



**CCA and mhhp Standard for Helplines<sup>®</sup>**  
A joint initiative for the helpline sector



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**CCA and Mental Health Helplines Partnership (mhhp)**  
**Standard for Helplines<sup>®</sup> Version 1**  
**‘A model for continual improvement’**

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**Note:** The assessment was based on random samples and therefore nonconformities may exist which have not been identified.

If you wish to distribute copies of this report external to the organisation, then all pages must be included.

## Introduction

<b>Helplines Name:</b>		Brighter Futures (Staffordshire Mental Health Help line)							
<b>Location Address(s):</b>		5 Whittle Court Town Road Stoke on Trent Staffordshire ST1 2QE							
<b>Contact name(s):</b>		Sharon Godwin – Operations Manager							
<b>Telephone number(s):</b>		01782 406000 - 0776 6880515							
<b>Fax number:</b>		01782 406006							
<b>Email address:</b>		sharon.godwin@brighter-futures.org.uk							
<b>Total FTE:</b>	12 Part time	<b>No of Seats:</b>	4	<b>No of Call Handlers:</b>	12				
<b>No of Sites and FTE per site:</b>	1 site	<b>No of volunteer workers:</b>	Nil	<b>Size of sample as a %:</b>					
<b>No of Managers:</b>	2	<b>No of Support Staff:</b>	2 (managers)						
<b>Helpline Channels:</b>	<b>Phone</b>	<b>Email</b>	<b>Fax</b>	<b>SMS</b>	<b>Web and/or Web-Chat</b>	<b>Online Self-Service</b>	<b>Post/White Mail</b>	<b>One Stop Shop</b>	<b>Other</b>
<b>Channels Assessed Please tick boxes</b>	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	No	No	No	
<b>Sample Sites Visited and brief description of functions at each site:</b>				<p>The Brighter Future helpline s is responsible for the delivery of Mental Health Helpline services for Staffordshire County Council Calls are received from individuals or their carers who are “worried, stressed or feeling low”, who find details of the service at a wide range of sources, such as GP surgeries and other health care environments and the internet The helpline mainly handles incoming calls but also makes a relatively small number of outbound calls to provide pro-active, requested/agreed support to customers.</p> <p>The helpline also receives a small number of emails (less that 1% of total contacts) The helpline does not handle any other contact types.. Brighter Futures is funded by Staffordshire County Council to handle 20,000 calls pa. The helpline provides a mental health helpline service to customers and/or their supporters/carers from the entire Staffordshire region.</p>					

## CCA and mhhp Standard for Helplines<sup>®</sup> – Initial and Re-assessment

Please tick box as appropriate.

1		2		3		4		5		6		7		8	
X		X		X		X		X		X		X		X	

Assessment start date:	22.06.11	SMO Reference number(s):	
Assessment duration:	1 Day	PO number:	
Assessors :	Martin Gilhooly		

### Conclusion and Recommendation

This certification was carried out to CCA and **mhhp** Standard for Helplines<sup>®</sup> Version 1.

Certification to the CCA and **mhhp** Standard for Helplines<sup>®</sup> is recommended.

This recommendation is subject to review and approval by the CCA and **mhhp** Standard for Helplines<sup>®</sup> Accreditation Panel.

The assessor would like to thank the Helpline Operational Manager and staff members for their contribution to this assessment.

No non conformities were identified during the assessment

## Summary Comments

Please include the following:

- Changes in the Helpline since the last assessment
- Channels assessed and scope
- Follow up on previous actions plans/opportunities for improvement/observations from forward view in last report
- Strengths of the Helpline and opportunities for improvement including interview comments if appropriate
- Any key innovations/leading practice observed and evidence

**This report has been compiled by Martin Gilhooly The report relates to the activity detailed below which covers the Initial assessment of the helpline.**

Channels assessed: Telephone (99%+ of contacts), and email – the vast majority of contacts are by inbound phone, <1% of contacts are by email. IM is being considered.

Based upon current call volumes, the helpline is scheduled to receive c22,000 calls this financial year (+9% on its contracted call volume)

Approximately 1200 outbound calls per year are made, to provide ongoing proactive support to customers, either as a result of a request from them, or a referral from a healthcare professional

The helpline does not currently use IM, SMS, fax, outbound dialers or IVR, nor does it have any face to face customer contact, nor does the help line have home working.

The helpline is equipped to deal with highly complex, sensitive and confidential enquiries from often vulnerable and anxious customers and their families/carers/supporters.

