



Webcam and Online Booking Pilot

EVALUATION REPORT

Vicky Ling | | November 19, 2015

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LOTTERY FUNDED

Brighton and Hove Advice Partnership

Community and Voluntary Sector Partners to the Advice Services Transition Fund Bid:

Age UK Brighton and Hove and Portslade

Amaze – for families of children and young people with SEN and disabilities

BHT – Combatting homelessness, creating opportunities, promoting change

Brighton and Hove Citizens Advice

Brighton Unemployed Centre Families Project

Brighton Women's Centre

Community Works

The Fed Centre for Independent Living

Impact Initiatives – Young Peoples Centre

Impetus

Money Advice Plus MIND Brighton and Hove

Moneyworks

R.I.S.E (Refuge, Information, Support and Education)

St Lukes Advice Service

Sussex Central YMCA

Terrence Higgins Trust

The Hangleton and Knoll Project – a community development charity

Members of the wider Advice Partnership:

Brighton and Hove City Council (various teams and departments)

Fitzhugh Gates Solicitors

Martin Searle Solicitors

Webcam and online booking advice pilot

Evaluation Report October 2015

INTRODUCTION

Advice Brighton and Hove is an Advice Service Transition Fund (ASTF) funded programme led by Brighton and Hove Citizens Advice Bureau on behalf of a partnership of local agencies <http://www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/>. The webcam and online booking pilot provides advice on housing and benefits issues using the internet, using Skype, Google Hangouts or other digital services to suit the user's convenience. It is delivered through BHT <http://www.bht.org.uk/services/brighton-advice-centre/>.

Government policy is to deliver services digitally by default. The third sector needs to respond to this challenge and help people access services in this way. Although everyone involved in the webcam and online booking project agreed that face to face services would always be needed and preferred by some, there was ample evidence that many people who might be assumed to be digitally excluded are not, in fact. There is also a clear need to support those who currently are excluded so that they can access digital services.

Simply saying 'digital services are not appropriate' to any group is likely to increase digital isolation. By contrast, delivering services such as this project, which incorporates methods of providing appropriate support, increases people's confidence in using digitally delivered services more generally.

The use of Skype is increasing, for example in recruitment, 18% of candidates responding to a recent survey said they had a job interview via Skype in the past year, which was up from 9% the year before. It is also beginning to be used more in the legal and advice world (see Appendix 1).

The Advice Brighton and Hove webcam and online booking project is innovative in that booking can be done by a potential client or referrer online for a digitally delivered service, without pre-screening or need for an intermediary.

This evaluation report also offers a toolkit based on the experiences of those involved which it hoped will be of use to others interested in setting up similar services. The toolkit is included as a section of this report but is also available separately for people who are interested in setting up a similar service but do not want the whole report and appendices.

What the service delivers and how

- The service offers advice on Housing and Welfare Rights
- Initial appointments are via webcam
- Follow up is by webcam and email

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

The purpose of the evaluation is to help partners learn from the pilot and consider whether and how they might embed this method of delivery into mainstream service provision.

The evaluation considers the challenges in setting up and managing service delivery in this way, and sustainability considerations.

- What is the client experience compared to traditional telephone and face to face delivery?
- Is there evidence that there are specific client groups that benefit from or prefer accessing advice in this way?
- How has the adviser experience compared to delivering telephone and face to face advice?
- Are there any particular challenges related to particular areas of social welfare law advice?

Methodology

The evaluation was carried out by Vicky Ling (see Appendix 2 for information on the consultant's experience). It started in July 2015 and took place in two stages:

Familiarisation and information gathering

I interviewed as many as possible of the people involved in managing and delivering the service to obtain their views. I also interviewed people who had referred clients to the project. I was given the contact details of several clients who said they would be willing to talk about their experience of the project; but in the event, was only able to contact one of them successfully.

It was not possible to meet everyone in person, and some of the interviews were conducted by telephone. Altogether eight people contributed to the review through interviews. A list is shown at Appendix 3.

Contributions are reflected in this report but are not directly attributed.

Desk based research and report writing

I conducted further online research on digital advice delivery and drew on statistics provided by the project and focus group reports, one facilitated by Advice Brighton and Hove with the Carer's Centre (a charity which works with informal family/carers) - see appendix 4; another co-ordinated through Speak Out – see appendix 5; another co-ordinated through MIND as part of a wider piece of work which Advice Brighton & Hove was undertaking, looking at barriers into advice for particular communities (not included as an appendix as webcam was only touched on).

The final evaluation report was submitted in early November 2015.

Evaluation summary

WHAT WORKED WELL

The project has achieved a great deal and the feedback has been very positive from users and stakeholders. There is a 'can do' attitude which has created a valuable service for the community.

MAJOR SUCCESSES

Discussed further below, and in detail throughout the report, the major successes can be summarised as:

- A good example of partnership working and collaboration between a wide range of voluntary sector organisations
- Strong user involvement the design of the service
- Having overcome some initial scepticism to become a valued part of advice services in Brighton and Hove
- Delivering additional casework in the complex areas of welfare rights and housing, which has become significantly less available since the Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012 (LASPO) became law in 2013
- Reaching client groups who find it difficult to access traditional face to face services
- Increasing users' confidence in accessing digital services more generally
- Having potential for development through involving law students

Partnership working

It is significant that this project was created in Brighton and Hove, which has a well-established Advice Partnership with dedicated staff support, since 2009. The fact that adequate resources were allocated over a reasonable length of time has created a dynamic and effective partnership which has produced real results for the local community, and has the potential to deliver more in future.

The partnership's bid to the Advice Services Transition Fund (ASTF) was designed through a collaborative process that drew on previous user involvement work, engaged key stakeholders, including the City council, and involved 16 frontline voluntary sector partner agencies.

Through this process it was agreed that the ASTF proposal would focus on the following 3 areas:

- User Involvement and Social Policy - understanding changing patterns in demand, understanding need and understanding barriers to provision
- Service Development - including a specific pilot around online advice

- Business Development - helping partners to work together to identify new funding opportunities and ways of working together

Having agreed on the framework for the proposal, partners then voted to establish which agencies would undertake which parts of the project. Through this voting process it was agreed:

- The Citizens Advice Bureau would lead the overall ASTF bid
- During the first 6 months:
 - CAB, as lead, would work with partners to scope, develop and specify the online advice pilot
- After the initial 6 month development period:
 - BHT would commence delivery and further development of the service
 - CAB would lead user involvement

Stakeholder and user involvement

The project was developed with strong stakeholder and user involvement. User testing and focus groups were facilitated with a range of client groups who typically encounter difficulty in accessing traditional advice provision:

- Carers
- Mental Health Service Users
- Adults with learning difficulties
- Young People
- Travellers

The digital booking aspect of the pilot meant that appointments could be booked with the help of referrers such as the CAB or other community organisation, or users could book direct with no filter such as legal aid eligibility. As long as the user had a housing problem and is able to use a digitally based service, they could use it.

The service statistics suggest that a significant number of clients would not be eligible for legal aid because the nature of their problem is outside scope (eg. return of deposits) or due to their financial situation (they are working and although their income is low, they are above the income or capital thresholds).

- This service meets some legal needs in key areas affecting people's lives which would otherwise remain unmet

Some referral agencies were concerned that the service would restrict access; but the user profiles show that in fact, it reached groups which have traditionally found it difficult to access mainstream information and advice provision (see 'Service Statistics' for more information).

The service is particularly appropriate for:

- People who have existing access to Skype or can access it through an organisation they are working with
- People who are not within easy reach of face to face services
- People in low paid employment who find it difficult to take time off to get advice
- People with mental health issues or learning disabilities
- People who need support when accessing advice
- People who have mobility issues or are home-based for other reasons
- People with dependent children

Skype for social inclusion

Skype was preferred to telephone by some users *‘There is this whole backwards and forwards thing over the phone, of speaking on behalf of the person we care for but proving who you are... For us webcam would be the ideal situation as you could all sit down together without leaving the house.’* (Carer in focus group discussion)

Skype also has the advantage that it can be used very discreetly, for example by people experiencing domestic abuse, with no need to leave their home to seek advice.

It is worth noting that the service has developed expertise in issues arising from EU migration, which is particularly appropriate, given the prevalence of EU workers in the local area. Many of them are in low paid employment and find it difficult to take time off to visit traditional advice agencies.

