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INTRODUCTORY PAPER · MAKING LAW, POLICY AND RESEARCH SPEAK HUMAN

Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use

A Framework for Making Complex Knowledge Practical

Is it safe to say? · Is it safe to reach? · Is it safe to use?

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WHO THIS IS FOR

Professionals, researchers, communicators, designers and organisations working together on the distance between what they know and what people can actually use.

ABOUT THIS VERSION

Introductory Paper, October 2026. Version 2, 4 November 2026: the October 2026 content, set in Lejacie's current design. This paper presents a proposed approach for discussion and evaluation. It does not constitute legal advice, professional certification or an adopted industry standard.

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INTRODUCTORY PAPER

Abstract

Here's the problem. Law, policy, research and other expert knowledge can be accurate, authoritative, and crystal clear. But still, it often doesn't really help the people it's meant for. It's not just about getting the knowledge out or making it easy to read. What matters is whether people can actually find it, see why it relates to them, know what's safe to trust, and use it when they need help.

A big reason for this disconnect is what psychologists call the "curse of knowledge." Experts sometimes forget what it's like not to know what they know. When they communicate, important assumptions and reasoning often stay hidden, leaving people lost, even when the facts are right in front of them.

But this isn't just about expert jargon. Sometimes useful information is buried, hard to spot, or it looks helpful but is actually misleading or impractical. This paper lays out an interdisciplinary framework, Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use, that tackles how complex, important knowledge travels from experts to ordinary people who need to act on it.

I've drawn on approaches from knowledge translation, information design, legal and professional responsibility, behavioural and ethical marketing, human-centred design, learning strategies, and implementation research.

The framework has three key responsibilities:

SAFE TO SAY

Communicate expertise accurately, professionally, and within the right boundaries.

SAFE TO REACH

Make important information accessible and engaging, using ethical and audience-centred communication.

SAFE TO USE

Build resources that fit the real questions, situations, and abilities of people expected to use them.

I also introduce the "Paper-to-Person Gap," ten guiding principles, and a ten-step application method, plus a practical "4:47pm Test" to check usability in genuine, everyday circumstances.

This isn't meant to launch a new academic field, replace professional standards, or certify information as 'safe.' It's meant to encourage practical, integrated design and evaluation, and open the door for critique, collaboration, and real-world testing.

SECTION 1

Expertise Doesn't Automatically Become Help

The law passed.
The policy was published.
The research went out.
The guidance approved.
The website launched.
What happened next?

In law, policy, research, and professional practice, a great deal of effort goes into producing clear, correct information.

- Professionals train for years.
- Researchers chase tough questions.
- Regulators interpret rules.
- Organisations produce guidance, policies, training and public information.

But just because expertise exists doesn't mean the people who need it can use it.

Think about someone who gets a letter about a decision affecting their rights. The letter might list the relevant laws, say there's a way to review decisions, and point out time limits.

IT COULD READ

- You may be eligible.
- Your circumstances may affect the outcome.
- We can't guarantee the result.
- You should seek independent advice.
- Time limits apply.

THAT PERSON MIGHT STILL BE WONDERING

- What actually happened?
- Does this apply to me?
- Which deadline matters?
- What facts would change this?
- Who decides?
- What can I count on?
- What do I do now?
- What if I can't reach anyone?

Everything's technically correct. The letter might be legally accurate but still not help them understand their situation or take action.

Here's the distinction: making knowledge available doesn't mean it's useful.

The issue isn't always poor wording. Sometimes the writer assumes more knowledge than the reader has, organises things in ways nobody can find, or doesn't think through what's safe and practical to share. Or there's just no support available.

I call the gap between available knowledge and useful, actionable support the “Paper-to-Person Gap.”

SECTION 2

The Paper-to-Person Gap

The gap is about how expertise gets from being correct enough for publication (or for experts) to actually helping someone in their real life.

“Paper” doesn’t just mean physical documents. It includes anything that carries expertise:



The intended recipient might be a member of the public, a client, a student, a worker, or a decision-maker.