Its opening hours are 7pm to 2am weekdays and 2pm to 2am weekends 365 days per year

In addition to giving emotional, listening support, the staff are supported by a comprehensive, wide ranging online resource bank which enables appropriate sign posting and referrals to be supplied with appropriate accuracy and urgency

Brighter Futures is also a registered social landlord and has charity status and works towards its well published values:

- Passionate
- Creative
- Equal
- Empowering
- Sustainable

In addition to the helpline, Brighter Futures also operates wider community services, affordable housing and hostel activities, to support a wide range of needs in the district, for example, for: rough sleepers, ex-offenders, abuse victims and addiction sufferers

This report is limited to the activities of the helpline

The helpline demonstrates impressive customer focus. Caller support is the highest priority.

**Brighter Futures key objective is to: Help people to live independent and fulfilled lives**

To support this objective, Brighter futures measures its performance against the following outcomes:

- People become healthy and fulfilled
- People feel part of the community
- People value their environment
- People work and become independent

**The Helpline Mission statements is:**

To provide non-judgmental, confidential listening support to people experiencing mental distress, or who are concerned about their mental health or that of someone they know. We empower people by providing information and offering options for promoting individual choice.

To support its objectives, the Brighter Futures helpline has:

- A thorough induction policy and practices
- Impressive competency framework
- Wide ranging training provision
- Impressive customer survey results
- Well marketed service availability across the region at a wide range of environments to maximise service reach
- Thorough call monitoring, (intensively during induction)
- An impressive support database to maximise sign posting/advice support for staff
- No routine computer data storage of any customer information
- Had no staff attrition in five years
- Full IIP accreditation

Due to the nature of Brighter Futures caller relationship, calls are not recorded (as client callers may find such practice to be disconcerting) and IVR is not used

Live call monitoring is performed and performance support given in regular supervisions 1:1 sessions and appraisals

Call answering is reported as 100% in 3 rings, when staff members are available

Missed call rates are on target, at 20%, however, all callers who leave a call-back request message normally receive the call-back within 1 hour and 100% of messages receive the call-back before the shift closes. In addition, past analysis has revealed that a large number of missed calls are from repeat callers, who through experience of the service know the call will be answered when a team member is available

\*\* Critically, the engaged in-hour answerphone message does not reflect call-back efficiency reality, and may encourage repeat caller activity, therefore unnecessarily inflating missed call volume

The out of hours message advises callers of help line opening hours and sign posts to alternative support sources (e.g. NHS Direct, The Samaritans)

**Call statistics reported include:**

\*Gender

\*Age group

Missed calls

Hang up/silent callers

Answerphone volumes

Out of hour answerphone volumes

Call duration

Call patterns

New callers

Suicide calls

\*District source

\*This information is used to, for example, increase marketing to under-represented areas

Email response targets are set and achieved at 100% within 24 hours and 100% emails are checked prior to being sent

**Strengths of the helpline**

Dedicated and supportive helpline manager

Good working environment and culture

Encouragement and support to develop skills and broaden qualifications

Impressive appraisal system

Comprehensive online resource bank

Simple and effective business continuity practice

Call monitoring and support

Online resource bank

Low attrition (0%)

Impressive induction

Robust competency framework

Rota/shift management and communication

Comprehensive customer involvement practices

Clear well publicized complaint procedure

Impressive list of customer compliments

**Brighter Futures was awarded “Employer of the Year” status in 2010 as part of North Staffordshire’s achievements**

**Brighter Futures has full IIP accreditation**

**Opportunities for improvements to be followed up during future assessment visits:**

**Call answering response targets and reporting** – Currently targets are set, and reporting is clear, but recording of performance data is not sophisticated. Work has commenced to better exploit systemised statistical data reporting (via the **mhhp** virtual call centre and this work should continue to be an improvement priority.

**The in-hours engaged message** should be reviewed, such that it better matches call back efficiency (normally, call backs are made within one hour and all calls returned before the shift end).

**Innovation**

On-going promotion of service continues to bear fruit, as more people across the region access the service. A recent advert in the Stoke City football programme is an impressive illustration of such innovative promotional activity

Initial exploration of IM is to be advanced and considered for future development of service

**Non-Conformities Action Plan**

- Minor non-conformity: affords minimal risk to the Helplines performance or legal compliance when dealt with in a suitable time period.

