Serious Illness Cover

Positioning SIC as an educator-led conversation

A practical learning and team-training guide to support writing agents' understanding, build confidence and strengthen client conversations about the true financial cost of illness, the importance of the sum assured and the choices available when affordability is a concern.

THE CORE SHIFT

Your role is not simply to select a number for the client. It is to help the client understand the potential financial consequences of serious illness, make any protection gap visible and support them to make an informed choice.

Educate first. Quantify the need second. Explore affordability third.

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1. Purpose and how to use this guide

This guide is designed to be shared directly with writing agents as a practical learning and training resource. Use it to strengthen your understanding of Serious Illness Cover, build confidence in educator-led client conversations and support consistent learning across your team. It provides clear explanations, example wording, questions, a repeatable framework and a checklist that can be used during self-study, coaching, team meetings and role-play practice.

Suggested learning approach

- **Learn:** Read each section and highlight the key ideas you want to remember.
- **Practise:** Use the example wording and questions in paired role-play.
- **Reflect:** Complete the self-reflection questions and identify one change to test.
- **Share:** Use the framework and checklist to train and support your team.
- **Review:** Discuss learning, successes and development needs in coaching or team meetings.

POSITIONING STATEMENT

"My role is to help you understand what becoming seriously ill could mean financially, so you can make an informed decision about the level of protection that feels right for you."

What an educator-led conversation achieves

- Explains what SIC is designed to do, rather than leading with a list of conditions.
- Makes the wider financial consequences of illness visible.
- Connects the sum assured to practical outcomes and choices.
- Respects affordability without allowing it to prevent a full needs conversation.
- Leaves the decision with the client while making any remaining gap clear.

The conversation in one line

THE PRINCIPLE

Do not start by selling an amount. Start by educating the client about the problem.

2. What Serious Illness Cover is

Serious Illness Cover is designed to provide a financial payment when the policy terms for a covered serious illness are met. The value of the conversation is not simply in explaining that a payment may be made. It is in helping the client consider what that payment could allow them and their household to do if illness changes their income, expenditure or day-to-day life.

A simple way for a writing agent or representative to explain it

WRITING AGENT / REPRESENTATIVE	"Before we look at figures, it may help if I explain what Serious Illness Cover is intended to protect you

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	from. It is not simply about receiving a payment because you have been diagnosed. It is about giving you financial choices at a time when illness may affect your income, expenditure and ability to carry on with everyday life.”

3. How the conversation works

A strong SIC conversation follows a logical sequence. Each stage builds the client’s understanding before price becomes the deciding factor.

Step	Purpose
Explain	Clarify the purpose of SIC and separate it from life cover or medical treatment.
Explore	Discuss what illness could change financially for the client and their household.
Quantify	Translate consequences into commitments, time periods and potential financial needs.
Test	Compare the proposed sum assured with what the client wants the money to achieve.
Choose	Explore sustainable options and make any remaining protection gap visible.

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4. The true financial cost of illness

Clients may initially think about treatment or the diagnosis itself. The educator-led approach broadens the discussion to the financial consequences that can sit around illness and recovery. These are areas to consider, not predictions about what will happen to every client.

Financial areas to explore

Income	Reduced or interrupted earnings, including a gradual return to work.
Household	Mortgage or rent, utilities, debt commitments and everyday bills continuing.
Family	A partner or family member reducing work, childcare or other caring responsibilities.
Recovery	Travel, rehabilitation, practical support or changes to working arrangements.
Lifestyle	Possible home adaptations and the desire to protect savings or other plans.
Time	The possibility that the financial effect continues beyond the immediate diagnosis.

Questions that educate rather than alarm

- "If your income changed, which costs would continue immediately?"
- "How long could the household manage before your finances came under pressure?"
- "Who else could be financially affected if you became seriously ill?"
- "What savings are available, and what were those savings originally intended for?"
- "Would reducing a major commitment make recovery easier?"
- "What would you want a payment to make possible?"

LEARNING NOTE

Remain curious and neutral. Your purpose is to help the client identify the possible consequences in their own words, not to create fear.

5. Why the sum assured is key

The presence of SIC on a plan does not, by itself, show how much practical support the client would receive. The sum assured determines the scale of the payment and therefore the range of financial choices it may create.

WRITING AGENT / REPRESENTATIVE	
	"Having some cover is valuable, but the important question is what that amount would actually enable you to do. We should test the figure against the financial problem you have described."

Test the number against the purpose

- What immediate costs could this amount meet?
- How long could it support the household?