Almost half people in the focus group co-ordinated through Speak Out used the internet regularly and had free access at home. One said; *“I use the computer a lot at home, I have a tablet. I sometimes go on google or on to google maps to find out where I need to go... It helps me find the answers”*. The others had varying degrees of confidence when it came to using computers. All of the group felt that developing the skills and confidence to go online and help themselves would be a positive thing.

For people who were already using Skype and already had the IT required, accessing advice by webcam is cheaper than coming into a town centre advice agency using public transport or by car. A bus ticket in the Brighton area can cost up to £5.00 – a considerable expense for anyone on means tested benefits.

The online booking system was popular with users and there were very few missed appointments.

Advisers felt that webcam is very similar to a face to face meeting in that it allows both adviser and service user to pick up clues from body language. Sometimes it also allows the adviser to see the service user in their home environment, which could be relevant to their problem.

A further development of the project will be to encourage a new generation of lawyers to practise social welfare law, through working with law students, who will deliver advice under supervision. This is important as the LASPO cuts have discouraged many students from becoming social welfare lawyers, because they have received the

impression that they will not be able to make a career in this specialism. Early exposure to social welfare law will ignite their interest and enable them to see that it is possible to make a living in this professionally rewarding area of law.

CHALLENGES

An initial challenge was to encourage people to apply for the Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer post so that the service could begin. Potential applicants suggested they tended to see the project as bit of a gimmick which might not take off. However, once the service had started and a second post was advertised, there was a significantly bigger response, which shows that the local advice community quickly appreciated the value of the service.

As with any project, the webcam and online booking pilot needed to ensure that the staff were in place and the technology worked reliably when the service was launched. This can take time, and can seem disproportionate in a pilot project which was not designed to last very long. However, it was essential, particularly in view of the fact that people were sceptical about the potential value of the project. With hindsight some commented it would have been good to spend a bit longer developing awareness before starting to deliver services.

Feedback during the evaluation stressed that awareness-raising has to be maintained throughout the lifetime of the project and staff need time to visit the groups most likely to benefit from the service, to remind them of it and to provide positive examples of the outcomes that can be achieved. This was reinforced by feedback received from, for example, the focus group co-ordinated with Speak Out.

There was a challenge in supporting the service to provide the whole range of services advertised. The service was stated simply to provide 'housing' and 'welfare rights' advice, indicating that it would deal with any problem falling under those broad headings. This has presented challenges in terms of staff training and supervision support across such wide areas of complex law.

It may be a better use of resources to focus on fewer topics within the overall headings, for example landlord and tenant problems and welfare rights issues which are broadly connected with housing status (see 'Service offer' for more information).

AREAS FOR FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The project has achieved a great deal so far and the feedback has been very positive from users and stakeholders. There has been a 'can do' attitude which has created a valuable service for the community.

The project needs to work through some issues in relation to supervision and the service offer, which are essential to establishing a quality assured, consistent and viable ongoing service.

The two issues are connected, since the wide current offer means that an adviser can be faced with an unusual problem, eg. concerning leases or trusts, which may require many hours of research and far more support from a supervisor than an issue which is dealt with on a regular basis. Refining the service offer would allow a more structured approach to mapping the competences required of a Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer and ensuring appropriate development and support is available.

As mentioned above, a further development will be to encourage a new generation of lawyers to practise social welfare law, through working with law students, who will deliver advice under supervision. This would benefit the service and its users but will also contribute to replacing the current cohort of social welfare lawyers, many of whom are nearing retirement age. Funding may be available through the Justice First Fellowship scheme to support a trainee solicitor in future (see 'Sustainability' for more information).

Supervision

BHT is accredited to the Specialist Quality Mark (SQM) in Housing, Debt and Welfare Benefits, so it has systems and procedures in place to provide assurance regarding quality of service. The SQM is externally assessed through a formal process every three years.

During the pilot period, the service has been managed through BHT managers with varying roles within the organisation, which has also undergone a restructuring process. Approaches to supervision have reflected the role of the manager in post at the time. It is important that supervision prioritises quality of advice as well as effective service delivery and staff development. At the time of writing the report, it is being supervised by a solicitor with a Housing specialism, which is ideal.

Supervision will become even more important as the service starts to work with law student volunteers. It is likely that supervision will take more time and systems will need to change to accommodate the needs of the law student group.

Quality assurance and supervision appear to have been effective but the systems have been developed organically alongside project development. They now need to be fully integrated so that supervision and file review procedures are formalised and become 'business as usual'.

Service offer

As the service matures, it is likely to come under increasing demand. For example, as increasing numbers of older people use online services.

From the outset, the project has been advertised as providing 'housing' and 'welfare rights' advice, without qualification. This has presented challenges in terms of staff training and supervision support. In order to make the service easier to manage, it may wish to refine its offer to the most popular topics during the pilot, for example:

- rent deposits

- disrepair
- homelessness
- rent arrears / possession
- housing benefit and related benefits issues
- complex benefit issues relating to EU nationals where they affect housing status

Project costs & value for money

£78,200 was set aside from the Brighton and Hove Advice Services Transition Fund budget to cover the costs of delivering the project (e.g. officer time and associated overheads).

This was a proof of concept project to test this method of service delivery, so it was not appropriate to set delivery targets during the pilot stage. The main aim was to make sure that this form of delivery could work and be effective. In addition, user delivery targets would only have reflected part of the total activity involved in the project, which has included development work, stakeholder engagement and service delivery. Relative proportions of staff time spent of each have depended on the stage of the project.

It is therefore not possible (or appropriate) to give a 'cost per case' comparison for delivery of this service against other more well-established channels.

The important point to note is that the overwhelming majority of clients, advisers and focus group participants involved were very positive about their experience. It appears very likely that there will be lessons from this project to enable significant efficiencies in advice delivery, particularly in relation to appointment bookings and services offering outreach and home visits, saving both adviser and client time and enabling greater volumes of service to be delivered at a lower level of resource.

The webcam and online booking pilot

SETTING UP AND MANAGING THE SERVICE

Stakeholder involvement and partnership working

The funding for this service was secured from the Big Lottery as part of an Advice Service Transition Fund (ASTF) bid by a partnership of local agencies under the umbrella of 'Advice Brighton and Hove'. The members of the advice partnership decided amongst themselves which agency was best placed to deliver the service. There was a great deal of interest in hosting the service and BHT was selected through a voting system operated by a cross-agency panel. This ensured that the selection process was robust and based on local agencies' knowledge and experience as to which of them would be most likely to be able to deliver the service successfully.

Hosting the project at BHT allowed easy access to the range of services provided by BHT (eg in relation to mental health, addiction, homelessness, housing needs and support, work and learning) as well as to partner organisations in the network.

There were issues for the partnership to work through in relation to the fact that only one of the agencies which expressed an interest was able to be successful. However, the success of the project does demonstrate that the agency-led resource allocation process was an effective method to identify an agency capable of delivering the project.

User group involvement

User testing and focus groups were facilitated with a range of client groups who typically encounter difficulty in accessing traditional advice provision. Some specifically considered digital advice, and so the reports are included as appendices.

- Carers (see appendix 4 for a report of the focus group)
- Mental Health Service Users
- Adults with learning disabilities (see appendix 5 for a report of the focus group)
- Young People
- Travellers

Start of the project

The project was initially intended to run for a year, starting in June 2014 (see project timeline at appendix 5). An initial challenge was to encourage people to apply for the Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer post so that the service could begin, as feedback from potential applicants suggested they tended to see the project as bit of a gimmick which might not take off. However, recruitment was successful and once the service had started and a second post was advertised, there was a significantly bigger response. See appendix 6 for a job description and person specification.

Publicity

An important part of the Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer's role during the initial three months of the project was to talk to partner organisations, make them aware of the service and discuss any misgivings they might have.

As the project develops, these visits should be repeated in order to reach as many potential users and referrers as possible, and to reinforce the benefits of the service.

Confidentiality

The project was aware that users and referrers need to be reassured that the service is confidential and that information will not be shared with any third party without their consent. This is emphasised on the Advice Brighton and Hove website 'frequently asked questions' (see appendix 8).

Data protection and security

Agencies were concerned about the data protection and information security measures adopted by the project. However, it was possible to allay their concerns (see appendix 7).

Initial contact with a client was by webcam, with follow up work being mainly by email. Before an appointment, clients are asked to read service guidelines on internet security, including measures a client can take to reduce the risk of their emails being accessed by a third party.

Generally emails that were sent by the service were not encrypted but they would be if the content was considered to be sensitive.

One point to watch out for in using the online booking service was that if an agency used the Events Plus plug-in to enable people to book appointments without modification, if someone used the service from a public computer, it would 'cache' their appointment and it would become visible to the next user of the work station. However, this 'cookie' can be disabled.