The gap appears when the information exists but doesn’t help people recognise its relevance, understand it, judge what they can trust, or use it responsibly. It’s not just about literacy or accessibility. It’s about the whole journey from expert knowledge to practical, everyday use.

It’s crucial to realise: sometimes, the issue isn’t about information at all. Someone might understand their rights perfectly and still struggle with unaffordable services, unreasonable deadlines, inaccessible processes, or unfair rules. So, we have to know when information design makes a difference, and when the system itself needs to change.

2.1 The Design Problem: The Curse of Knowledge

Translating expertise is tough, thanks to the “curse of knowledge.” Once you know something, it’s hard to imagine not knowing it.

Research shows that having information changes our beliefs about what others know or can figure out (Camerer, Loewenstein & Weber, 1989). An experienced lawyer spots what’s vital instantly. A researcher gets the limitations of their findings. A policy expert sees the rules interact, while a frontline worker faces guidance that feels overwhelming or unclear.

Experts merge all that knowledge into their thinking. Their reasoning becomes invisible: they don’t spell out every detail or connection. Most people receiving information can’t see that logic, don’t know the vocabulary, or miss important questions altogether.

It’s not just about complicated language. Plain English isn’t always enough. Sometimes guidance skips over how someone would recognise a right applies, what exceptions matter, how a process really works, or what documents are needed.

THE IMAGINARY PERSON

The "ideal" citizen who already knows the system, what to ask, and how to interpret everything.

THE IMAGINARY PROFESSIONAL

The "perfect" professional with endless memory, all specialists available, and unlimited time.

These assumptions create resources built for imaginary people. That's not reality. In real life, people are stressed, tired, missing information, or dealing with unfamiliar processes. Workers are under pressure, juggling incomplete facts, or out of their depth. Both groups need knowledge that experts take for granted.

The curse of knowledge is a big reason for the Paper-to-Person Gap, but not the only one. Even when missing information is translated, it can still:

- be hard to find
- fail to communicate relevance
- overstep boundaries
- or lead nowhere practical

The challenge isn't just to simplify expert talk. It's to bridge the gap from expert knowledge to what real people need and can use.

2.2 The Pathway from Source to Human Use

It's not always the document itself that matters. Sometimes it's how the expertise flows:

Source → **Carrier** → **Person** → **Judgement** → **Action** →

Help, Decision, Review, Recovery

STAGE	WHAT IT COVERS
Source	legislation, policy, professional guidance
Carrier	website, worker, letter, training, interpreter, digital tool, AI
Person	needs to recognise, interpret, assess
Then	make a judgement, take action, ask for help, provide information, challenge a decision, or recover when things go wrong

SO THE DESIGN CHALLENGE IS BIGGER

- How do we uncover what experts don't realise they know?
- Spot the questions people haven't even figured out yet?
- Communicate that knowledge accurately, with necessary uncertainty and boundaries?
- Make it engaging enough to get noticed without being manipulative?
- Build it so it can actually be used, in real circumstances?

Failure happens anywhere along this path. Maybe someone understands instructions but can't find the needed documents. A worker accurately delivers a referral but doesn't know if the service can actually help. A digital tool suggests a next step but fails to flag when professional advice is needed.

Evaluating the document alone misses these problems. So the framework checks both the information and the pathway, from expert to human action.

SECTION 3

The Fields Already Tackling This Problem

This gap isn't new, and there's no need for another academic specialty. Lots of fields have spent years studying how information moves, how people engage, and what helps them use it.

FIELD	WHAT IT CONTRIBUTES
Knowledge translation	Digs into how we share, adapt, and apply knowledge. The Knowledge-to-Action framework reminds us that simply producing information is just one piece of the puzzle (Graham et al., 2006).
Information and content design	Help structure and communicate information so people can use it. Plain language makes texts readable and usable. International standards offer principles for this (ISO 24495-1:2023), but clarity alone doesn't fix every complex rule or process (Assy, 2011).
Legal design	Applies human-centred principles to make legal information clearer, more accessible, and still legally sound (Hagan, 2018, 2019).
Professional responsibility and regulatory practice	Draw boundaries around what experts can safely say, recommend, explain, personalise, or decide.
Behavioural science, marketing, and communications	Teach us about attention, motivation, engagement, and decisions.
Human-centred and service design	Studies how real people interact with tools and information, highlighting our limits in memory and learning (Sweller, van Merriënboer & Paas, 2019).
Learning and instructional design	Structure expertise so it builds capability and practical application.
Implementation science	Looks at how evidence-based interventions get adopted, put into practice, and sustained.

