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C.A.L.L. Helpline Neurodiversity Support 24/7 Pilot

Substance Misuse Services

C.A.L.L. Helpline Service



Presenting Officer:
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Background

The Community Advice and Listening Line (C.A.L.L) Helpline has been commissioned by Welsh Government since 1995.

It offers a confidential listening and emotional support service, inclusive of a text messaging service and providing relevant signposting, information and literature on an array of subjects.

In September 2022 the C.A.L.L helpline was requested to be part of the initiative as set out by Welsh Government to improve services and support for neurodivergent individuals and their families.

Scope of Pilot

The request was for the C.A.L.L. helpline to expand to include individuals with a neurodivergent condition and their families and will provide a 24/7 bilingual open access tier 0 telephone service, where callers can discuss issues with the C.A.L.L. operator, in a safe space, allaying anxieties, with empathetic listening, and where appropriate signposting to information sites / charities / third sector organisations.

This was to also include families and friends of individuals living with neurodivergence. This was implemented in April 2023 for a 6 month period.

To support the pilot C.A.L.L. were allocated additional funding of £39,680 from Welsh Government.

This was provided to support the increase in staffing hours required (equivalent to / for the recruitment of 1.5 WTE Band 3 Helpline Operators at a cost of £27,180), and also to mitigate the additional marketing / advertising costs (estimated at £12,500).

It was further agreed that should the pilot prove effective, a further annual funding provision of £78,360 would be considered to ensure continuity of support taking into consideration the increased demand of support required for neurodiversity calls.

Due to this being a 6 month pilot, the decision was made to not appoint an additional operator for the initial pilot and to allocate the money for additional hours for existing operators to support the expected increase in C.A.L.L.s.

Prior to the commencement of the pilot, 2 training sessions were delivered to the C.A.L.L. team by Autism Wales.


In addition, further guidance was also provided, ensuring the C.A.L.L. team were equipped with the correct knowledge of relevant services across Wales that individuals could be signposted to for more specialised support as appropriate.

In order to measure the impact of the pilot, the C.A.L.L. Helpline service confirmed they would collect data of how many calls were received during this time, relating to support requests for those with a neurodiversity diagnosis or related query.

The scope of this being either from individuals or their friends / family.

Evaluation

The pilot was delivered from the 3rd April 2023 to 31st October 2023. On initiation this was marketed through the medium of digital van advertising across Wales, radio adverts, and creative design.



Cymorth Niwroamrywiol drwy Linell Gymorth C.A.L.L. Cymru
Neurodivergence support via the C.A.L.L. Helpline Wales

Os oes gennych ofidiau neu bryderon yn ymwneud â Niwrowahaniaeth, mae'r tîm CALL yma i gymnig cefnogaeth emosiynol drwy'r Linell Gymorth.

Mae C.A.L.L. yn cynnig cefnogaeth emosiynol, clust i wrando, ac fe all eich cyfeirio at wasanaethau Iedfed Cymru, gwasanaethau lleol, ac anton lienyddiaeth atoch.

P'un a ydych yn ffônio ar ran eich hun, ffônid neu aedol o'r teulu, mae CALL yno i wrando.

If you have worries or concerns relating to Neurodivergence, the team at CALL are here to offer emotional support via the Helpline.

C.A.L.L. Offers emotional support, listening support, can signpost to Wales wide services, local services, and can send out literature.

Whether you are calling on behalf of yourself, a friend or family member, CALL are there to listen.

Text/Testun: Help a / Help to: 81066

0800 132 737

callhelpline.org.uk



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The message was also circulated via Welsh Government social media feeds. On review however, it became apparent that the latter was ineffective and caused confusion amongst many who had seen the service advertised, and subsequently contacted the team with expectations that could not be met.

Many callers were of the impression that the C.A.L.L Helpline would be able to support in the provision of an assessment and / or diagnosis of their condition. Feedback received at this time indicated individuals feeling frustrated.

There was a time delay in the advertisement of the pilot. This should have been considered as part of the project plan. In this instance, this was delayed and resulted in no advertisement of the listening line going live until early August 2023, which was 4 months into the 6 month pilot.

The posters show the advertisement. The message received from the published documents by many callers, was that there was a separate telephone line dedicated to neurodivergent individuals, hence the frustrations noted above when expectations were unable to be met.

Ongoing discussions between the BCUHB service and Welsh Government took place and it was highlighted, that for a neurodivergent individual who is in distress, clear messaging is essential.

Due to the nature of the C.A.L.L helpline being available for any person experiencing mental health concerns or emotional distress, it was not possible to accurately record the number of calls received, specifically for concerns from all individuals living with neurodivergence during the period of the pilot.

In order to accurately record this data, it would have required the caller to specifically identify difficulties related to living with a neurodivergent condition or a family member requesting support.

Based on those callers who did identify as living with neurodivergence during the 6 month pilot period, there was a total of 209 calls.

It was also noted that during the pilot period, there was a noted increase of calls to C.A.L.L helpline, in comparison to the 6 month period prior to the pilot.

However, it is difficult to identify if this was due to the pilot marketing or other general C.A.L.L advertisement.

On review of the call logs it was felt that the below available data was helpful to highlight:

Time of Calls	Number of Calls
08:00 - 14:00	77
14:00 - 20:00	80
20:00 - 08:00	52
Age range	Number
12 or below	11
13-18	12
19-24	24
25-30	30
31-36	23
37-42	18
43-48	15
49-54	15
55-60	13
60 plus	8
Where the person had heard of the service	Number
Internet source (Social media / web pages)	69
TV / Radio	5
Leaflets / posters	17
Provided by another service (111+2, CMHT, GP, HMP, or other agencies)	70

Conclusion

It is important to conclude, that the aims and mission of the C.A.L.L Helpline is to provide support for those experiencing difficulties with their mental health throughout Wales, notwithstanding the cause.

Whilst those who are living with neurodivergence, can also experience mental health concerns, neurodiversity is not in itself a mental health condition and continuation of the current advertising regimes could potentially misrepresent support available via the Helpline, as previously noted C.A.L.L is a community advice and listening line and signposting service. Some of the feedback from people with lived experience included that the 'listening line' messaging within the posters, was in small text below the headline, which may not be immediately apparent to an individual living with neurodivergence, especially at a moment of distress.

A clear project plan with built in realistic timeframes, inclusive of advertisement would have been beneficial to focus the project and ensure embedding of the 6 month project, including a clear 'go live' date for the pilot.

A 6 month project did not enable the project to generate enough robust data to enable a clear conclusion. However from the available data it clearly indicates that the majority of calls were received during daytime hours.

Recommendations

Welsh government to use the data to inform next steps.

Would suggest scoping existing Neurodivergent organisations to establish if this can be embedded within their existing infrastructures.

Consideration for C.A.L.L to do a second pilot to enable further data to be gathered.