**Major non-conformity: affects the Helplines ability to achieve:-**

- Performance objectives, including customer specific requirements
- Legal compliance
- Compliance to key/critical CCA and **mhhp** Standard for Helplines<sup>®</sup> requirements

List details below and present to client or request completion within 2 weeks of the assessment date.

Follow up visits to be arranged by Accrediting Body either within 3 months for a major non-conformity or at the next assessment for minor non-conformities.

Module Number	Clause Number	Description	Action required	Allocated to	Target completion date	Actual completion date & verification
n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a	n/a

**Forward View**

**Business Planning: Helplines 12 month plan including any planned changes:**

Continuing success, attracting increased numbers of service users will contribute to the continuing success in supporting the contact renewal with Staffordshire County Council

**Forward plan for partial assessment process including:**

The improvement points, mentioned within this report should be the considered in the annual assessment visit.

**Other opportunities for improvements to be followed up during future assessment visits:**

See above – opportunities for improvement

**Assessor Module Report**

<b>Module Number 1:</b>	<b>Caller Focus</b>
<p><b>Assessment Evidence</b></p> <p>Corporate strategy 2010-2015 Business Plan Complaint handling policy Complaint policy leaflet and online details Compliment log Staff interviews Call satisfaction mailing and responses Online business resource</p>	
<p><b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b></p> <p>Caller satisfaction policy seen and responses reviewed.</p> <p>A process is in place to gather caller feedback - 32% response rate is reported from mailings. Result highlights indicate: Feeling valued and respected – 93% My views are listened to - 93% The service is open when others may not be – 93% I feel safe and secure using the service – 87% I feel that using the helpline supports good mental health – 86%</p> <p>Both customers and the funder receive customer feedback by means of survey results</p> <p>Corporate strategy 2010-15 and Values drive the activities of the helpline</p> <p>Feedback is used to inform service development (e.g. opening hour review)</p> <p>Customer involvement is well promoted and has resulted in an impressive 279 customers currently involved</p> <p>A two stage complaint handling process is in place and analysis undertaken (only 2 complaints were received in 2010) response targets are clearly set and achieved and appeal to governance head is available if stage one satisfaction is not achieved.</p> <p>Compliment logs seen reviewed highlighted numerous expressions of sincere gratitude for the patience and support of help line staff</p> <p>Equality considerations: – Callers who present with special disability or language needs are supported by signposting to specialist service providers, including the wider Brighter Futures resources.</p> <p>Funders stipulate call volumes at 20000 pa and the helpline is currently + 9% on this funder target</p> <p>A customer newsletter is distributed and this includes customer testimonies, activity updates, satisfaction survey results, volunteer information, customer involvement articles</p>	



The online resource bank, used to signpost/advise callers has 1158 listed resources

### Strengths of Helpline

Customer involvement  
Satisfaction survey activities and results  
Objectives, mission statement clarity  
Marketing and call volume growth  
Compliments log  
Complaints procedure and training guide clarity  
Complaints review quarterly minutes  
Customer service committee meeting minutes

**Non –Conformances Identified – None**

## Assessor Module Report

<b>Module Number: 2</b>	<b>Helpline Performance &amp; Operational Effectiveness</b>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b> Corporate plan (2010-2015) Call monitoring forms Multiple risk assessment documents Rota sheets and advance volunteer request communications Numerous internal and partnership meeting minutes Call statistics report Staff interviews Inter departmental team meeting minutes Forecasting and planning and rota sheet documents	
<b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b>  Help line objectives are derived from the organisation's corporate objectives, mission statement and published, high profile values  Caller outcomes are a key driver, these are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• People become healthy and fulfilled</li><li>• People feel part of the community</li><li>• People value their environment</li><li>• People work and become independent</li></ul> Steering group meetings are held 3monthly where reporting includes: calls answered, call source, demographics gender new/repeat caller volumes etc  Help line activities include: Phone (99%+ of contacts) , <1% email  Key performance measures feature:  Total call volumes – to measure marketing success (showing consistent increase over the time of the contract)  Missed calls – currently reported at 20% v a target of 20%  Email response of 24hrs, consistently achieved  No white mail fax or web form is processed by the help line	

Call quality is monitored by the helpline manager, intensively during the six week induction period. The monitoring form is used and was seen

Email quality is 100% checked prior to sending

Relationships with service funder are regular. Key meetings are documented.

Governance responsibility lies with the Governance Officer who, working with the CEO and Board, reports monthly to the entire business regarding business news, changes and amendments to procedures or policies and legislative development

Risk assessments are conducted with appropriate simple contingency plans in place.