These fields overlap a great deal. Many already focus on accuracy, ethics, audience needs, and practicality. The real idea here is to get people thinking about all those responsibilities at once.

Resources can be:

accurate	**but invisible**
engaging	**but misleading**
understandable	**but incomplete**
accessible	**but unusable**
actionable	**but outside the provider's authority**
or built on a service	**that just doesn't work**

Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use lets us weigh these things together.

SECTION 4

Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use: The Framework

This framework helps figure out how complex knowledge gets from experts to people who need to use it, especially when the information could affect rights, health, money, responsibilities, access to services, or big decisions.

Here's where it gets tricky. Making something easier to read can erase important nuances. Making it more engaging can pressure experts to oversimplify. Making information actionable can make people trust general advice more than they should. Making it accessible doesn't guarantee the next step is doable.

THE FRAMEWORK PUSHES THREE CONNECTED CONDITIONS

4.1 Safe to Say

Responsible Expertise and Professional Boundaries

4.2 Safe to Reach

Ethical Attention and Engagement

4.3 Safe to Use

Human-Centred Understanding, Judgement and Action

4.1 SAFE TO SAY

Responsible Expertise and Professional Boundaries

What can we communicate responsibly, and how can we keep it trustworthy?

Experts often face a dilemma: wanting to help but needing to stick to accuracy, confidentiality, evidence, obligations, and limits of authority.

- A lawyer might avoid publishing content that looks like personal advice.
- A clinician worries health information could be mistaken for diagnosis.
- A regulator hesitates to simplify guidance too much.
- A researcher fears an accessible summary might exaggerate findings.

These worries are valid, but sometimes caution leads to resources packed with disclaimers, vague advice, or referrals without clear next steps.

Safe to Say means staying inside professional boundaries while explaining as much as possible.

ASK

- What authority backs this information?
- What can we honestly claim?
- Which facts or exceptions might change things?
- What's still uncertain?
- Who decides or advises?
- Is there a risk of creating false certainty or personalisation?
- What should happen when the limits are hit?

"Seek professional advice" marks a boundary, but people might need to understand why it matters, what questions to ask, what documents to bring, and where to find help.

Safe to Say isn't about promising freedom from risk. It's about communicating accurately, fairly, and within authority, without abandoning people at the boundary.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLE

Keep the boundary, but make it useful.

4.2 SAFE TO REACH

Ethical Attention and Engagement

How can trustworthy expertise get noticed without misleading?

Information can't help if people never encounter it or don't recognise its relevance. Most public information competes with content designed for instant attention.

Advertising, digital platforms, persuasive campaigns use powerful tools for capturing attention:

storytelling · framing · emotion · timing · repetition

The question isn't whether we should use these tools. It's how to use them ethically.

Safe to Reach means trustworthy expertise should attract attention and communicate relevance, but not distort facts, manufacture fear, or push people toward bad decisions.

A good public information resource might need:

relatable examples · search-friendly language · readable headings · clear visuals

But legal information shouldn't exaggerate outcomes to drive requests, health information shouldn't create false certainty, and institutions shouldn't push compliance for its own sake.

The point is to help people find, and recognise, information that really matters.

BORROWING FROM ETHICAL MARKETING, BEHAVIOURAL SCIENCE, COMMUNICATIONS, AND DESIGN, ASK

- Can the audience find the information when it matters?
- Does it use language people actually search for?
- Is it clear this applies to their situation?
- Does the opening make it obvious why it matters?
- Can people see the source and judge trustworthiness?
- Are the channels appropriate and safe?
- Are urgency and emotion used honestly?
- Does the message respect people's autonomy?