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- Could it reduce or clear a significant commitment?
- Could it protect savings intended for another purpose?
- What would remain unprotected after the payment was used?

A USEFUL CHALLENGE

"What would £10,000 solve, and what would still remain?"

This question does not label a lower amount as wrong. It helps the client understand its practical reach and limitations before deciding.

6. Affordability: respect it, but do not lead with it

Affordability is a legitimate consideration. The risk is allowing anticipated affordability to prevent the client from understanding the full need. A more effective sequence is to establish the need first and then explore which option is sustainable.

WRITING AGENT / REPRESENTATIVE	"Let us first understand the level of protection that would meet the need. We can then look at the options and decide what feels sustainable within your budget."

If the full amount feels unaffordable

WRITING AGENT / REPRESENTATIVE	"That is completely understandable. My role is not to pressure you into a figure. It is to make the gap clear and help you explore your choices. Would it be useful to compare a few levels of cover, so you can see what each would provide and what would remain unprotected?"

Choices to explore

- Compare different sums assured and the outcomes each could support.
- Review the term and the client's priority needs.
- Consider how SIC sits alongside other protection needs.
- Select a sustainable level while clearly acknowledging the remaining gap.
- Revisit protection when circumstances or budget change, where appropriate.

PRACTICE POINT

Help the client understand the problem before presenting the solution. Once they have described the financial impact in their own words, connect the available options back to what matters to them.

7. Common misunderstandings and educator responses

The aim is not to "win" an objection. It is to uncover the assumption behind it, acknowledge what is valid, and add the missing information.

Client's starting point	Educator-led response
"I already have life cover."	Life cover and SIC address different financial events. Life cover is intended for the financial consequences of death. SIC considers what could happen if the client survives a serious illness but their income, lifestyle or household finances are affected.
"The NHS will look after me."	The NHS point relates to medical treatment. SIC is about the financial consequences around illness, such as bills, income and family responsibilities during treatment and recovery.
"I would use my savings."	Savings can form part of the plan. Explore how long they may last, what they were intended for and what other goals could be affected if they were used.
"Something is better than nothing."	Acknowledge that some cover can be valuable, then test whether the amount would do what the client expects and identify what gap would remain.
"It will never happen to me."	Avoid arguing about likelihood. Help the client decide how they would want to be financially prepared if serious illness did occur.

8. A repeatable conversation framework

1. Open: Explain that the purpose is education and informed choice.

2. Discover: Ask what serious illness could change for the client financially.

3. Deepen: Explore income, commitments, family impact, savings and recovery time.

4. Quantify: Translate the impact into an amount or range.

5. Demonstrate: Show what different sums assured could and could not achieve.

6. Resolve: Explore affordability and misunderstandings without minimising the need.

7. Close: Summarise the chosen level, the reason for it and any remaining gap.

9. Self-reflection and team discussion

- How do you currently explain the purpose of SIC before discussing price?
- What questions help the client describe the financial impact in their own words?
- At what point does affordability enter your conversation?
- How do you test whether the chosen sum assured will meet the need?
- How do you make a remaining gap visible without creating pressure?
- Which misunderstanding do you hear most often, and what assumption sits behind it?
- What small change could you test in your next SIC conversation?

TEAM TRAINING ACTIVITY

In pairs, role-play a SIC conversation from opening to close. Afterwards, discuss where the conversation gained or lost momentum: exploring the need, introducing the amount or responding when the client saw

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the premium. Share one effective question and agree one improvement to use in the next client conversation.

10. Writing agent learning and conversation checklist

☐	I explained SIC in terms of financial choices, not only diagnosis or conditions.
☐	The client described the possible financial consequences in their own words.
☐	We explored income, commitments, family impact, savings and recovery time where relevant.
☐	The proposed sum assured was tested against what the client wanted it to achieve.
☐	Affordability was explored after the need was understood.
☐	Different options and trade-offs were made clear.
☐	Any remaining protection gap was visible to the client.
☐	The client retained ownership of the final decision.

11. Take the learning forward

EDUCATE. QUANTIFY. ENABLE CHOICE.

Build confidence through preparation, practice and reflection. Start by helping the client understand the problem, quantify the potential financial impact, show what different levels of cover could achieve and enable an informed choice. Use this guide with your team to practise the conversation, share what works and create a consistent, confident approach. Where the chosen amount leaves a gap, make that gap visible and keep the client in control.

This guide is intended to support learning, understanding, confidence and team training. Product-specific explanations and options must remain within the writing agent's permissions and the relevant approved process.