

Health and Community Care

Breathing Space Telephone Advice Line – Omnibus Survey Evaluation of Public Awareness

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Breathing Space is a government-funded, NHS 24-run telephone service that aims to act as a 'first-stop' service for those experiencing depression or low mood. Although open to everyone, it is aimed primarily at men aged 16-40 years old, as in recent years they have been particularly at risk from death by suicide. It is one of a number of key initiatives of the Scottish Government's National Programme for Improving Mental Health and Wellbeing. The work presented here was commissioned by the Scottish Government to gauge awareness of Breathing Space and of the recent Breathing Space advertising campaign amongst the general public.

Main Findings

- Spontaneously, 8% of respondents mentioned Breathing Space when asked what services they were aware of for those experiencing low mood or depression
- There was a significant increase in prompted awareness (those who had heard of Breathing Space and could correctly identify its function), from 9% in 2005 to 15% in 2008
- In addition, over half of those who had heard of the organisation correctly recalled it was a helpline (56% from 47% in 2005)
- Spontaneous campaign recall was encouraging amongst those aware of Breathing Space, with 65% of those aware of the service recalling the campaign. Across the total sample this figure was 9%
- Television was the main source of advertising recalled with prompted awareness of 61%
- Those that recalled the advertising were able to correctly describe one or more elements of the campaign, and in most cases the key messages of the campaign had been communicated to those that recalled any of the adverts
- There were few changes in attitudes towards Breathing Space since 2005 with 54% of those who were aware of the organisation continuing to believe that they would recommend Breathing Space
- Those saying that they would use the service themselves have dropped since 2005 (from 38% to 34%), but only 18% stated they would definitely not use the organisation themselves
- Over two thirds of respondents (68%) thought that the service was meant equally for both sexes and respondents were most likely to think that the campaign was aimed at all age groups (61%) with a fifth thinking it was meant for 'people like them'
- Nearly half the general public (49%) thought Breathing Space should be open at all times, however most actual calls to Breathing Space are within the times it is actually open
- Only a third of respondents thought that there were enough services to help people with low mood / depression, however 60% of respondents said they would know where to turn were they to experience such symptoms, with over two thirds (67%) saying they would turn to their family or friends first

Breathing Space Campaign Evaluation

In 2006, an evaluation report of the Breathing Space telephone line for those with low mood / depression specified that a comparable omnibus survey to the one which was carried out in 2005 should be repeated so that any changes in the general public's awareness of the service and its campaign materials could be tracked.

Aim of the Evaluation

The main aim was to gauge awareness of the Breathing Space service amongst the general public, including examining recall of recent advertising.

Specifically, the research objectives were:

- Track changes in the general public's awareness of, and response to, the service and campaign materials
- Identify levels of campaign awareness amongst the general public
- Examine understanding and perceived appropriateness of the campaign messages amongst the general public
- Explore people's perceptions of the service for themselves or for their friends/family if they experienced low mood or depression
- Explore awareness of existing services for low mood/depression

Methods

Given the need for comparability with the previous research; the nature of the objectives and the target audience, an omnibus approach was considered to be the most appropriate method. 1,040 adults throughout Scotland were interviewed from the 10th – 16th October 2008¹. The sample was representative of the Scottish population in terms of age, gender, employment status and socio-economic grouping (SEG) and covered 52 constituencies throughout Scotland with sampling points selected to be representative in terms of location and political constituency. The final data set was weighted to match the 2001 Census results. The data set was analysed by the target group (16-40 year old males).

¹ With the exception of the spontaneous awareness of services for those with low mood / depression question – this was placed in the November omnibus (7th – 13th November 2008) to avoid pollution from other questions in October.

Key Findings

Awareness of Breathing Space

When respondents were asked unprompted what services they were aware of for those with low mood or depression, 8% spontaneously said Breathing Space. Respondents were most likely to answer 'GP/Doctors' (51%) and 'The Samaritans' (25%).

