

Telephone supervision: Options for the post-pandemic future

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The background

- Learning from other areas of public service and private business
 - Health, education, leisure
- Drawing on the growing body of research evidence in this area
- Making use of performance management and information systems
- Listening to the experiences and voices of service users and staff
- Not just about the telephone
- Not (necessarily) about flexible and home working

Shaping options for the future

- Relationships and telephone supervision
- Compliance, engagement and commitment
- Supporting and developing professional discretion

Relationships and telephone supervision

'I've only just realised how much of it [the job] I do by looking pleasant, and you know I'm quite smiley, I'm quite friendly - and if people don't hear that on the phone, I think possibly I sound a bit sharper on the phone, as it were, I talk quite fast... which probably makes a difference to people... I have had to work on talking more consciously slowly. I think possibly the way I come across if people haven't spoken to me before is just less approachable, maybe, on the phone, because I think I'm doing a lot of work with my body language' (Claire)

'I have found telephone discussions to be more open and engaging with some service users than face to face - one has said that he so hates just coming into the office (everything it represents for him), that he is in a state of agitation before seeing me, and so the first period of supervision is spent supporting him to relax (and this service user has been on licence for some years now); we do not have to go through this on the phone and the difference in engagement is remarkable.' (Survey comment)



Compliance, engagement and commitment

- 'they just pick up their phone....At the end of the day, they've answered you and you've contacted them.' (Nicola)
- 'Service users have the benefit of feeling like they are in a two-way relationship with their Programme Facilitators because they can easily contact them (with a message) on the phone, rather than simply being required to turn up to meetings with a group. This must encourage the impression that they are equal and responsible agents in their own rehabilitation, so improving their engagement and receptiveness' (Survey comment)

The place for professional discretion

'Remote contact is a very useful option with the right service user; hopefully one legacy of the pandemic will be an increased recognition of this and a corresponding extension of trust to individual officers to determine when and for whom this option is used.' (Survey comment)

'I don't think we ever would have gone to this phone contact if it hadn't been these exceptional circumstances. It's been forced to come in. But there certainly have been some benefits... it's the mixture that's needed. That balance between the two.' (Deborah)



Options for the
post-pandemic
future:

Nothing New
or Everything
Different?

Professional judgment and
discretion

The need for consistency
and standards

Supervision as an
individualised intervention

Supervision as a discipline
or punishment

Accessibility and
confidentiality