THE MAIN PRINCIPLE

Help trustworthy information earn attention for the right reasons.

4.3 SAFE TO USE

Human-Centred Understanding, Judgement and Action

Can a real person use this information when they actually need it?

Information is usually built around what its creator knows. Its structure might follow professional terms, familiar categories and processes, or assumptions about what the audience already knows.

But the person looking for help may have no idea how those systems work. They might not know which facts matter, what to ask, which exceptions count, or which professional can actually help. They might also be:

- exhausted
- distressed
- distracted
- disabled
- short on time
- on their phone
- or trying to make sense of something completely unfamiliar

Safe to Use means designing for how information is actually used, not for an imaginary person with unlimited time, knowledge and energy. It borrows from legal design, human-centred design, information and content design, cognitive psychology, human factors, decision support, service design and learning design. And it goes further than asking whether the words make sense.

Take a guide to reviewing a government decision. It might need to explain not just how to submit a request, but:

- when the deadline starts
- whether asking for a review changes the original decision
- what evidence could help
- who can help
- and what happens if the first contact goes nowhere

The exact content depends on the law and the situation. The design job is to investigate those questions instead of assuming the reader already knows the answers.

ASK

- Can the person understand what's happening in practical terms?
- Can they tell which facts, conditions or documents matter?
- Can they tell what's settled from what's still uncertain?
- Does the resource answer questions they don't know to ask yet?
- Can they recognise when they need individual advice or assessment?
- Is the next step doable with the time, technology, privacy and resources they actually have?
- Do they know who can help, and what that person or service can actually do?
- What happens if the first pathway fails?
- Can they ask for clarification, challenge a mistake, or request a review where that's appropriate?

Safe to Use applies to professional learning too. A training program shouldn't just repeat the policy. It should help professionals recognise situations, use their judgement, understand where their authority ends, and apply what they know in practice. And a client resource shouldn't make someone become an expert before they can take an informed next step.

THE MAIN PRINCIPLE

Design for the person, the questions they haven't asked yet, and the moment they need help.

SECTION 5

Why All Three Have to Work Together

The three conditions cover different responsibilities, but they depend on each other.

SAFE TO SAY

Main question: Can this information be responsibly communicated and relied on within its stated limits?

What it tries to prevent: Misrepresentation, overreach and inappropriate reliance

SAFE TO REACH

Main question: Can the intended person come across it, recognise its relevance and engage by choice?

What it tries to prevent: Invisibility, irrelevance and manipulation

SAFE TO USE

Main question: Can the person understand what it means in practice and take an appropriate, doable next step?

What it tries to prevent: Confusion, hidden questions and abandonment

One rule governs how they fit together:

Safe to Reach and Safe to Use must never go further than Safe to Say can responsibly support.

An explanation can't become more certain just to make it more engaging. A resource can't hint that someone's entitled to something just to make the instructions feel actionable. At the same time, professional boundaries shouldn't automatically be an excuse to hold back useful general information. The job is to find a responsible balance between all three.

That takes more than checking each condition separately at the end of a project. You have to think about them together the whole way through: research, design, development, testing and maintenance.

For example, audience research might show that people search for something using words that assume an outcome nobody can guarantee. The communication challenge is to answer the question people are actually asking, without promising an answer the evidence can't back up. Or usability testing might show that people misunderstand a qualification. The fix might be changing how that condition is explained or presented, not deleting it.

So the three conditions create a shared design responsibility across professional expertise, communication and practical use.

SECTION 6

Who Does the Information Need to Be Safe For?

You can't judge the three conditions in the abstract. A resource might work for one audience and fail another.

People differ in:

- language
- literacy
- disability
- access to technology
- cultural background
- past experiences
- how familiar they are with professional systems
- and how able they are to act

Their circumstances can also change whether getting or acting on information puts them at extra risk.

FOR EXAMPLE

- Someone experiencing coercive control might not be able to receive messages privately.
- Someone with limited digital access might not be able to complete an online process.
- Someone who's experienced discrimination might have good reasons not to trust a service.
- A professional under serious time pressure might need different guidance from someone doing in-depth specialist research.