There was a significant increase in respondents who had both heard of Breathing Space and could correctly identify its function, from 9% in 2005 to 15% in 2008 (17% of the target group). This increase was even higher amongst younger respondents aged 16-44 (20% from 13% in 2005).

The proportion of respondents who spontaneously said they thought Breathing Space was for 'helpline / depression / feeling low' has risen to 56% (47% in 2005).

Campaign Recall

Respondents who both had heard of Breathing Space and were able to correctly identify its function were asked if they remembered seeing or hearing any advertising for the service lately. Approaching two thirds (65%) said that they had, with a further 24% saying either 'possibly' or 'unsure'. 68% of the target group (16-40 males) recalled seeing or hearing advertising.

Of those that thought they had seen or heard advertising for Breathing Space, over half (51%) thought they had seen it on television – rising to 75% amongst the target group - and over a quarter (27%) thought they had heard it on the radio. They were then asked to describe what they remembered seeing or hearing. Encouragingly, those that thought they recalled advertising were able to describe at least one element of the campaign correctly. A quarter recalled 'man drawing the same thing over and over on a post-it note' and a fifth (20%) recalled 'man talking about not easy to talk about problems/depression'.

To explore the public's understanding of the campaign messages, the respondents who recalled seeing or hearing advertising were then asked (without further prompting) what they thought the main message of the advert had been. Over a fifth (21%) thought the main message was 'open up when you're feeling down', the strapline of the television advert. This figure was 39% amongst the target group of 16-40 males. Nearly a quarter of respondents (24%) thought it was 'the hardest part is making the first call/contact for help', and a fifth (20%) remembered it as being 'Breathing Space makes it easier for men to talk about their problems'.

Respondents were then prompted with campaign material to test prompted recall.

All respondents were shown stills of the Breathing Space television advert and asked if they recalled seeing it. Almost a fifth (19%) recalled seeing it, with a further 6% being unsure. Amongst the target group the figure for recall was 28%.

They were then prompted with the poster, pocket card and press images from the campaign and asked if they recalled seeing them recently. 10% said that they had (higher amongst the target group at 14%), with a further 6% being unsure.

To test radio recall, respondents were played a recording of the recent Breathing Space radio advertisement and asked if they remembered hearing it in the last 3 months. Approaching a fifth (18%) said that they had, with a further 5% being unsure. Amongst the target group there was an 18% recall. Those that did recall hearing it were asked on what radio stations they recalled hearing it. A third (33%) answered Real Radio and 22% answered Clyde 1.

Likelihood to recommend / use service

In order to explore people's perceptions of the Breathing Space service, respondents were asked whether they would consider recommending Breathing Space to a family member or friend. Over half (54%) answered that they would (consistent with the 2005 findings), and amongst the target group, this figure was 69%.

Respondents were then asked whether they would ever consider using Breathing Space themselves. Just over a third (34%) said they would, with another 32% saying possibly. Again, respondents in the target group of 16-40 year old males were more likely to answer positively with 46% saying they would.

Respondents who answered yes, possibly or unsure were then asked in what circumstances they would consider using the service. Over a third (34%) stated that they would use the service if they were feeling low / depressed (higher than the 2005 figure of 23%) and 18% said they would use it if they had no-one to talk to (again higher than the 2005 figure of 5%).

Target Audience

Respondents were presented with the press/pocket card/poster images and asked a series of questions about who they thought the service was aimed at.

All respondents were asked if they thought the service advertised was meant for 'people like you'. Over a fifth (21%) said that they thought it was, with a further 12% being unsure. Males aged 16-40 were more likely than the overall sample to think it was aimed at them with 29% answering yes.

They were then asked whether they considered the service to be aimed mainly at men, mainly at women or equally for both. Over two thirds (68%) thought that the service was meant equally for both sexes, with 13% saying they thought it was mainly for men, and 4% saying they thought it was mainly for women. Those in the target group were slightly more likely to think the service was aimed at them (16% compared to 13% overall).

