

Connecting Advice In Dorset



Outcomes Monitoring exercise - Summary January to May 2015

1. Background

In early 2015, the Connecting Advice in Dorset project co-ordinated a joint outcomes monitoring exercise with a dual purpose:

- To demonstrate the long term impact of advice being provided
- To pilot the joint process and report on the methods as an effective way of monitoring the outcomes of advice

This report summarises the methods used, the results of the exercise and the key learning from the process. A more detailed report is available on request.

2. Method

The exercise involved 12 advice organisations based in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole. For two weeks in January 2015, each organisation asked clients to sign a consent form agreeing to a call-back in April 2015 exploring the outcomes of the advice they received.

Between 13th April and 11th May 2015, clients were contacted by phone and/or email. If clients were no longer receiving advice for the issue, the following questions were asked:

1. Whether the help received resolved the initial problem
2. Whether the help received resulted in any financial gain and, if so, by how much
3. Whether their physical or mental health had improved as a result of receiving the advice

3. Responses

240 client contact forms were received. Attempts were made to contact 174 clients, 70 clients were successfully contacted, 46 of whom were not still receiving advice and were therefore asked the three key questions.

4. Impact of Advice

Although the sample size was small, the following conclusions can be drawn from the results.

- In general, people who seek advice are more likely to be able to resolve their initial problem (76% clients)
- The likelihood of being able to resolve the initial problem is similar across all the organisations which took part
- Many clients who seek help will gain financially as a result (30% clients)
- Seeking advice has a positive impact on the physical and/or mental health of the client (82% clients)



They helped me
a lot, very
professional

5. The Process

The second key aim of this exercise was to test the method of measuring impact of advice across organisations. The following statements can be concluded.

- In general, the process was straight-forward and the method of collecting client details and consent was unproblematic.
- A simple data sharing agreement was developed and could be used again for similar projects.
- The client data was collected at minimal cost
- The process of call-backs was simple, although time-consuming.
- A surprising number of clients were still receiving advice on the initial issue, 3 months after their first appointment.
- Responses to emails were disappointing, despite clients stating that they preferred this method of contact.
- Similarly, the number of clients with whom contact was made was disappointing. In hindsight, call-backs in the evening or at weekends may have yielded a better response rate.
- Unsurprisingly, clients are reluctant to discuss financial details with a stranger on the phone

6. Conclusions

The outcomes monitoring exercise has been a useful piece of work in demonstrating that the process of measuring the impact of advice across organisations is feasible and relatively low cost. Lessons have been learned on how to increase contact with clients in order to get an improved response rate.

Now that the process has been proved, partners may wish to consider commissioning a repeat of the exercise in future years in order to demonstrate the combined impact of the advice sector in Bournemouth, Dorset and Poole.

You guys are fantastic,
keep up the
good work!

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