These aren't extra features to bolt on after a resource is designed. They shape what Safe to Say, Safe to Reach and Safe to Use mean from the very start. So accessibility, cultural safety, trauma-informed practice, privacy, and genuinely involving the people the resource is for should all inform the design process.

In Australia, cultural safety involving Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples must be informed by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander knowledge, authority and leadership, not treated as a generic communication preference.

The framework also recognises that people shouldn't automatically be labelled disengaged, difficult or incapable when a resource or pathway fails them. The real question is whether the design properly accounted for their circumstances.

SECTION 6

The framework also recognises that people shouldn't automatically be labelled disengaged, difficult or incapable when a resource or pathway fails them.

SECTION 7

Ten Guiding Principles

The framework rests on ten provisional principles to guide how it's applied. They're up for discussion, testing and refinement. They're not adopted professional standards.

PRINCIPLE 1

Preserve source integrity

Knowledge should stay true to its authoritative sources. Translating it must never strip out important conditions, exceptions, limits or uncertainty just to make it easier to read or more engaging.

PRINCIPLE 2

Match claims to authority

Whoever is communicating the information shouldn't imply authority they don't have. Where it matters, the difference between explaining, giving individual advice, assessing, recommending and making a formal decision has to stay clear.

PRINCIPLE 3

Make relevance truthful

Good communication can use storytelling, framing, specific detail, emotion and timing. It shouldn't manufacture fear, certainty, urgency or personalisation the evidence can't support.

PRINCIPLE 4

Design for real conditions

Information should be developed and tested with the circumstances people actually meet it in mind. Time, privacy, fatigue, disability, technology, competing demands and missing information all affect how it gets used.

PRINCIPLE 5

Support judgement, not just compliance

The goal isn't just getting people to follow instructions. It's supporting informed understanding, appropriate reliance, agency and professional judgement. Someone can understand the information and still reasonably decide not to follow a particular course of action.

PRINCIPLE 6

Make boundaries useful

Professional and evidence boundaries should stay in place. But when information reaches its limits, the resource should explain why or point to a pathway, not leave the person with nowhere to go.

PRINCIPLE 7

Treat access as pathway access

Landing on a webpage or getting a document doesn't mean someone can use the information. Think about the whole practical pathway, including the documents, services, decisions and handovers it needs.

PRINCIPLE 8

Build in contestability and recovery

Where relevant, people should know how to ask for clarification, spot errors, challenge decisions, get a review, or recover when a process fails.

PRINCIPLE 9

Share accountability across the pathway

Someone should be responsible for accuracy, communication, usability, professional review, implementation, maintenance and correction. Those jobs shouldn't quietly land on the person trying to use the information.

PRINCIPLE 10

Apply proportionately and learn

Not every resource carries the same risk. How much review, testing, documentation and ongoing checking you do should match how complex it is and how much harm an error or misplaced reliance could cause. Apply the framework in cycles, and revise it as evidence comes in.

PRINCIPLE 10

Not every resource carries the same risk.

SECTION 8

A Ten-Step Method

Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use can be put into practice with a proposed ten-step method. It's meant to help teams move from understanding a knowledge problem to producing, testing and maintaining practical resources.

It's not a rigid sequence. Projects can move back and forth between steps as new information turns up.

0 Orient

STEP

Understand the person, the problem and the context.

Before building anything, find out who needs the knowledge, what they're trying to do, what shapes their situation, and what questions they might not know to ask. That includes digging into the assumptions already baked into existing materials.

What you get: a clearer definition of the knowledge problem, the intended audience, and what's at stake if the design gets it wrong.

1 Capture

STEP

Find and draw out the expertise that matters.

Gather knowledge from subject-matter experts, authoritative materials, existing resources, questions that keep coming up, and professional practice. Pay special attention to tacit knowledge: the contextual reasoning, exceptions, judgement and practical experience experts take for granted.

The aim isn't to reproduce everything an expert knows. It's to work out what the audience needs, and what has to stay within professional judgement.

2 Anchor

STEP

Pin down the sources and evidence behind the information.