As soon as the project became aware of this issue, it was fixed.

IT for the website and booking

The Web Developer who helped Advice Brighton and Hove to set up the project said that most voluntary sector organisations could use the same model on their own website, with a bit of support. Support for the Events Plus plug-in can be purchased at a reasonable cost.

Advice Brighton and Hove used WordPress for their website with Events Plus plug-in.

Supporting clients use of IT

Sometimes the Digital Advice and Inclusion Officers do have to assist users in accessing the service via Skype, so good IT skills are an important part of the person specification (see appendix 6).

Often users were already using Skype, perhaps with the support of family and friends. Clients who are EU nationals are frequently familiar with the technology as they often use Skype to communicate with their families.

Some users found it easier to use Skype than telephone:

'There is this whole backwards and forwards thing over the phone, of speaking on behalf of the person we care for but proving who you are... For us webcam would be the ideal situation as you could all sit down together without leaving the house.' (Carer in focus group discussion).

Clients are sometimes supported to access the service through community organisations which had appropriate IT. A referrer said *'It is wonderful for support workers, you don't have to accompany the young person.'*

Even users who were less sure about taking part found it straightforward. One of the participants was deaf and initially had felt that he didn't want to try it as he was struggling to see how it related to him; the skype call was set up so his signer was with the adviser and he decided to try it. He was able to communicate really clearly with his signer, and he reported that he felt extremely happy.

Booking

The digital booking aspect of the pilot means that appointments can be booked with the help of referrers such as the CAB or other community organisation, or users can book direct with no filter such as legal aid eligibility. At the time of writing the report, as long as the user had a housing or benefits problem and has access to the required IT, they can use it (see also 'Service offer' for suggestions about refining the areas covered).

Some referral agencies were concerned that the service would restrict access or be confined to user groups who already have relatively good resources to help them deal with their problems. However, comments from users and user profiles show that in fact, it reaches groups which have traditionally found it difficult to access mainstream information and advice provision (see 'Service Statistics' and 'User experience' for more information).

During the pilot period waiting times have been favourable compared to traditional services. People can usually get an appointment within a week. This means that people can be given advice at an early stage, for example if they have disrepair problems and are thinking of withholding rent, as well as being able to access advice quickly if there is a crisis.

The online booking system was popular with users and there were very few missed appointments.

Book an appointment

To book an appointment click on a free day, select your time and then fill out your details.

You will receive a confirmation email to remind you of your appointment time together with another email from us, to let you know how to connect.

- Please ensure that you have read our “using this service” guide to who we are, how we store and use your data and the terms of use of the service.
- Please also ensure that you have read our guide to “online security”.

Our schedule for June 2015

Click a free day to apply for an appointment.

Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa	Su	18 June, 2015		
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	10:00 am	11:00 am	12:00 pm
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	1:00 pm	2:00 pm	3:00 pm
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	4:00 pm		

SERVICE STATISTICS

148 clients used the service in the first year of delivery.

Housing

An exceptionally large number of people rent their homes in Brighton and Hove. The 2011 census showed that 28 per cent of households were renting from a private landlord, compared to 15 per cent in the South East region and across England. 15 per cent of households were in the social rented sector, compared to 14 per cent in the South East and 18 per cent across England.

In 2011, only 53 percent of households were owner-occupiers, compared to 63 percent across England.

The local authority has identified that housing in the local area is unaffordable for most people. 72 per cent cannot afford housing at market rates (either to buy or rent) without

some form of subsidy or spending a disproportionate level of their income on housing costs.

The housing status of service users in the pilot period shows that the service is reaching those people who are most likely to be experiencing problems with their accommodation: only 7 per cent were home owners; 73 per cent were in the private rented sector; 8 per cent were renting from the Council or other social landlord; 6 per cent were in temporary accommodation or homeless and 6 per cent had an 'other' form of housing.

79 per cent of service clients were assisted with housing issues. This compares with 21 per cent of Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove users for the same period. This suggests that the service is reaching the target client group and is adding a useful additional resource in a particularly complex area of law. Many of the service users are EU nationals in low paid employment who find it difficult to take time off work to get advice. The webcam delivery method is particularly useful for this group.

Disputes over rent deposits was the biggest housing issue.

Other issues included, disrepair, homelessness and possession.

Welfare rights

34 per cent of clients were assisted with benefits issues. This compares with 30 per cent of Citizens Advice Brighton and Hove users for the same period. Again, this suggests that the service is reaching the target client group and is adding a useful additional resource in a particularly complex area of law. It is worth noting that the service has developed expertise in issues arising from EU migration, which is particularly appropriate, given the prevalence of EU workers in the local area.

Of the 34% of clients overall that were assisted with benefits issues:

- 61% were assisted with issues related to Housing Benefit
- 24% were assisted with issues related to EU migration
- 10% were assisted with issues related to ESA
- 10% were assisted with issues related to JSA
- 8% were assisted with issues related to PIP
- No-one was assisted with issues related to DLA/PIP despite the disability profile of service users (see below)

Other social welfare law problems

10% of clients were assisted with other SWL advice issues

Webcam and online booking service users

The employment rate in the local area is around 60 per cent. Around 50 per cent of webcam and online booking service users were in employment (34 per cent full time, 9 per cent part time, 9 per cent self- employed). 48 per cent of service users were unemployed.

Most were adults of working age but some older people also used it. It is likely that as older people increasingly use online services, demand will increase.

10% were aged	17-24
26% were aged	25-34
47% were aged	35-49
15% were aged	50-64
2% were aged	65+

Disability

According to the 2011 census, nine per cent of the Brighton and Hove population said their day to day activity is 'limited a little' by a long term health problem or impairment, and a further seven per cent said their day to day activities are 'limited a lot'.

Again, we see that the service reaches those most likely to need advice as 29% of clients identified themselves as disabled, which is higher than the local population.

- 43% reported physical impairment(s)
- 46% reported mental health issues
- 8% were learning disabled
- 38% reported long term health issues
- 8% reported sensory impairment(s)

Ethnicity

The 2011 census showed that 89 per cent of people identified themselves as white. 20 per cent of the Brighton and Hove population were of black and minority ethnic (BME) groups. This includes some groups which identify themselves as white and ethnic minority. The largest increase in the number of people in an ethnic category since the 2001 census was in the 'other white' category accounting for 36 per cent of the BME population.

Service users' ethnicity

62%	White British
24%	White Other
6%	Other
3%	Asian / Asian British
4%	Black / Black British
2%	Mixed

Gender

There is a gender balance between males and females in Brighton and Hove but it has an unusual age distribution compared to both national and regional profiles; with fewer children and older residents, but more adults aged 20-44.

59 per cent of service users were female, a significantly greater proportion than the local population – 50 per cent, suggesting the service is particularly suited to this group. 41 per cent of users were male.

Dependent Children

A quarter of households in Brighton and Hove had a dependent child living with them according to the 2011 census. A far higher percentage of service users (52%) had dependent children, suggesting the service is particularly suited to this group.

USER EXPERIENCE

What is the user experience compared to traditional telephone and face to face delivery?

The Advice Brighton and Hove webcam and online booking service allows people to self-refer and make their own appointments, without the need for an intermediary. This is empowering for clients as it accepts their own diagnosis of their problem and provides quick and easy access. It is simple and straightforward in the complex world of post-LASPO¹ legal aid where the scrutiny of both financial and scope eligibility is so complex that many people give up before they see a legal adviser.

A client who was no longer eligible for legal aid said: *'On learning that this [legal aid] was no longer available to me, I was mortified but now having experienced the digital service, I prefer it to face to face consultations.'*

Clients who would previously had to visit a number of agencies in person before finding one which would take them on were able to access the webcam and online booking pilot easily from their own home.

All of the participants in the focus group co-ordinated through the carers centre regularly accessed the internet and felt confident doing so. One said:

"I could see it really helping people who are housebound, that is disabled people and carers. It could be the only conversation you have that day and to actually see someone's face, to feel you have a bit of rapport going, it makes it a lot more personal"

Skype can be used very discreetly, for example by people experiencing domestic abuse.

A referrer described access to the service as *'quick and easy'*.

A client said *'I was initially a little nervous about Skyping someone I don't know but it was no different from being in a fact to face interview and if anything allowed me to be more relaxed as I was at home in familiar surroundings.'*

¹ Legal Aid Sentencing and Punishment of Offenders Act 2012, which sets the criteria for legal aid eligibility

For people who are already using Skype, it is cheaper than coming into a town centre advice agency using public transport or by car. A bus ticket in the Brighton area can cost up to £4.70 – a considerable expense for anyone on means tested benefits. A client said: *'Obviously it saves time and money; no bus journeys, no queuing.'*

A referrer mentioned a homeless Italian family with a child who had been refused benefits. The webcam service had intervened on their behalf and a payment was made to them the same day, and ensured they had accommodation that night.

The MIND focus group which informed development of the project recognised the value in being able to offer advice in a variety of different ways and really felt that webcam advice could be a useful tool in overcoming some of the access to advice issues that people with mental health problems face. A number of people with mental health issues find it difficult to be ready early in the morning, essential to being seen at most 'drop in' services, due to their medication. Some find waiting in waiting areas very stressful. The webcam and online booking service avoids both these issues.

Is there evidence that there are specific client groups that benefit from or prefer accessing advice in this way?

The service is particularly useful for clients whose problems fall outside the scope of legal aid, for example tenants whose landlords who have not complied with the tenancy deposit protection scheme and who are entitled to claim penalties, and those who have disrepair problems that fall short of affecting health.

The service design meets the needs of people with mobility issues better than most traditional advice agencies are able to.

Many of the users during the pilot period were women and many had dependent children (see 'Service Statistics' for more information).

Despite the high number of service users who were EU nationals, some feedback suggests that the service delivery method may not be ideal for people who are not confident in communicating in English.

However, other feedback indicated that the service is very valuable for people who have support workers, key workers and sign language interpreters as it is much easier to make sure they can be available for a pre-arranged appointment via Skype than going along to a drop in service, with additional travelling and waiting time.

There is evidence that the webcam and online booking service is particularly suitable for:

- People who have existing access to Skype or can access it through an organisation they are working with
- People who are not within easy reach of face to face services
- People in low paid employment who find it difficult to take time off to get advice
- People with mental health issues or learning disabilities
- People who need support when accessing advice

- People who have mobility issues or are home-based for other reasons
- People with dependent children

ADVISER EXPERIENCE

Advisers reported that clients were generally very positive about the webcam and email service delivery method. Even those who were initially nervous quickly warmed to it.

Advisers felt that webcam is very similar to a face to face meeting in that it allows both adviser and service user to pick up clues from body language. Sometimes it also allowed the adviser to see the service user in their home environment, which could be relevant to their problem.

Advisers felt that it was easier for them to prioritise their workload as after initial contact, most of the follow up work was done by email.

There were some issues that needed to be resolved as the project developed, for example, what would happen when a previous user had a new problem? Would that automatically be accepted and dealt with by the same adviser? Agencies delivering a similar service will need to work through these issues in the light of their own resources and delivery models.

Advisers felt that the wide service offering advertising a service that would potentially cover any housing or welfare benefits problem had caused difficulties on occasions when an obscure problem had required a great deal of research and use of supervisor time. See 'Service Offer' for suggestions about how refining the service offer might assist to resolve this.

SUSTAINABILITY

The Advice Services Transition Fund was a time limited resource aimed at supporting the Advice Sector to develop new models of delivery. The Brighton and Hove Partnership has been successful in utilising this short term opportunity to develop and test a model that has the potential for wider use.

ASTF funding for delivery of the service will end on 30th November 2015 and, at the time of writing, some project officers have found alternative employment. However the service is due to continue, albeit at a significantly reduced level, as part of the Citizens Advice led 'Moneyworks' Financial Inclusion Programme funded by the City Council and DWP. In addition, a small amount of further funding has been secured to explore the potential for engaging law students in delivery of the service.

Digital services

It may be possible to identify funding which is focussed on supporting digital literacy, rather than delivering advice as such, to continue this project or start a similar project, eg through the Carnegie Trust <http://www.carnegieuktrust.org.uk/home>.

Trainee lawyers

As this project is supervised by a qualified solicitor, it may be possible to obtain funding to support a trainee lawyer, eg. through the Justice First Fellowship Scheme.

<http://jff.thelegaleducationfoundation.org/about/>. The Scheme has been established by The Legal Education Foundation, in partnership with Esmée Fairbairn Foundation and Unbound Philanthropy. The Fellowship has three parts:

- Training Contract placements for law graduates seeking to pursue careers in social welfare law;
- Fellows with time and resource during their training period to develop and implement a project that will advance access to justice in some way;
- Additional support, training and opportunities for Fellows to gain skills and feel part of a wider movement of people committed to access to justice.

WEBCAM AND ONLINE BOOKING TOOLKIT

Funding

Advice Brighton and Hove was an Advice Service Transition Fund (ASTF) funded programme led by Brighton and Hove Citizens Advice Bureau on behalf of a partnership of local agencies <http://www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk/>. The webcam and online booking pilot provided advice on housing and benefits issues using the internet, using Skype, Google Hangouts or other digital services to suit the user's convenience. It was delivered through BHT <http://www.bht.org.uk/services/brighton-advice-centre/>.

One of the features of the pilot was that the Digital Advice and Inclusion Officers provided support to clients in using their IT and accessing services digitally. As shown in the evaluation report for the webcam and online booking pilot, users' confidence in using digital services was increased more widely through using this service.

It may be possible to identify funding which is focussed on supporting digital literacy, rather than delivering advice as such, to start a similar project.

Project planning

You need to plan your project carefully.

It is likely to require some time to work with partner agencies and encourage referrals. The Advice Brighton and Hove project took three months to work with stakeholders as they were setting up the project. See appendix 6 Project Timeline for more information.

However, it is important not to think of publicity as a one off exercise. You will need to touch base with stakeholders on a regular basis as people attending group meetings change and individuals move on to other roles.

Level of service and range of topics

It is advisable to think through criteria for the service carefully, otherwise due to the general shortage of free, quality advice, a service without formal referral barriers can become swamped with problems that fall outside its areas of expertise or are catered for already.

Be clear about what level of service you are offering – information / advice and supported self-help or are you able to provide casework as well?

Are you able to provide advice across the whole of a wide topic area, for example, housing or welfare benefits, or would it be better to target specific types of problem? The Advice Brighton and Hove webcam and online booking project found that it would have been better to specialise in particular topics within their original broad headings of 'Housing' and 'Welfare Rights'.

What should happen when a previous user has a new problem? Would that automatically be accepted and dealt with by the same adviser?

You will need advisers with good digital skills as they will probably need to support some of the clients in using their IT to access the service. See appendix 6 for a person specification and job description for a Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer.

You need to ensure that you have the staff you need and the technology works reliably when you launch the service. See appendix 5 for the project timeline – with hindsight it would have been good to spend a bit longer before starting to deliver services.

Web design / IT

Advice Brighton and Hove used WordPress for their website with Events Plus plug-in.

The Web Developer who helped Advice Brighton and Hove to set up the project said that most voluntary sector organisations could use the same model on their own website, with a bit of support. Support for the Events Plus plug-in can be purchased at a reasonable cost.

However, as with all IT projects, the people designing the service were not IT experts and there was room for misunderstandings about what the IT needed to do and the time things would take. It is advisable to be very clear about what you need and critical points in the service delivery plan.

Marketing and working with stakeholders

Hosting the project at BHT allowed easy access to the range of services provided by BHT itself (e.g. in relation to mental health, addiction, homelessness, housing needs and support, work and learning) as well as to partner organisations in the network.

The webcam and online booking project spent a significant amount of time during the first three months of the project working with stakeholders to encourage referrals.

Some referral agencies were concerned that the service would restrict access; but the user profiles shown that in fact, it reached groups which have traditionally found it difficult to access mainstream information and advice provision (see 'Service Statistics' for more information).

This form of service is particularly appropriate for:

- People who have existing access to Skype or can access it through an organisation they are working with
- People who are not within easy reach of face to face services
- People in low paid employment who find it difficult to take time off to get advice
- People with mental health issues or learning disabilities
- People who need support when accessing advice
- People who have mobility issues or are home-based for other reasons
- People with dependent children

The webcam and online booking pilot also found that they needed to refresh the contact regularly throughout the pilot, otherwise referrals from outside agencies could tend to dry up.

COMMON CONCERNS ABOUT SKYPE BASED SERVICES

It won't be suitable for our client group

No form of service delivery is suitable for everyone but most people use the internet. The Office for National Statistics found that between January-March 2015, 86 per cent of adults (44.7 million) in the UK had used the internet in the last three months.

Data on users reported by Toynbee Hall in 2015, (located in Tower Hamlets, which is the third poorest borough nationally and has the highest rate of child poverty in London) found that 78 per cent had access to the internet and almost 89% of those said they did at least one of the following online; shopping, looking up information, banking, comparing product or services, using government or official services and /or signing up for services and making payments online.

It is good practice to offer digital services where they are available so that the client can decide for him/herself whether it is suitable.

The Advice Brighton and Hove webcam and online booking project found that although some people were nervous about using Skype at first, it was popular once people used it (with support if necessary). This increased people's confidence in using digital services more widely. Government policy is that services are to be delivered digitally by default. The advice sector needs to play its part in enabling users to access digital services, otherwise there is a risk that it is perpetuating exclusion from the mainstream.

It won't be confidential

The webcam and online booking project covered this issue in their 'frequently asked questions' (FAQs) on their website. See appendix 8.

Skype is encrypted and is confidential as long as you don't use a landline or mobile phone (see Toolkit section for more information).

You should follow good practice guidelines, e.g. as 'Communication tips' below and Data security – appendix 9.

COMMUNICATION TIPS

Find the right place

Try to avoid places with a lot of background noise. Be aware if there are people nearby who might overhear you.

Make sure your location is well-lit so the other person can see you, and be conscious of what else might be shown by the camera. Make sure things you don't want other people to see are out of sight.

Using a webcam

Make sure your webcam is secure and pointing directly at you. This way, it won't shake or accidentally leave you out of the frame. It helps to make eye contact. Instead of watching the screen, look up when it's your turn to talk, and speak directly to the camera.

Technical issues

When you experience a technical problem on Skype, the best place to go for help is Skype Support <https://www.skype.com/en/>.

Security

If someone walks into the room, let the person know you're on a call.

Always hang up when you've finished. If you forget, the other person may be able to see or hear you later by accident.

APPENDIX 1 - ADVICE AND LEGAL SERVICES VIA SKYPE – FURTHER RESOURCES

Better Leeds Communities <http://www.betterleeds.org.uk/about-blc> offers advice on topics including benefits and tax credit issues, benefit checks, debt, budgeting, problems at work, housing issues, family matters, consumer, health and education via Skype. Appointments are booked by telephone.

Lawworks <https://www.lawworks.org.uk/legal-advice/individuals/veterans-legal-link-clinic> says it will offer a specialist service to veterans in relation to children/family, housing, welfare benefits, and service-related injuries or diseases but it is not clear how to make an appointment.

Lord Thomas When appointed as Lord Chief Justice, Lord Thomas encouraged people to use Skype to find expert legal advice at lower cost: *"In the age of the internet, of teleconferences, Skype and Facetime, there is no reason why a litigant should not or could not properly instruct a lawyer from outside London to work for them at a cost significantly less than in London but with equal quality experience"*

Solicitors in private practice - A number of firms in private practice offer consultation via Skype in a range of categories of law; but these services would not generally be free.

The Criminal Justice System is making increasing use of digital service delivery. For example, in 2014, a Judge at Croydon Crown Court appeared to receive a Jury's verdict via Skype. This is believed to be the first time a Judge was not physically present to do so <http://www.lawgazette.co.uk/practice/virtual-judge-hears-jury-verdict-via-skype/5045093.fullarticle>.

A discussion paper; '**Digital Delivery of Legal Services to People on Low Incomes**' edited by Roger Smith OBE was published by the Legal Education Foundation in the summer of 2015. It posed four key questions:

First, empirically, how is – and how can – the development of digital delivery benefit those on low incomes through: a) new forms of effective legal practice; b) the delivery of legal advice, information and assistance; c) help to self-represented litigants and, potentially, on-line determination of disputes?

Second, what opportunities does digital delivery give to further the convergence of the training of legal skills and legal services?

Third, against what criteria should digital developments be measured, evaluated and regulated?

Fourth, what is our best estimate of digital exclusion and what implications does that have for how it should be addressed?

A further paper is planned for the end of the year.

APPENDIX 2 - CONSULTANT'S EXPERIENCE

Partnership Quality Systems
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Telephone: 020 8466 6677
Website: <http://www.pqsonline.co.uk/>
Email: vicky@vling.demon.co.uk

Vicky Ling is a management consultant who works in not for the profit and commercial legal services sector. She has almost 20 years' experience of providing specialist consultancy advice and support on all issues concerning information, advice and legal services. This has included project planning, developing funding strategies, grant applications and bids for commercial tenders.

Qualifications

- ◆ B.Sc. Social Sciences (Social Policy) (Hons) – London South Bank University
- ◆ M.Phil. Women in Education and the Labour Market - London South Bank University
- ◆ Certificate in Management (Open University)
- ◆ Chartered Quality Professional

I am a member of the Low Commission on the future of advice and legal support 2012 – 2015 www.lowcommission.org.uk

Experience of evaluations and joint service delivery

During 2015, I worked with Tower Hamlets Community Advice Network to develop new models of delivery and improve sustainability <http://thcan.client-projects.net/>.

I am carrying out an evaluation for the London Legal Support Trust of its Centres of Excellence project <http://www.londonlegalsupporttrust.org.uk/grants/centres-of-excellence/>. The project provides free management consultancy to NfP agencies delivering legal services. The role is to research and evaluate how well the project is achieving those aims and report to the Trustees of LLST.

I was a freelance consultant advising Citizens Advice and providing support to CABx with legal aid contracts from 1997 – 2014.

I was a Trustee of the Lewisham CAB Service 1993 - 2015, I served twice as Chair of the Trustee Board. I joined the Bromley CAB Service Trustee Board in 2015.

In 2013 I worked with Sheffield Law Centre and CAB service on the redesign of their services to create one, integrated CAB and Law Centre in the city, with particular reference to meeting SRA requirements.

From 2009 - 2011 I worked with RNIB on the quality and accreditation aspects of a three year project to develop its Welfare Rights and Legal Service and improve integration with other RNIB services.

I was an approved consultant under the 2010 Tender Support Project managed by the National Association for Voluntary and Community Action.

As a consultant to Citizens Advice, I was involved in the tender to create the West Sussex Community Legal Advice Network (2009-10). I also worked on the Gateshead Community Legal Advice Centre bid in 2006, and provided ongoing support on operational matters to both services.

I worked with nine different Citizens Advice Bureaux and Law Centres in relation to consortia bids for social welfare law contracts with the Legal Services Commission in 2010.

In 2006 I was joint consultant (with Jean Hemmings) to evaluate the 'Money Maze' project funded by the DWP involving Age Concern Wirral, Age Concern England and 40 other Age Concerns. I carried out a review of fieldwork services administration for Age Concern England (as it then was) in 2002.

In 2005, I was a joint consultant (with Clare Shirtcliff) on a project to improve joint working between Law Centres in the Greater Manchester area to enhance capacity and improve the delivery of publicly funded legal services.

In 2002 I was interim Manager North Kensington Law Centre. I managed 13 staff including senior solicitors, solicitors, caseworkers, administrators, and reception staff, both paid and volunteer. I managed Legal Aid Contracts in Immigration, Housing, Employment, Welfare Benefits and Education. I developed three complex funding bids, accounting for 54% of the Centre's funding.

From 1987 – 1993, I was Manager of Chelsea Citizens Advice Bureau.

APPENDIX 3 – PEOPLE WHO CONTRIBUTED THROUGH INTERVIEWS AND QUESTIONS ASKED

A Client

Alex Brining – (Digital Advice & Inclusion Officer, Advice Brighton and Hove (based at BHT)

Daniella Westcott – Support Co-ordinator Downs Link Group

Dawn Devaney – BHT

Mark James – SCIP It Services for Charities

Nigel Parkinson – Project Manager (later stage of the project)

Paul Sweeting – Business Development Coordinator, Advice Brighton and Hove (based at Brighton and Hove Citizens Advice)

Simon Whitwell – (Digital Advice & Inclusion Officer, Advice Brighton and Hove (based at BHT)

Evaluation interview questions – Referrers and service users

1. Did you use / refer people to the service?
2. What did the service do for you / your client
3. Was it easy to use/ refer?
4. What are the best things about it?
5. Did you experience any problems or issues in using / referring people to the service?
6. Is there anything you could suggest to improve the service?
7. (For referrers) What is your impression of the client experience compared to traditional face to face delivery?
8. Do you know if the person you referred had ever used traditional advice services in the past? If no – was there a reason for that?
Or
Have you ever used traditional advice services? If no – was there a reason for that?
9. Do you think this type of service is particularly suited to certain client groups?
10. Would you recommend other people to use this service?
11. Is there anything else you would like to say?

