

Pain Concern Helpline: Measuring the impact of a remote service

This case study is about

the steps Pain Concern took in order to capture the difference their telephone helpline makes for people living in chronic pain

Read it if you want to learn about measuring remote service delivery such as telephone support

It will show you that setting immediate outcomes and indicators can help you collect useful evidence during remote service delivery

About Pain Concern

Pain Concern supports and informs people with pain and those who care for them, whether family, friends or healthcare professionals. This support is largely provided through a telephone helpline and an online forum.

Previous evaluation approach

Previously, Pain Concern gathered evidence through a feedback form. The form itself largely gathered information about quality and customer satisfaction, rather than impact. Some of this information was used to identify future training needs and ensure accessibility.

The volunteer call handler would gather detailed information on a contact log which asked for a lot of personal information

which wasn't being used (such as employment status and marital status).

When focusing on impact it was largely towards **long-term impact** which was proving more challenging to show impact on (such as reduced social isolation).

What we did

ESS ran a tailored support session with the helpline supervisor, manager and volunteers. Together we created a **logic model** to show immediate impact and contribution towards longer term outcomes. It was helpful to set very short term outcomes that were typically achieved during the call (caller feels more listened to; more emotionally supported; better prepared for next appointment)

"The helpline logic model was key in helping us to redesign our feedback forms for both capturing the contacts (caller, emailer, online forum user) views and those of the volunteers." Heather Wallace, Manager, Pain Concern

Focusing on the **need** was really helpful in setting outcomes. In this case the need was that people felt they weren't listened to or believed in relation to the pain they experienced which led to them feeling isolated and alone. Feeling that someone believed them was a crucial first step in being able to cope with pain.

Pain Concern used the logic model to create an **evaluation plan**. Volunteer call handlers were best placed to come up with indicators as they frequently notice a shift in callers' feelings, attitudes and intentions from the beginning to the end of the call. This led to ideas about simple changes they could make to the contact log form, which they complete during the call, such as recording callers feelings of positivity and ability to take next steps.

Putting plans into action

Pain Concern **revised their tools** and changed their existing feedback form which they sent out to people after the call. They created a much shorter and more relevant feedback form which related to the outcomes.

"The uptake of the new feedback forms has been a bit slow, but that is to be expected. We are working with our media team to see how we can promote the feedback form more effectively. We are also looking at other methods of capturing feedback – such as text response system and polls on Health Unlocked."

Pain Concern introduced **indicators** to the volunteer helpiners' contact form which they could tick during the call. They also use a free comment box to capture **comments** during the call which are impact related. They removed a lot of the questions about personal information.

"The changes to the helpiners contact form has been valuable in capturing 'in the moment' comments."

"We are also developing case studies with repeat callers which show our impact on medium term outcomes."

ESS's tips for others

If you run a remote service like this you may find it helpful to:

- Set immediate outcomes which you can achieve during the call
- Don't worry about proving long term outcomes like people are less socially isolated; it may be about showing your contribution
- Recognise that lots of things are outside your control. Focus on what can you achieve in a phonecall (which is actually quite a lot)

- Collect evidence during the call if possible (tick boxes/comments box) and also when discussing next steps at the end of the call
- Ask if you can keep in touch to follow up with callers

Resources

[ESS Support Guide 1c – Developing a Logic model](#)

[Contact form for phone delivery](#)

[Evaluation planning template](#)

[Capturing casual moments](#)

Contact details

If you want ESS's support, please contact [Evaluation Support Scotland](#)

For further information about tailored support please click [here](#)

April 2020