Identify the authoritative legislation, policy, research, standards, professional guidance or other sources. Separate what's established from interpretation, emerging evidence, uncertainty and organisational practice.

What you get: a clear basis for the claims the resource can responsibly make.

3 Bound

STEP

Work out the limits of responsible communication.

Identify what can be explained, what needs qualifying, and what has to go to a properly authorised professional or decision-maker. Consider jurisdiction, scope of practice, confidentiality, privacy, uncertainty, and foreseeable risks of people relying on it the wrong way.

The goal isn't to say as little as possible. It's to say as much useful information as you can within defensible boundaries.

4 Reach

STEP

Design for ethical attention and relevance.

Find out how your audience describes their problems, where they look for information, and what helps them see it's relevant. Develop the right language, structure, framing, channels and approach. Make sure persuasive techniques don't distort the evidence or undermine informed choice.

5 Translate

STEP

Turn expertise into meaning people can understand and use.

Build the information around the audience's questions, what they already know, and what they practically need. Explain terms, conditions, exceptions, decision points and relevant context. Use the right formats, examples, visual structures and learning approaches.

The goal isn't just to simplify. It's to make visible the expert reasoning people need to understand things properly.

6 Connect

STEP

Link understanding to practical next steps.

Identify what someone may need to do, decide, prepare, check or ask. Where it fits, explain handovers, referral pathways, escalation points, fallback options, and chances for review or correction. The resource shouldn't suggest every problem can be solved with information alone.

7 Verify

STEP

Check professional integrity and responsible reliance.

Have the right subject-matter experts review the information, qualifications, sources, boundaries and practical instructions. Check whether the design could leave a misleading impression even when each statement is technically correct. Verification should look at both the content and how people are likely to read it.

8 Test

STEP

Try the resource with the people who'll actually use it.

Test whether they can find the information, see that it's relevant, understand it, spot the important questions and take appropriate next steps. Include realistic constraints, and relevant accessibility, cultural safety and privacy considerations. Testing should also look at how professionals use the resource and whether it supports good judgement.

9 Maintain

STEP

Set up responsibility for keeping it accurate and useful.

Identify who owns the resource, what changes should trigger a review, and how corrections will be made. Think about changes in law, evidence, policy, professional practice, service availability and technology. A resource that's out of date can become misleading, even if it was carefully made.

SECTION 9

Putting the Framework to Work

The framework is meant to help build and evaluate real outputs.

That could include public information resources, legal explainers, professional learning programs, facilitator guides, research summaries, client preparation materials, decision-support tools, forms, information pathways and AI-assisted information experiences.

The process starts before any writing or visual design. It starts with understanding the knowledge, the people who need it, and the circumstances they'll use it in.

9.1 Capturing Professional Expertise

Picture an organisation whose experienced professionals regularly explain complex information to clients, colleagues or the public. A lot of their practical knowledge probably isn't in the organisation's published resources. The existing materials might explain the formal rules, policies or research findings, but leave out the questions people keep asking, the misunderstandings professionals keep correcting, or the conditions that change what someone should do next.

A project using the framework could start by interviewing professionals, looking at recurring enquiries, and finding the points where people get confused or need extra help. The next stage would identify the authoritative sources, work out what can responsibly be communicated, and pin down which matters need individual assessment or professional judgement. Audience research could look at how people describe their problems, where they look for information, and what helps them recognise a resource is relevant to them.

The resulting materials might include explainers, checklists, professional guidance, learning resources, decision-support tools or digital information pathways. The right subject-matter experts would review the substance and approve its use. The people it's for could then test whether they understand it, recognise its limits and know what to do next. And the project would need an agreed process for keeping the information current.

The framework doesn't replace professional, marketing or design expertise. It helps organise what each one contributes around the experience of the person it's meant for.

9.2 Professional Learning and Policy Implementation

The same approach works when an organisation needs professionals to understand and put new requirements into practice. A policy can be accurate and comprehensive and still leave practitioners unsure how to apply it. A training program might explain the policy but not prepare people for situations where the facts are incomplete or requirements interact.

