

## **Rethink Focusline Consultation**

### What does the current Rethink Focusline service provide?

Focusline is an anonymous telephone support service for adults in Derbyshire with mental ill health. The three main reasons for calls during 2016/17 were from people who identified themselves as being “in distress”, and requiring “emotional support” and “ongoing support”.

Focusline receives approximately 65,000 calls per year, however they answer approximately 5000 calls per year; therefore less than 10% of calls made to Focusline are connected and support provided. Demand for the service is increasing yearly.

Focusline is available to callers from across Derbyshire and Leicestershire (funded separately), however the highest areas of usage are in Chesterfield, Amber Valley and Derby City. The Service attracts up to 400 new callers per year, however the majority of callers are high users of the service and repeatedly call on a regular basis. Feedback from a recent Healthwatch report also highlighted that many people have experienced difficulties getting through to a support worker, thus supporting the evidence that Focusline has a core group of repeat callers, making it less available to other people needing help with their mental distress.

In response to this, Focusline have recently implemented a new system whereby repeat callers can only receive up to 30 minutes of support per evening in order to allow more callers to reach a worker. Following the implementation of this new system, more callers have been able to get through to the service for support. Focusline staff have also started to refer repeat callers across to the new Recovery and Peer Support service (see below).

Focusline do signpost callers to other services in a small number of cases (8%). However as it is a standalone service and not linked in to the wider health and social care system it is currently unable to make active referrals. The ability to do this would significantly enhance the support they could provide to callers.

### Proof of Concept / Pilot

In September 2016 a pilot was set up to enable Focusline staff to work within the local 111 service, providing the same support they would give those who call Focusline direct, following a call to 111. This has enabled 111 call operators to hand over calls from people

with mental ill health who may otherwise have been sent to A&E or have received no further offer of support to alleviate their mental distress. Focusline staff have also been able to make immediate referrals to wider health and social care services where required.

During this period the main Focusline service has reduced its opening hours (from 5pm to 1am) in order to release staff to work alongside 111 staff. The existing service was most in demand during the hours of 5pm and 1am and therefore during the proof of concept, people could either continue to ring Focusline direct or via 111 to access their support during these hours.

The aim of the proof of concept was to understand if this new way of working:

- could provide support for more people experiencing mental distress across Derbyshire than the current Focusline service currently supports
- could provide parity of esteem for callers with mental ill health, with improved access to more health and social care services for both physical and mental ill health, and ensuring better outcomes for individuals
- provided both 111 and Focusline staff with additional professional to professional support

What we have found so far;

- Focusline staff in 111 have provided support to a number of new callers who have never used their direct telephone service
- Focusline staff have supported a broader range of callers in relation to gender, age and ethnicity.
- Focusline staff themselves have received and provided support from and to other health professionals.
- Focusline staff have been able to connect and refer callers in to the wider health system by benefitting from these stronger professional links.

During the transitional period, the normal Focusline service was able to answer more calls than usual due to the reduced opening hours of the service and having more staff available in the reduced opening hours.

We are continuing to learn from the proof of concept and from other similar successful projects being piloted across the country.

### **Other initiatives to improve outcomes for people experiencing a mental health crisis**

There are other current initiatives in Derbyshire also in development stages, including the Mental Health Advice and Assessment Hub (MHA AH). This is an out of hours support service for the Police, EMAS (Ambulance service) or OOH GP service (via 111) who are dealing with people who have presented to them who are experiencing a mental health crisis.

This service operates out of hours (4pm to midnight on weekdays and 9am to midnight at weekends) and is staffed by specialist mental health social workers and nurses who provide rapid access to information and advice for our emergency services, to ensure the best possible outcomes for people presenting with a mental health crisis. The service is located in the police control room and will soon be welcoming EMAS operatives into the hub to further improve outcomes and professional links.

There is the possibility of embedding Focusline staff into the MHAAH so they could offer immediate emotional telephone support to people directly following a referral from Police, EMAS or OOH GP service. Similar initiatives across the country are already working well.

