

GDS Content Designer Portfolio Artefact Pack

Example artefacts for user-centred content design, research synthesis, content prototyping and evidence-led iteration.

What this pack demonstrates

This pack is designed for a Content Designer role in a GDS-style environment. It shows how you can move from user needs to tested content, not just write polished pages. The artefacts use a fictional service: helping a professional author apply for hardship support after redundancy.

- How to plan research questions with a researcher or UX designer.
- How to turn interview notes into user needs and pain points.
- How to audit existing content and identify duplication, gaps and unclear language.
- How to write user stories, acceptance criteria and content hypotheses.
- How to create and test a low-fidelity content prototype.

Artefact 1: User research discussion guide

In a GDS-style team, user questions are usually asked in live interviews or moderated usability tests. The spreadsheet is used to plan, capture and synthesise findings; it is not the user-facing format.

Research goal	Example interview question	What this uncovers
Understand trigger	Can you talk me through what made you look for financial support?	The real life event or pressure that starts the journey.
Understand language	What would you call this type of help in your own words?	Whether users say grant, hardship fund, emergency help, loan, benefit, support.
Find confidence gaps	At what point would you feel unsure whether to continue?	Fear, stigma, eligibility uncertainty and evidence barriers.
Test comprehension	What do you think “professional author” means here?	Whether eligibility language matches the user's mental model.
Understand evidence burden	What documents would you expect to need before applying?	Practical friction and missing checklist content.
Understand next steps	After submitting, what would you expect to happen next?	Need for confirmation, waiting times, status updates and reassurance.

Artefact 2: Research notes and synthesis

Observation / quote	Theme	User need	Content opportunity
“I don’t know if redundancy counts as hardship or if it has to be illness.”	Eligibility confusion	I need to know if my situation fits before I spend time applying.	Add plain-English eligibility examples near the start.
“I would be embarrassed	Emotional barrier	I need the service to feel	Use direct, calm, neutral

writing all this down.”		respectful and non-judgemental.	wording; explain why questions are asked.
“I would not know what proof to attach.”	Evidence uncertainty	I need a checklist before I begin.	Create a “What you need before you apply” section.
“If it takes months, that changes whether I apply.”	Timing anxiety	I need a realistic decision timeframe.	Put wait times and urgent alternatives on the start page.

Artefact 3: Content audit / landscape review

Content item	Issue found	Risk to user	Recommendation
Start page	Eligibility buried below scheme history.	User may leave before understanding whether it is relevant.	Lead with who can apply and what the fund can help with.
Application guidance PDF	Formal wording and repeated instructions.	User may miss required evidence or duplicate effort.	Turn into checklist and short task-based guidance.
Confirmation email	Only says “received”. No timeframe or next step.	User anxiety and avoidable follow-up emails.	Add realistic wait time, contact details and what happens next.
Evidence instructions	Uses phrases like “supporting documentation”.	User may not know what documents count.	Use examples: redundancy letter, bank statement, rent/mortgage evidence.

Artefact 4: User needs and acceptance criteria

User need	Acceptance criteria	Evidence
As an applicant, I need to know whether redundancy may count as hardship, so I can decide whether to apply.	The start page includes redundancy as an example of financial difficulty; wording is tested with users.	3 of 5 test users correctly identify whether they may be eligible.
As an applicant, I need to know what documents I need before starting, so I do not abandon the form.	A short checklist appears before the form and uses examples not abstract labels.	Users can name at least 2 likely evidence documents after reading.
As an applicant, I need to know what happens after I submit, so I can plan around the wait.	Confirmation page includes timeframe, contact route and urgent support signposting.	Users report they understand next steps without asking moderator.

Artefact 5: Low-fidelity content prototype

The pack includes an actual clickable HTML prototype. It is intentionally low-fidelity: enough to test content order, wording, headings, questions, error messages and next steps before investing in a production build.

- Start page with plain-English eligibility and timing content.
- Eligibility check question using radio buttons.
- Evidence checklist page.
- Short situation question and character-count helper.
- Check answers page and confirmation page.
- Usability test prompts built into the prototype footer for portfolio demonstration.

Portfolio case study narrative

Challenge: People applying for hardship support often arrive under pressure and may struggle to understand whether they are eligible, what they need to provide and how long they will wait.

Approach: I planned research questions with a UX/research partner, reviewed the existing content landscape, synthesised pain points into user needs, and created a rough content prototype to test key assumptions.

Content decisions: I moved eligibility examples to the start page, replaced abstract language such as “supporting documentation” with concrete examples, added realistic timeframes and wrote confirmation content that reduced uncertainty.

Outcome to evidence in portfolio: The prototype can be tested with users to check whether they understand eligibility, know what evidence to gather and feel clear about what happens next.