Applying the framework would mean capturing the reasoning behind the policy, identifying its authoritative requirements, setting the limits of professional discretion, and investigating the situations practitioners actually face. Learning resources could then be built around realistic scenarios, decision points, questions, escalation requirements and practical workflows. Testing would check whether professionals can apply the guidance properly, not just remember what it says.

This connects knowledge translation with learning design, capability development and implementation.

SECTION 9

The framework doesn't replace professional, marketing or design expertise. It helps organise what each one contributes around the experience of the person it's meant for.

SECTION 10

The 4:47pm Test: Designing for Real Life

The 4:47pm Test is a practical way to challenge assumptions about the ideal user. The time is just an example. Imagine someone coming across an important resource at 4:47pm.

AT 4:47PM

- Their phone battery's low.
- They've got an appointment to get to.
- A service closes at five.
- They're missing a document.
- They're not sure whether a deadline applies.
- They're tired, worried or struggling to concentrate.

WOULD THE RESOURCE STILL HELP?

- Could they recognise what matters?
- Could they tell what's established from what needs further advice or assessment?
- Could they find a next step they can actually take?
- Would they know what to do if the office closes, the website fails, or the first person they contact can't help?

The test applies to professionals too. Could a frontline worker use the guidance without guessing, overstating their authority, or relying on unusual personal knowledge to patch gaps in the process?

The 4:47pm Test doesn't replace formal usability, accessibility or professional testing. It's a practical prompt for questioning the assumptions built into information and services.

A resource that only works when everyone has unlimited time, complete information and uninterrupted attention isn't designed for ordinary life.

SECTION 11

Implementation, Accountability and Maintenance

Designing a useful resource doesn't guarantee it'll be adopted, maintained or produce the outcome you wanted. Implementation matters.

Organisations need to think about:

- how resources will fit into existing workflows
- who'll use them
- how professionals will be supported
- what evidence of effectiveness will be collected
- and who'll maintain them over time

Responsibility doesn't end when a document is approved or a webpage goes live.

Legal requirements change.
Research develops.
Referral services move or close.
Organisational practices change.

Resources can become misleading through neglect, even if they were accurate when published. That's why the framework treats verification, testing and maintenance as part of the work. It also treats handover, contestability and recovery as key parts of practical use.

A referral isn't the same as a successful handover.

A person may need to know what the other service can do, how to reach it, what information to bring, and what alternatives exist if the referral falls through. And when someone's affected by a decision, they may need to understand how to ask for clarification, challenge a mistake, request a review or make a complaint. These responsibilities vary with context, and they can't be reduced to generic instructions.

SECTION 12

What Information Design Can’t Fix

A key limitation of the framework: better information can’t remove every barrier.

IF A PERSON…	THE PROBLEM MAY BE…
understands a process but can’t afford the service	**affordability**
understands their rights but can’t get an interpreter	**service accessibility**
knows exactly what evidence is needed but can’t reasonably get it	**administrative design**
is facing an underlying policy that produces an unjust outcome	**the policy itself: clearer communication may make the injustice easier to understand, without making it any less unjust**

Research on administrative burden shows people can face learning, psychological and compliance costs when dealing with public systems (Moynihan, Herd & Harvey, 2015). Clearer information can’t always remove those burdens.

In those situations, the framework should help identify the structural barrier, not disguise it as an information problem. The right outcome might be a recommendation for service redesign, policy reform, extra professional support or further investigation.

The framework also isn’t a substitute for individual legal, clinical, financial or other specialist advice, formal decision-making, professional regulation, accessibility assessment, privacy assessment, cultural safety, AI assurance or other relevant safeguards. Its job is to help those responsibilities connect better across the journey from expertise to human use.

SECTION 13

Research and Evaluation

Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use is a proposed framework, not an established or independently validated professional standard. Its value has to be shown through application and evaluation.

Early pilots could involve redesigning a public legal information page, a professional guidance resource, a client preparation guide, a government notice or a learning program.