Evaluation interview questions – People involved in delivery

1. Please can you tell me about your role in relation to the project?
2. What are the best things about it?
3. What have been the challenges in setting up and managing service delivery in this way?
4. How were they overcome?
5. If there were one thing you would have done differently, what would it have been?

6. What is your impression of the client experience compared to traditional face to face delivery?
7. Is there any evidence that there are any particular client groups that prefer or benefit from this way of delivering advice services?
8. Can you think of any other groups for whom this method would be particularly appropriate?
9. Would you recommend other agencies to use this method of delivering advice?
10. What would be your key recommendation to others considering setting up a similar project?
11. Is there anyone else / another agency I should talk to about the project?
12. Is there anything else you would like to say?

APPENDIX 4 – CARERS CENTRE DIGITAL FOCUS GROUP REPORT

Author Tess Craven – Advice Brighton and Hove May 2015

Background

On the 6th March 2015 Advice Brighton & Hove facilitated a focus group with The Carers Centre– a charity which works with informal / family carers; the aim was to explore whether this community might benefit from accessing the new webcam advice service. We were also keen to gather feedback on any improvements that they felt might be necessary to make this service more accessible.

This is part of a wider piece of work which Advice Brighton & Hove is undertaking, aiming to evaluate the digital advice project as well as promote it to communities who may benefit from it. We have already spoken to adults with learning disabilities and mental health problems. There will be a briefing produced from each piece of group work as well as a final report based on findings from across all of the groups. It is hoped that this piece of work can be part of a comprehensive evaluation of the digital advice service and help inform our next steps.

The focus group was held at The Carers Centre’s offices in Hove and 6 carers, along with one worker attended. Participants were offered a £10 voucher for taking part. The session consisted of a focus group which was recorded and transcribed, as well as individual sessions which allowed people to try out the service in a more in depth way.

Of the 6 participants all of them regularly accessed the internet and felt confident doing so. They all saw the potential benefit of the webcam advice service for carers

“I could see it really helping people who are housebound, that is disabled people and carers. It could be the only conversation you have that day and to actually see someone’s face, to feel you have a bit of rapport going, it makes it a lot more personal”

Need

Our series of digital focus groups are being set up as part of our digital outreach programme which is part of the remit of the digital advice service. The webcam advice service has been up and running for 9 months; in that time the people who have accessed the service have predominantly been working age adults (70%) without a disability (82%)

This reflects our expectations that initially this service would be used by those who are more 'digitally aware' – however, we recognise that this service could be extremely beneficial to groups who may not be able to access mainstream advice easily. This may be because they are less able to get out and about easily because of illness, disability or caring responsibilities.

According to the Carers Trust a “carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. Each carer’s experience is unique to their own circumstance”² There are around 6.5 million carers in the UK and they save the economy an estimated £119 billion a year.

There is a strong relationship between having caring responsibilities and experiencing deprivation and social exclusion. A recent analysis by the charity, Carers UK, reveal that recent benefit cuts are pushing them further into debt, arrears and food poverty. The charity says cuts to the financial support of full-time carers between 2011 and 2018 include:

Carer’s allowance - £175.63m cut: 24,457 fewer entitled to the carer’s allowance with implementation of the Personal Independence Payment.

Bedroom tax - £150.70m cut: At least 40,000 carers to see rent support cut by over £700 a year because of the housing benefit ‘spare room’ changes.

Benefit cap - £72.4m cut: At least 2,946 carers to see incomes capped, losing an average of £105 a week.

Inflation switch - £421.91m cut: Dramatic devaluing of the carer’s allowance by 2018 with the switch from the Retail Prices Index to the Consumer Prices Index.

Real-terms cut to Help For Poorest - £76.94m cut: 350,000 worst-off carers hit by means-tested benefits freeze.

Council tax support - £170.34m cut: Over 240,000 carers face additional council tax charges following the scrapping of the council tax benefit.³

Carers need independent advice because of these challenges but are often not accessing it because of certain barriers – this means that they are at risk of becoming more disadvantaged than they already are.

² <http://www.carers.org/role-carer>

³ <file:///C:/Users/tess.craven/Downloads/brefing-welfare-reform-act.pdf>

The Focus Group

During the focus group we asked questions around accessing advice as well as computer and internet usage. We demonstrated a skype call and participants took it in turns to try it out and give feedback on their experience.

‘Traditional’ Advice – All of the participants had accessed advice and recognised the need for specialist support around understanding their rights and responsibilities – both for themselves as carers and for the person whom they were caring for. Participants discussed their experiences of accessing advice both face to face and on the telephone and highlighted some significant issues for carers; particularly around finding the time to go to appointments

“waiting for an advice appointment has massive implications – you are relying on whoever you have left at home looking after the person you care for, they might have to go within a fixed period of time or you’ve left the person you care for on their own and that’s not always ideal. You are thinking ‘this is stressful enough already’ but it adds on so much more stress” (Cathy⁴ – Carer)

“if an appointment doesn’t happen on time for some reason or another, it might not be anyone’s fault, but its quite difficult because you set your whole day around the fact that this is going to happen at 10 o’clock and it still hasn’t happened by 10.45 then it causes big problems. Usually it’s quite a stressy thing, if you want advice about something, but this makes it worse” (Eleanor – Carer)

Whilst there were barriers for carers in getting into advice appointments, they did appreciate seeing an adviser face to face

“I like to see someone face to face, there’s more rapport going on... It’s then a real person” (Diana – Carer)

Participants also discussed their experience of getting advice over the telephone. Whilst they acknowledged a preference for face to face advice for more complicated matters they felt there were benefits of getting advice over the phone, particularly as it means more flexibility and less stress around organising someone to look after the person they care for

“I tend to go for telephone advice because it fits around caring much easier... it offers me the flexibility I need and saves me coming into Brighton, finding a parking space, that kind of thing” (Felicity – Carer)

⁴ Real names not used

However, at times, getting advice for the person they care for on the telephone can present some challenges

“The problem we have as carers getting advice for the people we care for over the phone is often they can’t give us the information because of confidentiality. My brother is deaf so I speak on the phone for him a lot but always run into problems, they don’t give me the information I ask for even when I have all his details and his consent” (Eleanor – Carer)

Webcam Advice – A brief explanation of the webcam advice service was given to the participants; this service allows people to make an advice appointment online via www.advicebrighton-hove.org.uk and be given an email with instructions on how to connect to Skype; at the time of their appointment they speak to an adviser via webcam, this appointment can be a one off or casework can be offered in more complex situations. Participants then tried the service out and gave feedback. They all agreed that it has the potential to offer the flexibility of phone advice but with the personal connection offered in face to face appointments. This has benefits for both carer and cared for

“There is this whole backwards and forwards thing over the phone, of speaking on behalf of the person we care for but proving who you are... For us webcam would be the ideal situation as you could all sit down together without having to leave your house” (Cathy – Carer)

“[Benefit] forms are so complicated. My brother gets so daunted just looking at massive form and not being sure. Of course most of it doesn’t apply to him, he doesn’t have children, he doesn’t have a spouse, so he needn’t bother with those bits. He just needs someone to physically show him that and this service could” (Eleanor – Carer)

“My daughter hates using the phone, she clams up and it totally stresses her out, she hates not being able to see people when she speaks to them, I ask her why and she says that when she cannot see someone and can only hear them it is like a monster or an alien” (Diana – Carer)

All of the participants in the focus group used the internet and 2 of them used Skype regularly

“I was introduced to it by a friend... At the time both of my daughters lived in Dublin and it was very expensive calling them. This friend suggested I download Skype and I was like “oh no, I can’t do that, it’s far too complicated!” but its not that bad – once you set it up it’s a doddle!” (Felicity – Carer)

However, the group did envisage some particular barriers for carers when using this service. Firstly around internet connection and specifically around the cost of this

“I actually can’t afford internet connection, it’s not cheap... lots of carers don’t have much disposable money” (Diana – Carer)

And also around finding confidential space away from the person they cared for

“A lot of carers might be stuck indoors with the person they care for, but they might need to use a service like this in a space where the person they care for can’t hear them, this is an issue I think. The person you care for might get angry with what you are saying” (Julie – Carer)

These are no easy answers to these questions, and all of the participants agreed that this service might not be suitable for everyone. However recognising the need for choice was a strong theme, all of the group agreed that the more varied the methods of service delivery, the more likely it was that people would get the help when they really needed it

Recommendations

Continue to promote this service to people who may benefit from it – All of the group felt that the webcam advice service could really help carers to get information and advice, especially if they were housebound through their caring duties. None of the group had heard about the service before so further work needs to be done around promoting this service to communities who may benefit. The worker from The Carers Centre suggested that the Digital Advice & Inclusion Officers attend some of the carers coffee mornings to introduce and outline the service as well as answer questions.