### **Recovery and Peer Support Service**

Derbyshire County Council and the four CCGs have recently commissioned a new Recovery and Peer Support Service which aims to help people improve and maintain their mental health and wellbeing through access to targeted professional and peer support and to social networks in their local community. This includes access to recovery education to help people to understand and manage their mental health condition; help with welfare benefits issues and low level housing related support and help to maintain or enter I to employment or education. For those who are unable to access face to face support, the service provides both professional telephone support and peer led telephone support.

The new service is being provided by Rethink, in partnership with Derbyshire Federation for Mental Health and P3.

## **Proposals for the future**

The Derbyshire Focusline Service is currently funded by Derbyshire County Council (DCC) and Erewash, Hardwick, North Derbyshire and Southern Derbyshire CCGs. Going forward it is likely that the current level of funding for Focusline will be reduced including the funding received from Leicestershire, which means that the service cannot continue to operate in its current form beyond the end of November 2017. DCC have committed substantial funding to the new Recovery and Peer unlikely to be able to maintain their funding to Focusline at current levels. Proposals for change are therefore required and it is important that at the same time we seek to improve access to support for people experiencing a mental health crisis.

In light of this the CCGs and DCC would like you to tell us which of the following possible options you would prefer them to consider:

### **OPTION 1 – DCC funding is removed, CCG funding continues and is used to embed Focusline service into the 111 service.**

(This would provide **parity of esteem** meaning that anyone needing support for concerns in relation to their mental health would be able to ring the same number (111) as someone needing support for concerns in relation to their physical health).

Advantages:

- Currently this is offered between the hours of 5pm and 1am, 7 days a week - depending upon demand and funding for these hours potentially could be increased or adapted.
- 111 is available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week and 365 days per year
- One telephone number for access to all health needs out of hours.
- Would provide an equitable offer of support for both physical and mental health needs
- Would be able to access professional advice and support from trained mental health workers
- 111 Call operators are upskilled in dealing with mental health issues
- Provides access to supported signposting and referral to a wider range of agencies

### **OPTION 2 – DCC funding is removed, CCG funding continues and is used to embed Focusline service into other mental health initiatives such as the MHAH**

(This would provide **support for people with mental ill health experiencing a crisis** who have presented to the Police, EMAS or OOH GP service (via 111) – out of hours only (4pm to midnight weekdays and 9am to midnight at weekends)

Advantages –

- Provides better outcomes for people experiencing a mental health crisis
- Could prevent Police or Ambulance staff from unnecessarily conveying a person experiencing a mental health crisis to A&E by providing access to professional emotional support from Focusline staff to alleviate a person's distress
- Would reduce emergency services on call time as they can pass person on to emotional telephone support once they are satisfied there is no immediate risk of harm for the person
- Provides access to supported signposting and referral to a wider range of agencies
- Focusline staff have immediate access to information and advice from highly skilled specialist mental health nurses and social workers

**OPTION 3 – A proportion of DCC funding continues but is redirected to other settings i.e. the Recovery and Peer Support Service. CCG funding continues and is redirected to other mental health services such as those listed in Option 1 or 2 above.**

Any remaining DCC funding could be redirected into other mental health services, for example, **expanding the telephone support offer in the new Recovery and Peer Support service.** (This could provide additional capacity for people requiring telephone support but would not be accessible at weekends or out of hours)

Advantages :

- As shown in Options 1 and 2 above
- Increased investment in the Recovery and Peer Support service could provide additional targeted professional support for people so that they are better able to manage their mental health condition and develop a stay well plan
- Increased investment in the Recovery and Peer Support service could provide more opportunities for peer support and establishing and maintaining friendships and relationships hopefully reducing the need for out of hours support
- Continued access to emotional telephone support for people who currently use Focusline (but not necessarily out of hours).

**OPTION 4 – Cease the Focusline funding altogether with no alternative local offer of out of hours telephone support**

Advantages

- This could free up CCG funding to be allocated to other areas of mental health provision
- People experiencing a mental health crisis could still access national telephone crisis helplines such as Samaritans