Respect helplines analysis:
Review of practice and planning for the future

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My internship was with the domestic abuse charity, Respect. Respect works with perpetrators of domestic violence, providing a confidential helpline that aims to provide support and information to assist perpetrators in stopping their use of abusive behaviour. The helpline is also open to any partners, friends, family or professionals who need advice or support. The charity also runs a similar helpline for male victims of domnestic abuse, The Men's Advice Line.

Objectives

The focus of my project was patterns in service use and efficiency in service provision The organisation had some main areas they wanted me to investigate.

One such area of investigation was the patterns of call frequency, the levels of demand for service, over time and by hour/day. (See Figure 1). Along with service demand, a key aim was to research aspects of service provision, whether the current and previous service had met their guidelines. For example, had all the calls been sufficiently recorded and all the necessary action taken. (See Figure 2).

The project also developed and gained objectives as it progressed. Part of my role was to provide analyses on demand for affiliated organisations, such as Scottish Women's Aid, requiring specific data to be gathered and presented.

Method

I used three main tools for investigating my aims, the 'Call Handling' database, the 'Salesforce' database, and Excel. For investigating the service demand, I used data from 'Call Handling' database. The database provided information on call frequency, time and results which could be used in various ways to find patterns of use and patterns of sevice.

The 'Salesforce' database provided data on all the records produced by the helpline staff on the calls they had recieved and recorded. This could provide demographics for service users and, importantly, could tell us how the helpline staff were taking all the necessary steps to provide an effective service.

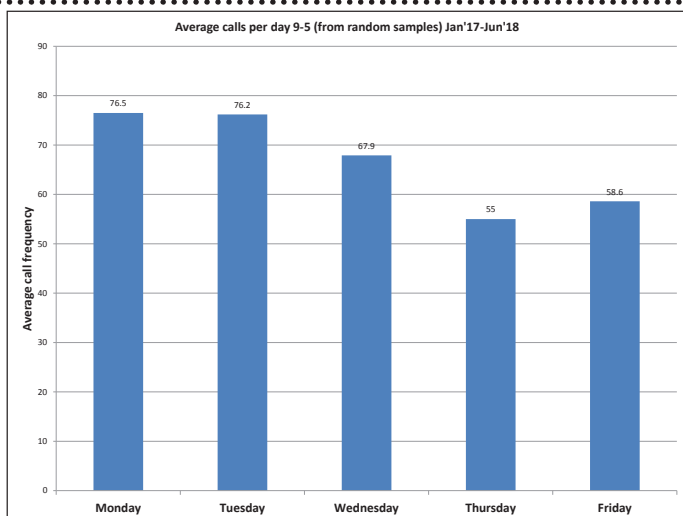I used Excel to clean, organise and present my findings.

Figure 1: Graph showing the average number of calls recieved by day of the week, taken from random samples accross a three month period
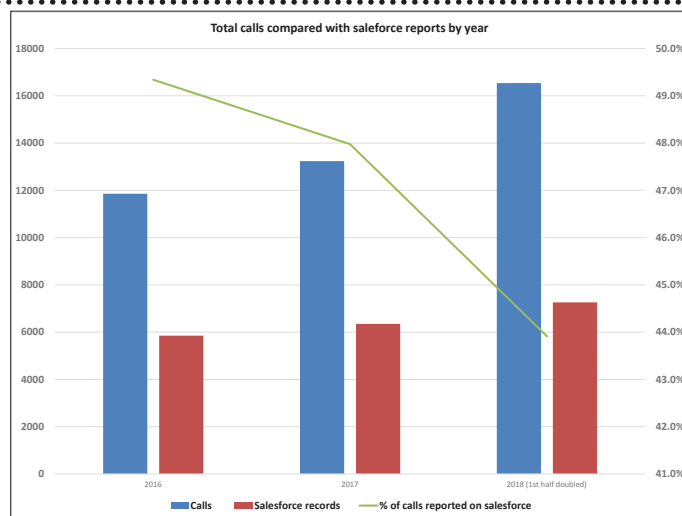

Figure 2: Graph showing the total number of calls per year, against the total number of reports, with a second Y axis showing the % of calls that were made into reports

Results and Conclusions

The resulting project was a 9000 word report that extensively assessed all the areas set out as aims by the organisation, and many more findings in areas that arose as the project progressed. The report covered call frequencies (by day, night and over time- and how these usage stats varied between the two helplines), rates of calls that were successfully and sufficiently dealt with by the staff, numerous and varied demographic analyses, and visualizations of survey responses.

The most imediate and concrete result of the project was that my findings on call frequency were used to advise and rearrancge staff shift and break times. Using my findings on the hourly and daily call frequency variations, staff rotas were edited to address these variations.

Another key finding of the report was that rates of 'successful calls', those that had been suffeciently recorded by staff, were decreasing. This meant that an increasing proportion of calls were going unrecorded, reducing the effectiveness of the service. This trend coincided with overall increase in call frequency, so some of the trend could be down to this increase. With this in mind, I presented these findings was presented at a monthly meeting, with the aim of increasing staff awareness of their record taking practices.

Along with these key findings, my report addressed many other aspects of their service users' demographics. Additional areas of focus ranged from rates of sexual abuse within heterosexual and homosexual relationships, to the changing demographics of all callers over the past five years. In many of these additional areas of I was able to investigate freely, without instruction, in whichever areas seemed important.

For me, this opportunity to work on a project that allowed a high level of freedom and independence was great. I was able to engage with the resources and project aims critically, allowing me to produce my best work and enjoy my time at the organisation.

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RESPECT
MEN & WOMEN WORKING TOGETHER TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE