

First User Engagement on 29 June 2020

The first User Engagement Group met remotely on 29 June 2020, during the first lockdown period, and engaged in a helpful and informative discussion regarding their experiences during the lockdown period where the centre was closed. Prior to the session, users were invited to complete and return a questionnaire on whether they would prefer to continue to access services remotely or in the centre once lockdown was over.

The engagement with service users continued for a month through telephone discussion and email survey. In the end a total of 90 service users completed and returned the questionnaire. A total of 37 users had accessed our services at the centre pre-lockdown **and** remotely during lockdown.

Whilst there was **no clear preference** for individual services to be provided remotely there is clearly **a significant minority of users** who would welcome the current remote offering to remain post-lockdown when face to face sessions are possible. When considering our offering as a whole, a slight majority (17 more likely to 13 less likely) of those who have experienced services both before and after lockdown say that they are **more likely** to access the services remotely in the future.

Having said that, it is clear that providing complementary therapy sessions, wellbeing classes and social & creative activities remotely are less popular, although again it may be felt that there is **sufficient interest to retain remote access in some form**, possibly where sessions are recorded and made available for a limited period or password protected?

It is also clear that certain sessions lend themselves to being provided remotely, for example counselling and support groups, emotional support, legal help, informative workshops and would certainly seem to be worth continuing.

It may be that the ideal provision of services when clients can access the centre is with a combination of remotely and face to face offerings. This would seem to be supported by the relatively even split of preferences across the three categories, except possibly for complementary therapy, where there seems to be a clear preference for accessing this service within the centre.

Comments from our service users regarding remote support were:

- *we would love to see most services also remain virtual even when the centre reopens, particularly for busy professionals / young families. They can incorporate this help that the centre provides into their lives when otherwise they wouldn't have the time or prioritise this help.*
- *the counselling works very well over zoom and though I know this will differ person to person, I felt more able to talk honestly in a virtual session in the comfort of my own home.*
- *younger males that are sometimes less likely to ask for help or open up (maybe) more able and comfortable to use the services virtually and would have felt too uncomfortable in person.*

"I love the idea of remote access and wish that a recorded video for tips of healthy eating, relaxation techniques including eft a sample mindfulness exercise. These can be found on website to give us some support at any time."

The opposing view, and reasons for it, were expressed by one user, who said:

"I cannot be on/use the mobile, laptop, computer, internet, zoom for a long time due to my eyesight and head pain."

You Said, We Did

Retaining remote access after lockdown was raised in the user group and the replies to the questionnaires and the response is as follows:

1. The intention is to retain remote access to as many of our service offerings as possible after any lockdown period(s) ends. We may need to use password protected files.
2. Our Complementary Therapy Lead, Julie Quinn, will be recording short video clips of therapy treatments, which will be uploaded to our You Tube channel. We will work on making the whole channel accessible only to our service users and on extending the offering to other areas, such as uploading videos of healthy, nutritious recipes etc.

Presented by Tom Stockton