Explore using it with other services – Because of the potential benefits for carers of offering advice via webcam, the group felt that this method of service delivery should be explored by other services. In the same way that physically getting to advice appointments can present problems for both carers and the cared for, so too, can getting to all other appointments. It could also offer independence for the cared for, reducing pressure on carers.

“It could give my brother a really independent life, at the moment he has to rely on us to speak over the phone for him but he wouldn’t need that. He uses Skype with my mum but if he could communicate with services like this it would be so much better for everyone” (Eleanor – Carer)

They were particularly interested in the benefits of it being used in health settings

“Using it in GP’s – that would be wonderful, that could really make a difference in people’s lives (Julie – Carer)

Accessibility is a key issue for all services so it is important to recognise how webcam services have the potential to overcome difficulties of access by offering a new way of doing things and ensuring that people feel empowered through being able to communicate in ways which suit them best.

APPENDIX 5 – SPEAK OUT – DIGITAL FOCUS GROUP

Author Tess Craven – Advice Brighton and Hove – February 2015

Background

On the 22nd January 2015 Advice Brighton & Hove facilitated a focus group with Speak Out – an independent advocacy organisation for adults with learning disabilities in Brighton & Hove. This was to explore whether this community might benefit from accessing the new webcam advice service. We were also keen to gather feedback on any improvements that they felt might be necessary to make this service more accessible.

This is part of a wider piece of work which Advice Brighton & Hove is undertaking, aiming to evaluate the digital advice project as well as promote it to communities who may benefit from it. We have further focus groups planned with carers and people with mental health problems and we hope to organise more with people over 50 and single parents. There will be a briefing produced from each piece of group work as well as a final report based on findings from across all of the groups. It is hoped that this piece of work can form a comprehensive evaluation of the digital advice service and help inform our next steps.

The focus group was held at Speak Out's offices in Hove and 7 adults with learning disabilities, along with one worker and one signer attended. Participants were offered a £10 voucher for taking part. The session consisted of a focus group which was recorded and transcribed, as well as individual sessions which allowed people comfortable with the technology to try out the service in a more in depth way.

Of the 7 participants 3 people regularly accessed the internet and felt confident doing so. However, they all saw the potential benefits of they online advice service.

“I can't get out easily because I can't walk that far and I have to have someone take me [using skype] would be great, it would be so much easier”

Need

Our series of digital focus groups are being set up as part of our digital outreach programme which is part of the remit of the digital advice service. The webcam advice service has been up and running for 7 months; in that time the people who have accessed the service have predominantly been working age adults (70%) without a disability (82%)

This reflects our expectations that initially this service would be used by those who are more 'digitally aware' – however, we recognise that this service could be extremely beneficial to groups who may not be able to access mainstream advice easily. This may be because they are less able to get out and about easily because of illness, disability or caring responsibilities.

There is a strong relationship between learning disabilities, deprivation and social exclusion. Research suggests that disabled people are almost twice as likely to experience poverty and individuals with learning disabilities are faced with extra costs as a result of their impairment(s), extra expenditure owing to specified or extensive needs, necessary adjustments to their home, the cost of buying support and care services, extra costs of transport services, and so on. Added to this is the impact of welfare reform on this community. Many people with learning disabilities use welfare benefits to meet the additional costs of their disability to ensure they live the most independent life possible. Some of the changes which may affect people with learning disabilities disproportionately are;

- Disability Living Allowance reform / introduction of Personal Independence Payments (PIP)
- Changes to Employment Support Allowance (ESA)
- Plans to replace all means tested benefits – including income related ESA, Income Support and Housing Benefit with Universal Credit.

People with learning disabilities need independent advice because of these challenges but are often not accessing it because of certain barriers – this means that they are at risk of becoming more disadvantaged than they already are.

The Focus Group

During the focus group we asked questions around computer and internet usage as well as questions around whether people have access to the internet and whether they had ever used it to find advice and information.

We demonstrated a skype call and participants took it in turns to try it out and give feedback on their experience.

The way advice is delivered – The participants recognised the need for advice and most of them had received some kind of support to access advice in the past. We thought of some scenario's where advice might be needed and discussed the potential barriers to getting advice in a traditional way.

“Face to face is OK but I don’t like speaking on the telephone, cos I hesitate a lot and when I’m on the phone the person on the phone might not understand that... It’s easier if I can see them”

“It comes down to the individual, I am good at reading and writing so paperwork suits me but for others it’s not the same”

“It’s good if people can make a choice”

Recognising the need for choice was a strong theme, all of the members of the group had different needs, 1 person said that because they were deaf they liked advice and information to be written down, whilst 2 others were unable to read lots of words so spoken advice was better for them. All of the participants agreed that being able to choose from different options of getting advice helps them take control of their lives

Using the internet to get advice and information – 3 of the people in the focus group used the internet regularly and have free access at home. The other 4 had varying degrees of confidence when it came to using computers. All of the group felt that developing the skills and confidence to go online and help themselves would be a positive thing

“I’d like it, to go on the internet to find things; I think it could be really useful”

“I use the computer a lot at home, I have a tablet. I sometimes go on google or on to google maps to find out where I need to go... It helps me find the answers”

“I don’t use the internet but the staff have it where I live, I would be interested in using it but I would need support to use it”

The webcam ‘experience’ – Participants were asked to think of a question they wanted to ask relating to advice, they were given examples such as ‘I’m having problems with my money’ or ‘I don’t understand my benefits’, they then connected to skype and asked an online adviser. All of the participants were extremely positive about the experience

“I heard him really easily”

“The picture was really good”

“It is good to call people but to be able to see them at the same time”

“that was easy!”

“This is so awesome! We are all doing really well!”

“I could hear so well – I could use this at home”

Even participants who had been less sure about taking part found it straightforward. One of the participants was deaf and initially had felt that he

didn't want to try it as he was struggling to see how it related to him; we set up the skype call so his signer was with the adviser and he decided to give it a go – he was able to communicate really clearly with his signer, and he reported that he felt extremely happy, as while he may not use this technology to seek online advice he was going to ask the staff where he lived if he could make skype calls to his family. This demonstrates that that being supported to access the service enhances peoples sense of being 'digitally included'.

The website – 3 of the group went on to do further 1:1 work evaluating the accessibility of the website

- All of them said that it was very easy to book an appointment for the webcam advice service
- All of them said that it was very easy to speak to someone via Skype
- All of them said that it was quite easy to find an advice agency from the online directory
- Finally, all of them said that they would use this service, both at home or in a supported environment (for example at the Speak Out drop in)

Recommendations

Ensure service is accessible – one of the things which all participants fed back was that using pictures in any written communication is particularly useful for adults with learning disabilities. They suggested that along with a map and the address of the service on the online directory there should also be a picture of the building

*“It is really helpful to see a picture of somewhere before we go there”
“If I haven't seen a picture of somewhere it can be really difficult to find it...
yesterday I went somewhere but I didn't know I was there as I hadn't seen a picture first”*

Speak Out has a guide on how to make information accessible – this should be used to make necessary adjustments to the online advice directory

Continue to promote this service to people who may benefit from it – Many of the group felt that webcam advice would be a good service for them if they encountered problems in the future where they needed advice. Staff at Speak Out said that it could work well for them as normally an advocate would need to accompany a person to an appointment – being able to connect to an adviser

online, in a place where the person felt comfortable would both save time and be an easier experience for the person seeking advice. None of the participants had heard of the online advice service and neither had the workers. Further work publicising the service with community organisations is needed in order for it to be properly accessible

Explore using it with other services – Another thing which came from the group was how a webcam service could be used for things other than advice. They reported that often with GP appointments, when they called to talk about their health, they were offered a ‘ring back service’ where the doctor will call them to see if they do in fact need a face to face appointment. Many of the group found phone conversations challenging and stressful

“they ring me to see if I need an appointment and it’s not easy... [a skype call] would be great, it would be so much easier!”

“It would be much clearer for me to be able to see them and talk to them at the same time, I would prefer it”

It is important that all services bear in mind issues of accessibility and how webcam services have the potential to overcome these by offering a new way of doing things and ensuring that people feel empowered through being able to communicate in ways which suit them best.

