research information about disability equipment, funding for individuals in need, UK disability information services and UK advice services.

## How do we get our information?

By listening, reading, talking and mailing. From research carried out when responding to enquiries; continuous reading of local newspapers, newsletters, journals; networking and events; pro-active information gathering by mail, phone and email to meet identified gaps in information about services; and through service providers direct contact to keep us informed.

## How do we keep information up-to-date?

Every organisation in ICISbase is contacted on an 11-month rolling basis by post, fax, email or phone, and again at 13 and 15 months if necessary. If no response is received after 16 months the record is deleted. The updating process is a huge, crucial and continuous administrative task. Organisations also keep us informed when they make changes. Internal maintenance processes enable all updated information in ICISbase to be immediately assigned to ICISdirect and all other databases developed from ICISbase. Our library material is updated on a rolling basis alongside the database updating process.

## Who can access ICISbase?

Only ICIS staff have full access to the information in ICISbase which we use to research answers to enquiries, and to develop tailored resources for other providers.

Some of the information in ICISbase (about 35%) is made available on our website in a free online search facility, so that people can search for answers to commonly asked questions, day and night.

Subscribers to ICISdirect have access to about 98% of the information stored in ICISbase.

Subscribers to tailored datasets have access to the proportion of the information in ICISbase which is relevant to their particular information needs.

## **What is ICISdirect?**

An 'off-the-shelf' quality managed online database, created from ICISbase, and made available to service providers on subscription in a specially built hierarchical menu-driven system designed to make it easy to search for services supporting all aspects of daily living.

## **Can ICIS create databases for other organisations?**

Yes. We develop databases (datasets) to meet the particular needs of services. These might be specific to a client group, a geographical location, or might arrange the topics and subject matter in a different way, or use different terminology. These databases are all sourced from ICISbase, and can be made available online, via intranets or in hardcopy.

## **Are enquirers who are carers identified, and, if so, what action is taken?**

Yes. If a caller has caring responsibilities details of local carers services will be sent along with the information related to their enquiry.

## **Does ICIS have any other branches?**

No. As far as we know ICIS is the only organisation in the UK managing and enabling access to county-wide information with a focus on health, independence and wellbeing, and covering all aspects of disadvantage, including disability. There are some local disability information services elsewhere in the UK, and we signpost enquirers to these services when appropriate.

## **How many people work at ICIS?**

We have 10 paid staff (3 full-time and 7 part-time) and 6 regular volunteers.

**The above answers were correct as at March 2009.**