A useful evaluation would look at more than readability or satisfaction. It would ask whether the intended users can:

- find the information
- see its relevance
- understand its substance and limits
- identify the important questions
- and take appropriate next steps

It would also look at whether professionals can communicate or apply the material within their authority, whether handovers work, and whether any unintended harms or inequities show up.

The framework suggests four propositions worth testing:

PROPOSITION 1
Integrated design
Resources built with deliberate attention to all three conditions may perform better across combined measures of responsible reliance, engagement and practical usability than resources designed mainly for accuracy or readability.

PROPOSITION 2
Ethical attention
Audience-centred communication may help people discover and engage with trustworthy information without increasing misleading impressions or inappropriate reliance.

PROPOSITION 3
Hidden knowledge
Identifying and translating the assumptions experts usually leave unsaid may improve users' understanding of the relevant questions, conditions and decision points.

PROPOSITION 4
Real-world usability
Resources that anticipate hidden questions and real-world constraints may better support informed judgement and doable action than resources only evaluated under ideal conditions.

These are research propositions, not established findings. Future evaluation should draw on the expertise of intended users, people with lived experience, frontline professionals, subject-matter experts, designers and implementation practitioners.

It should also look at the costs and limits of applying the framework, including whether its integrated approach adds value beyond established methods that already work well in particular settings. Where evidence shows weaknesses, the framework should change.

SECTION 14

Conclusion: From the Page to People's Lives

Law, policy, research and professional expertise don't become useful just because they've been produced, approved or published. They have to move through a series of human moments. Someone has to:

Notice the information.
Recognise its relevance.
Understand what it means.
Judge what they can rely on.
Identify what's still uncertain.
And work out what they can realistically do next.

The curse of knowledge helps explain why experts can leave important reasoning and assumptions unsaid. But the challenge goes beyond understanding. Trustworthy expertise also has to reach people, keep its professional integrity, and support practical use in real conditions.

Established disciplines already know a lot about different parts of this journey. Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use proposes a way to bring three responsibilities into one shared approach to design and evaluation:

SAFE TO SAY

protects the integrity and boundaries of expertise.

SAFE TO REACH

helps trustworthy information earn attention ethically.

SAFE TO USE

designs for human understanding, judgement and action in real conditions.

It isn't meant to replace professional expertise or certify that information is safe. It's meant to help professionals, researchers, communicators, designers and organisations work together on the distance between what they know and what people can actually use.

ITS CENTRAL QUESTION ISN'T JUST WHETHER INFORMATION IS CORRECT, CLEAR OR AVAILABLE. IT'S:

Can a real person find it, understand what they can rely on, and use it when it matters?

That's the Paper-to-Person Gap this framework is trying to help close.

BACK MATTER

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ABOUT LEJACIE

About Lejacie and suggested citation

ABOUT LEJACIE

Lejacie is an independent research, professional-education and practice-design platform concerned with what happens after law, policy, research and professional knowledge leave the page.

Its work explores how complex expertise can be captured, translated and designed into public information, professional learning, practical resources and pathways that people can understand, trust and use.

Safe to Say, Safe to Reach, Safe to Use is a developing framework within that work.

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Feedback. If something is wrong, out of date or hard to understand, email **info@lejacie.com** with the page number.

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BACK MATTER

Key terms

TERM	MEANING
Paper-to-Person Gap	The gap is about how expertise gets from being correct enough for publication (or for experts) to actually helping someone in their real life.
Curse of knowledge	Once you know something, it's hard to imagine not knowing it. Having information changes our beliefs about what others know or can figure out.
Safe to Say	Communicate expertise accurately, professionally, and within the right boundaries.
Safe to Reach	Make important information accessible and engaging, using ethical and audience-centred communication.
Safe to Use	Build resources that fit the real questions, situations, and abilities of people expected to use them.
Source to human use	Source → Carrier → Person → Judgement → Action → Help, Decision, Review, Recovery.
The 4:47pm Test	A practical way to challenge assumptions about the ideal user. It doesn't replace formal usability, accessibility or professional testing.

This paper presents a proposed approach for discussion and evaluation. It does not constitute legal advice, professional certification or an adopted industry standard.