APPENDIX 6 - PROJECT TIMELINE

Period	Stage	Lead	Outputs
December 13 – March 14	Initiation & Scoping	Business Development Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnership Agreement on project design / scope
April 14 – May 14	Project Development	Business Development Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New website & online booking portal delivered by SCIP Service Specification & data collection framework agreed with BHT Agreed JD's for BHT delivery officers Appointment of 1st Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer
June 14 – August 14	Soft launch of Service	1 st Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Delivery of initial sessions Identification of 'teething' issues
September 14 December 14	Main delivery phase #1	1 st & 2 nd Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appointment of 2nd Digital Advice Officer Delivery of sessions Development of promotional materials and implementation of publicity plan. Promotion via engagement

			<p>with potential referral agencies</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development and dissemination of
December14 – May 15	User testing and Involvement	Social Policy and Impact officer	<p>Focus group sessions & related reports:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers • Adults with learning difficulties • Mental Health Service Users
July – October 2015	Project Evaluation & learning	Independent consultant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evaluation report • Implementation Toolkit • Assessment of options for post ASTF sustainability
November 2015	ASTF Project Close	Business Development Coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dissemination of findings • Implementation of post ASTF sustainability plan

APPENDIX 7 – JOB DESCRIPTION AND PERSON SPECIFICATION

JOB DESCRIPTION

Job Title: Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer

Job Summary:

To work with residents and partner organisations to remove the barriers to the use of digital methods of advice provision and to deliver an online service to enable residents access to advice on social welfare law issues including housing, debt, employment and benefits.

The post will work closely with the Project's other Digital Advice and Inclusion Worker and other advice staff to ensure that services are developed that meet the needs of residents requiring access to advice services utilising new methods of delivery.

Responsible to: Senior Manager Advice Services

Responsible for: Volunteers

Significant Working Relationships: Clients; BHT staff; ASTF staff; Advice Providers; Partners; Local agencies

Tasks and responsibilities:

Work with host Centres to ensure access to a range of residents.

Identifying current barriers to the use of digital advice resources and working with partner agencies to overcome them for both individual residents and advice organisations.

Put in place and deliver an agreed online advice service in conjunction with the other Digital Advice and Inclusion Officer and advice organisations.

Work with the Advice Brighton & Hove Project Team to develop publicity for the service.

Engage with partner organisations to review service.

Recruit volunteers to support ongoing service development.

Participate in the mid-term and endpoint evaluations of the service.

Engage with service users to ensure the service meets needs through client involvement.

To work on the implementation of the Advice Brighton and Hove online advice tool.

To establish effective referral systems for residents accessing the Advice Brighton & Hove online advice tool.

To provide initial responses to advice queries from residents using the Advice Brighton & Hove online advice tool.

Produce project briefings for the Project Group/Advice Partnership including monitoring information.

Participate in Advice Brighton and Hove Project meetings.

Produce online content to support providers in the provision of advice services and link to other relevant online information on positive outcomes.

No job description can cover every issue which may arise within the post at various times and the post holder is expected to carry out other duties from time to time which are broadly consistent with those in this document.

PERSON SPECIFICATION

This post requires that the post holder has the following skills and experience to fulfil the job description. Please address yourself to the points marked * and explain clearly how your experience and knowledge meets each of these requirements.

Experience:

One year's full-time experience advising on social welfare law or the equivalent part-time

Experience of using relevant IT systems for the delivery of advice services to an advanced level including MS Office, case management and an understanding of wordpress.

Experience of working to quality assurance systems relevant to the provision of advice services.

Experience of participation in meetings and other fora.

Essential: Skills/Ability/Knowledge and attitudes

Understanding of the use of technology in the provision of information and advice on social welfare issues in relation to both service users and providers

Ability to liaise effectively with outside agencies such as advice providers, the local authority, relevant government departments and voluntary and community organisations

Ability to communicate complex information effectively with a wide variety of people from different

backgrounds

Understanding of the role of client involvement in the development of information and advice services

Ability to work as part of a multi-agency team.

A proactive approach to project work and a creative approach to problem solving

An understanding of the causes of digital exclusion and the approaches taken to reduce this.

A commitment to the promotion of equality through the development and delivery of accessible advice services

An ability to collect, analyse and report on monitoring information relating to the provision of advice services.

An understanding of the role of partnership working in the delivery of advice services.

APPENDIX 8 – FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

These FAQs are taken from the webcam and online booking project's website

This service is primarily aimed at people who are familiar with using a webcam.

Once you book an appointment we will send you an email confirming the booking. We will send you a second email with instructions on how to connect to the service.

WHAT IF I DON'T HAVE A SKYPE ACCOUNT?

If you do not have a Skype account, you can still access the service using a Google + Hangout. This is a free alternative to Skype and works within your web browser.

Before the appointment we will send you a Google username and password so that you can log into Google + before the hangout starts. You might be asked to install a plugin if your computer requires additional support. The way we use Google Hangouts is confidential and nobody else will be able to see your details.

Each appointment uses a different password, so if you need a second appointment, we will send you a new password.

CAN I USE A TABLET COMPUTER?

We can offer advice over a tablet computer, such as an iPad. However, this may reduce the extent of the service we can provide. A laptop or desktop is preferable.

IS THIS SERVICE FREE?

Yes, this service is 100% free to residents of Brighton and Hove. It is funded by the Big Lottery.

IS THIS SERVICE CONFIDENTIAL?

Yes, this service is 100% confidential. We will never share your details with anyone without your express permission.

CAN I CANCEL MY APPOINTMENT?

If you know you cannot make your appointment please let us know, so we can offer it to another person.

You can cancel your appointment either using a link in the confirmation email or by emailing us at advice@advicebrighton-hove.org.uk.

WHY DO YOU NEED MY PHONE NUMBER?

There could be problems with the technology and we might need to call you to offer assistance.

WHY DO YOU NEED MY POSTCODE?

The service is provided for residents of Brighton and Hove exclusively.

WHAT WILL HAPPEN AT THE TIME OF MY APPOINTMENT?

First you will need to make sure your webcam is on.

If we are contacting you using Skype, we will call you, so please accept the call. The call will come from Advice Brighton.

If we are contacting you using Google Hangouts please log into the Google + account and wait for us to start the hangout.

We will send you instructions before the appointment.

APPENDIX 9 - SECURITY AND DATA PROTECTION

Information commissioner's top tips for data security

Top five tips <https://ico.org.uk/for-organisations/charity/>

Top five of data protection tips for small and medium sized charities and third sector organisations:

- 1. Tell people what you are doing with their data**
People should know what you are doing with their information and who it will be shared with. This is a legal requirement (as well as established best practice) so it is important you are open and honest with people about how their data will be used.
- 2. Make sure your staff are adequately trained**
New employees must receive data protection training to explain how they should store and handle personal information. Refresher training should be provided at regular intervals for existing staff.
- 3. Use strong passwords**
There is no point protecting the personal information you hold with a password if that password is easy to guess. All passwords should contain upper and lower case letters, a number and ideally a symbol. This will help to keep your information secure from would-be thieves.
- 4. Encrypt all portable devices**
Make sure all portable devices – such as memory sticks and laptops – used to store personal information are encrypted.
- 5. Only keep people's information for as long as necessary**
Make sure your organisation has established retention periods in place and set up a process for deleting personal information once it is no longer required.

Skype and encryption⁵

All Skype-to-Skype voice, video, file transfers and instant messages are encrypted. This protects you from potential eavesdropping by malicious users.

If you make a call from Skype to mobile and landline phones, the part of your call that takes place over the PSTN (the ordinary phone network) is not encrypted.

For example, in the case of group calls involving two users on Skype-to-Skype and one user on PSTN, then the PSTN part is not encrypted, but the Skype-to-Skype portion is.

For instant messages, we use TLS (transport-level security) to encrypt your messages between your Skype client and the chat service in our cloud, or AES (Advanced

⁵ <https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA31/does-skype-use-encryption>

Encryption Standard) when sent directly between two Skype clients. Most messages are sent both ways, but in the future it will only be sent via our cloud to provide the optimal user experience.

Voice messages are delivered to you encrypted in the same way as Skype calls and instant messages are encrypted. However, after you have listened to a voice message, it is transferred from our servers to your local machine, where it is stored as an unencrypted file.

Skype uses the AES (Advanced Encryption Standard*), also known as Rijndael, which is used by the US Government to protect sensitive information, and Skype has for some time always used the strong 256-bit encryption. User public keys are certified by the Skype server at login using 1536 or 2048-bit RSA certificates.