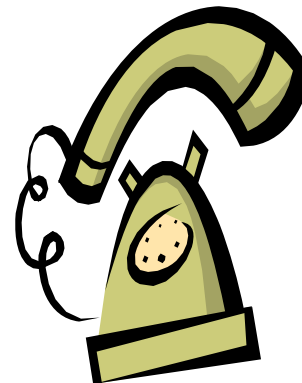


Planned bilingual telephone support for disadvantaged parents in North Wales: User Perceptions



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The planned bilingual telephone support service provided by NCH CYMRU

- Part funded by NCH for 3 years from March 2004
- Planned, stand alone, intervention
- For parents of children aged 2+
- Aim to address service access difficulties
- For parents who experience a range of problems with their children
- Based in a disadvantaged region of North Wales
- Bilingual service: English and Welsh

The service

- Referral via childcare professionals
- Delivered by 3 NCH social care practitioners
- Initial visit/telephone assessment
- Weekly Calls (45 mins/1hour) 12 weeks
- Service provider draws up an action plan
- A copy of the plan is then sent to the client

Telephone Support

- Traditional preference for face versus new technology
- Accessible, convenient and immediate
- Relieve anxiety, depression and despair
- Differs: info/counselling Planned/Crisis
- Evaluation is problematic/sensitive
- Most evaluation is of crisis led support

The evaluation

- One year after service implementation
- April 2005 (18 client cases)
- Numbers were small
- But waiting list increasing (15 at that time)

Methods

- Semi structured face to face interviews
- With clients, referrers & providers
- Interviews tape recorded
- 9 clients (inc. 1 Welsh speaker)
- 17 referrers
- Interview focus on reasons for take up, previous participation in NCH programmes, access and waiting, comparison with face to face services, call experiences and outcomes, perceived advantages and disadvantages and future recommendations.

Listening Ear

“I could always talk to her about anything even if it wasn’t how (my child) and me had gone on and what we’d done. If there’d been any other problems or something I wasn’t sure about to do with child care and stuff, I could always ask her, as well as having advice about child behaviour problems”.
(C05)

Listening ear

“You feel that you can tackle things...you can be on the phone quite despondent at first and come off feeling very positive. Because you were maybe feeling you were doing something wrong and you’ll get the reinforcement on the phone. They’ll tell you that you’re doing something absolutely fine, it wasn’t your fault, to whatever situation. So you actually get the positive feed back”. (C09)

Listening Ear

“She gave time for the moan and she gave time to work through issues of what had gone wrong, what had worked, what hadn’t worked. She’s the only one who has stuck with us. Everybody else has been, come, looked and gone away. Come, looked written a few notes, gone away. You don’t know whether you are discharged out of their care, you don’t know whether they are following you up” (C01)

Personalised service

“(the service operator) would phone me and if I couldn’t speak to her, I would probably phone her back later when I could talk. Do it that way. Or she’d text me saying, ‘Is it OK to talk?’” (C02)

“I was telling the operator about what was going on with (my children) and how they were responding. They actually came back with some replies that were ‘Have you thought of doing this?’ So they were specific to that particular problem”. (C09)

Personalised Service

“The telephone service goes on and I like that. That’s what keeps me going as well. I can load off with what’s happened and I can get advice of what to do or how to sort the problem out. Talk about a problem and get advice”. (C02)

Personalised Service

“ The air was blue basically and normally where I would have gone upstairs and got really upset and irate and probably made the situation worse. In the previous week we had actually talked about coping with anger management on the telephone service coping with anger behaviour and basically, I put into practice the advice...took a deep breath and let them get on with it, which was something I'd been advised to do”. (C09)

Individualised Support

“(I) don’t like discussing everything in front of people, plus, you know that you have actually been listened to, and not this one person having to try and listen to a lot of people”(C05)

“As well as telephone support, things would arrive by post, like star charts, stickers, smiley stickers, she went to a lot of trouble. Little added extras, also an evaluation of the call work was sent out. Also if you asked a question and (the service operator) didn’t know, she would find out.” (C01)

Personalised Service

“Once the service had started, one client was unsure and started to avoid re-engagement. A text message with a ‘Smiley Face,’ arrived from NCH, client enjoyed it, got a lot out of it and found it (the telephone service), useful in the end. This was very supportive to the client -sensitive to client needs”. (R02)

Sustained service & trust building

“(if) it went really bad, you only had got the following week to go...(the service operator) would be ringing you the following week and you could thrash it out then”. (C01)

“...there’s about six different people, it takes time for me to actually settle down, do you know what I mean? Being able to trust people. But I can get on ‘one to one,’ rather than a few people because I get nervous, it’s quite hard being able to trust people as well, to build confidence with other people”. (C02)

Accessibility & Flexibility

“People who have children with problems, special needs, have to see a great many people, such as psychologists, teachers at school, statementing officers, and special need/educational psychologists, people can’t be everywhere. This service helps by coming to you”. (C01)

“it can run alongside home support. It can act as a stand alone service. It can also be a useful precursor, to test out ideas prior to group work, or run in tandem with Webster Stratton or other group work. There is a formalised follow up with the telephone service”. (R10)

Out of hours

“sometimes I couldn’t say what I wanted to say. (My child) used to say, ‘You’re talking about me, aren’t you?’” (C06)

“It would have helped me if it had been accessible in the evening when the children were in bed ... People could listen better and learn more if phoned when quiet in the evening”. (C03)

Waiting List

“It’s counterproductive for the client to have to wait...after building up contact it is frustrating, as to whether the service will be available when needed. Service needs to be responsive to client need”. (R04)

Findings

findings resonate with earlier research:

That is: Telephone support can overcome some practical and financial difficulties for users with little discernable loss to their experience of satisfaction with the service.

Advantages of planned support

- can offer one to one communication, tailored to specific client needs
- can enable the development of user trust in the service which empowers users to operationalise strategies in the context of a reliable, sustained, unthreatening (and thus minimal risk) relationship

Conclusion

planned telephone support may provide a valuable service to users who are most disadvantaged and marginalised and who have found traditional forms of support unsatisfactory.