While looking at the same press/pocket card/poster images, the respondents were asked what age groups they felt the service was aimed at. Multiple answers were allowed in this question. 61% thought the advertising was aimed at no age group in particular, and 15% thought it was aimed at those aged 21-30.

All respondents were read a clarification of Breathing Space's function (that trained advisors were on hand to offer advice and provide further contacts for relevant services in the caller's locality) and were then asked at what times they thought a service such as this would be needed. Unsurprisingly, just under half (49%) of respondents thought that the service would be needed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. Interestingly, only 173 callers per week – 16% of the total calls per week - on average² to Breathing Space are outwith opening hours (6pm-2am weekdays, but 24 hours all weekend).

In order to set the research into context, a series of statements surrounding the provision of services for those with low mood / depression were shown to respondents, and they were asked to rank how much they agreed or disagreed with each one.

When read the statement '*I believe there are enough services available to help people experiencing low mood / depression*', only 30% agreed. Agreement by respondents in the North was even lower with only 15% agreeing. Results were similar for the target group with 30% agreeing.

When read the statement '*I would know where to turn were I to experience low mood / depression*', 60% of respondents agreed, and encouragingly, agreement was higher amongst those who recalled elements of the campaign (however it must be noted that they know where they would turn, but this may not necessarily be Breathing Space). 59% of the target group agreed with this statement.

Over two thirds (67%) of respondents agreed with the statement '*I would be likely to talk to my friends/family first were I to experience low mood / depression*'. Those respondents aged over 65 were more likely (74%) to agree

² Average calculated 29/09/08 to 18/10/08, Breathing Space.

with this statement. Amongst the target group slightly less agreement was evident with 64% agreeing.

Just over a quarter (27%) of respondents agreed with the statement *'I wouldn't know how to find out what services were available to me were I to experience low mood / depression'*. Amongst the target group, 29% agreed. Disagreement was higher amongst those who recalled elements of the campaign than amongst those who didn't, indicating that awareness of services has indeed risen.

Conclusions

Spontaneous awareness (when respondents were asked what services they were aware of for those with depression / low mood, with no prompting) of the Breathing Space service was 8%, and given that the campaign was lightweight and that the television advertising only ran at off peak times, this is a positive result.

Prompted awareness (those who when prompted had both heard of Breathing Space and knew what the service did) of Breathing Space increased significantly, from 9% in 2005 to 15% in 2008.

Attitudes towards Breathing Space have remained consistent since 2005, with over half saying they would recommend it to a friend or relative, and over a third responding that they would use the service themselves.

Few respondents thought that the campaign was aimed at the target audience, though exposure to the campaign

seemed to favourably affect opinions on service provision for those with low mood or depression.

Spontaneous awareness of the Breathing Space campaign is low, however when looking at those who were aware of the service and correctly identified its function, 65% were spontaneously aware of the advertising campaign.

Recommendations

The campaign evaluation research indicates positive impact from the campaign activity, and there are no indications that a change in strategy is required or would be more effective. However, with a higher level of media budget we would expect over time to see an increase in overall awareness of Breathing Space across the Scottish population.

The intended key message of the campaign was successfully communicated to those who recalled the campaign and should be considered for future use, and should Breathing Space wish to ensure that no sections of the community are alienated from this message, campaign materials that have a broad appeal should continue to be used.

Although an increase in awareness has been clearly shown between 2005 and 2008, to enable more meaningful insight, standard pre and post campaign evaluation should be conducted in the future. Measuring awareness levels immediately prior to each campaign activity and then tracking awareness levels immediately after the campaign is finished will enable analysis to evaluate specific campaign success and could then be used annually to allow clear trends to emerge on awareness and understanding.

This document, along with "Breathing Space Telephone Advice Line – Omnibus Survey Evaluation of Public Awareness" the full research report of the project, and further information about social and policy research commissioned and published on behalf of the Scottish Government, can be viewed on the Internet at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/socialresearch>. If you have any further queries about social research, or would like further copies of this research findings summary document, please contact us at socialresearch@scotland.gsi.gov.uk or on 0131-244 7560.



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