\*\* Contingency plans involve the issuing of up to four charged mobile phones, which can then be used at any of the organisations sites (e.g., close by offices, hostel or at home), The redirect of calls can be initiated online, or by contacting the service provider. The resource database can then be accessed to provide continuity of advice for service users.

\*\* The current work to better utilise the **mhhp** Virtual Call Centre will increase contingency options

Risk assessment documents were studied and they featured:

- Accidents and reporting
- Health and safety including storage of personal belongings
- Display screen equipment
- Fire
- First aid
- Infection control
- Lone working
- Pregnant workers

Business relationships are managed by, for example during regular minuted operational meetings

The helpline works in close partnership with:

- Health and social care
- Clubhouse network
- Safe spaces network
- Supported housing programme
- Healthy minds network
- North Staffs user group
- North Staffs carers association
- South Staffs network for mental health

Rota and shifts are calculated three months in advance using 11 years call history, and are worked out with full cooperation with staff members, who confirmed such in discussions

Forecasting and planning: 20000 calls are contracted for and known call patterns reflect shift patterns worked by the team. For example, peak evening calls occur up until 11pm, when most staff are on duty, maximising call answering efficiencies. Staffing levels also reflect specific anticipated peaks in demand, for example recent radio and football programme advertisements

Strengths of Helpline

- Forecasting and planning
- Broad call answering statistics
- Rota/shift management
- Partnership and relationship management
- Risk assessments

**Non –Conformances Identified – None**

## Assessor Module Report

<b>Module Number: 3</b>	<b>Staff Focus: Selection and Engagement Strategies</b>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b> The HR Policy Recruitment and selection policy Job specifications Clearly communicated HR support Sickness and absence policy (Bradford index) Return to work interview forms Exit interview forms Staff benefit and welfare factsheet Staff interviews Discipline and grievance policy Staff handbook Staff counselling service brochure Legislation update from McKnights LLP	
<b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b>  The HR Policy exists which is kept up to date, with new legislation update provided by McKnights LLP  No staff attrition has been experienced by the helpline for five years  Sickness and absence is measured and managed using the Bradford Index system  Back to work and exit interview mechanisms are in place  No volunteers are currently used. A volunteers programme is under considerations  Staff schedules and rotas – see module 2 (as part of planning and forecasting)  The main processes to gather the views of staff are staff meetings and supervision 1:1's a staff survey was last performed in 2009 and new methods of capturing formal staff feedback, using the intranet system are being evaluated (e.g. Survey Monkey)  Full IIP accreditation has been awarded	
<b>Strengths of Helpline</b>  IIP accreditation HR policies and on-going legislative update disciplines Staff handbook Schedules management Attrition (0%) Regular and valued 1:1's Comprehensive staff handbook	
<b>Non –Conformances Identified – None</b>	

## Assessor Module Report

<b>Module Number: 4</b>	<b>Learning, Development &amp; Staff Performance Management</b>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b>  Employer of the year certificate Staff development procedure documents Brighter futures appraisal star system and procedure documents Probation review forms Job descriptions Induction scheme information Mentoring procedure and assessment form Supervision form Grievance policy documents Competency framework Monthly staff newsletter Training request form Training feedback forms and summaries Telephone skills training programme outline PDP policies On-going professional development policy Staff interviews Staff handbook	
<b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b>  A personal development policy is in place covering all staff. Staff files are stored confidentially in the central HR department  Individual staff members receive an appraisal incorporating PDP meeting every 12 months and also have supervisory meetings every six weeks (confirmed in staff discussions)  Staff confirmed in discussions that they understood their personal objectives, together with the means by which they are monitored and performance appraised.  The Brighter Futures Appraisal Star system is used. The level framework details competencies against the following headings: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Communication</li><li>• Teamwork</li><li>• Customer focus</li><li>• Operations</li><li>• Continuous improvement</li></ul> Five levels of competence are assessed, ranging from: I always need help in this area, at level one, to: I exceed at this all the time at level five  Staff are given thorough induction training and on-going development to support them in their role.  Training effectiveness is measured in the form of post training evaluation and on-going call monitoring and effectiveness is reported by the training manager  There is a commitment to discuss and plan career progression/opportunities.  The organisation encourages and supports participation in continuing professional development, and members of staff have been and are involved in such development (NVQs City and Guilds, <b>mhhp</b> training etc)	

