



Helplines
Partnership

Helplines: towards reducing health inequalities

Peter Chidwick, Director of Social Enterprise

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A large sector, with over 1200 helplines and many key strengths

Helplines deliver person-centred and person-led care.

Helplines provide a trusted space.

The independence of helplines is valued by callers.

Helplines are an unseen health and care provider and solution.

Helplines are at the frontline and can offer the first step to further help, as well as ongoing support.

Helplines can reach out effectively to vulnerable, isolated communities.

Beyond phones: modern helplines, use of technology and role in health and social care

- Helpline services have a long history in the UK
- Helplines are delivered through a variety of methods that enable service users to choose the channel that best supports their needs
- Helplines are great in encouraging channel shift among vulnerable user groups
- Helplines support people with complex needs and multiple issues



Helplines and the Statutory Health Sector

- Helpline services take place outside of core NHS provision
- Overwhelmingly operate within the third sector
- Some helplines are supported through NHS commissioned service arrangements.
- Need for greater recognition within commissioning structures of the value of helplines.



Outreach and accessibility: Reaching the most vulnerable individuals

Helplines can be accessed by the user on their own terms, without a diagnosis in a space that is comfortable, and increasingly, through the user's preferred method of communication

Many helplines provide emotional support, and are well-placed to provide a non-stigmatising service, as they give a high degree of control over disclosure, offering the user confidentiality and, in some cases, anonymity.

'The people we know are deep within the service are very mistrustful and generally feel let down and unsupported.'

Helpline manager describing callers who use NHS mental health services

Trusted Space, confidentiality and person centred care



Case study- OCD Action: next steps

Next Steps service provides support for people with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder to move towards and through treatment, complimenting health provision.

The service aims to give people with OCD better understanding of treatment options, increased motivation to visit their GP and get the right diagnosis, give people support to complete treatment programmes that can have a high dropout rate and support wider wellbeing outcomes.

Questions

How important are helplines to reducing health inequality?

What innovations within the helpline sector would enable health inequality to reduce at a faster rate?