Staff highlighted numerous training events they had attended such as:

- Capacity Act
- Depression Awareness
- Mental Health Act
- Self harm
- Health and safety
- Induction

**Strengths of Helpline**

PDP process and practice  
Competency framework  
Appraisal procedure  
On-going professional development encouragement and take up  
Employee of Year Award  
Training practices  
Induction strengths

**Non –Conformances Identified – None**

**Assessor Module Report**

<b>Module Number: 5</b>	<b>Legislation, Regulation, and Policies affecting your Operation</b>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b>  Legislative updates commissioned from McKnights LLP Data protection evidence Clean desk practice Locked away call back listings No data routinely stored on computer system Call-back listing are password protected (seen) Confidentiality policy on each staff desk	
<b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b>  A process is in place to ensure that developing legislative requirements are brought to the attention of management from McKnights LLP  Staff are aware of regulations and compliance required as a result of organisational memberships to relevant bodies e.g. <b>mhhp</b> , National Housing Federation, Homeless Link, Social Enterprise, TSA Processes are in place to manage any breach of legislation, regulation or policy (disciplinary procedures)	
<b>Strengths of Helpline</b>  Legislative policies and updating awareness Data protection and customer confidentiality	
<b>Non –Conformances Identified – None</b>	

## Assessor module report

<b>Module Number: 6</b>	<b>Third Party and Managed Relationships</b>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b> Client contract example Strategic Alliance – contract performance minutes Quarterly steering group and performance meeting minutes Focus group minutes	
<b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b> The relationship with the funder represents “ the relationship” The relationship is contractually defined. The contract viewed includes: Service outline Call volumes The ring out service Staffing requirements Complaints Contract period Best value Financials E&D considerations Data protection Record keeping Legislative compliance Dispute Funding Mental Capacity Act 2005  Governance practice is preformed by means of formal minuted quarterly performance meetings and focus groups.  Those in attendance are: key referring agencies commissioners (funder)  The council nominate Officers to attend from: Social care Primary care trusts Other parties as agreed by the funder and provider as seen fit  All minutes are circulated to all interested parties  Regular day to day communication is ongoing as required, and performance issues raised and acted upon at all communication formats	
<b>Strengths of Contact Centre</b> Robust comprehensive contractual agreement Regular minuted reviews and focus groups with all interested parties	
<b>Non –Conformances Identified – None</b>	

## Assessor Module Report

<b>Module Number: 7</b>	<b>Security and Confidentiality</b>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b>  The lack of any contact forms seen on display in the department Staff interviews Manager interview Staff briefings Confidentiality Policy Data protection policy Staff handbook	
<b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b>  All staff have CRB checks undertaken  ** Customer contact sheets are completed when customers call the helpline. These forms <b>do not include</b> : <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The customer's name (only the customer's first name is recorded)</li><li>• The customer's phone number</li></ul> Therefore, from routine day to day contacts, no data or confidentiality issues arise  Only when call backs are requested, does any further information become recorded. Such information is initially stored on forms which are locked away securely (confirmed by staff discussions) and when such data is input into an excel spread sheet, its storage is password protected , with only two senior staff members having access (verified)  No risk of data copying was identified  Home working is not undertaken  No financial transactions are undertaken  A whistle blowing policy is in place	
<b>Strengths of Helpline</b>  No surname or telephone numbers are routinely captured for incoming calls (the vast majority of contacts) Only requested call-backs have any customer information stored, and this is protected rigorously 100% staff CRB checks	
<b>Non –Conformances Identified – None</b>	

## Assessor Module Report

<b>Module Number: 8</b>	<b>Implementing and Managing Helpline Technology</b>
<b>Assessment Evidence</b>  The help desk does not have any of the following technologies: SMS IM IVR ACD (this is positioned at <b>mhhp</b> Virtual call Centre Outbound diallers The helpline does not have call monitoring technology, on confidentiality grounds (and will not be introducing this)	
<b>Evaluation Summary and Conclusions</b>  The helpline does not have any key technologies and as such relies upon simple, often manual data and information recording and reporting  The telephony system is an Avaya system and statistics are captured by Call Handling ( <b>mhhp</b> Virtual Call Centre)  Work is now underway with <b>mhhp</b> to better exploit the reporting aspects available from the Virtual Call centre. Once established, training is currently being initiated, following which, more sophisticated and wide ranging reporting will be available	
<b>Strengths of Helpline</b>	
<b>Non –Conformances Identified – None</b>	

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