RESPECT
Understanding Domestic Violence

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Introduction

My internship was with Respect, a domestic abuse charity which runs two confidential helplines: one for male victims of domestic abuse (the Men's Advice Line), and one for perpetrators of domestic abuse of any gender (the Respect Phoneline). The helplines aim to provide support to those calling and signpost callers onwards. The charity also runs many training events for frontline workers in the domestic violence sector.

Objectives

The focus of my internship was to look at the data gathered about calls to the helplines, in order to gain insight into the call patterns and demographic information about the callers. My work was to be presented in the form of three detailed reports; one on each helpline individually and one summary of the organisation as a whole.

One key area of investigation was the monthly, daily and hourly variations in call frequency to the helplines. I was tasked with mapping how the calls to Respect changed over time, in order to help in allocating the helpline advisers 'working hours' efficiently.

Another objective was to analyse which organisations the callers to the helplines were being signposted to, in order to better understand the needs of the callers as a group. The demographic data that was collected on the callers was also to be analysed, so as to show which groups of people Respect was most effectively reaching, and if there were any groups that were being overlooked.

The project evolved as it progressed, and one of the most enjoyable aspects of the work was that I was able to adapt my research to areas that were proving interesting or surprising.

Total Calls
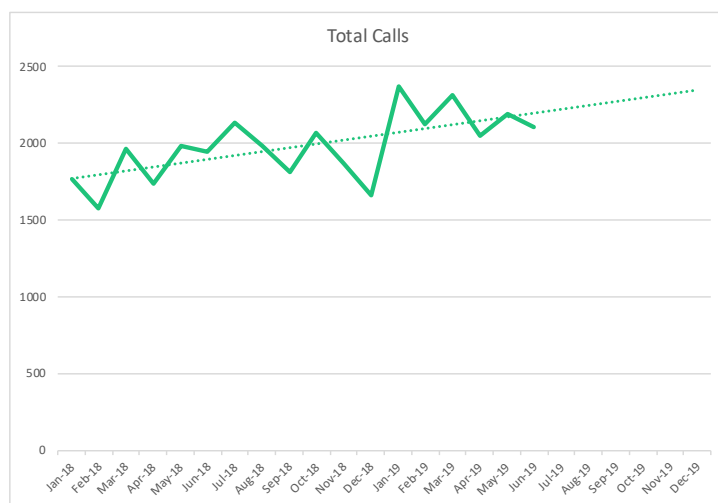
Total monthly calls to both helplines over 18 months (with 6 month prediction).

Results and Conclusions

The resulting work was two extensive reports on the individual helplines, to be used by Respect in attempting to use their resources most efficiently, and a more succinct 'summary' report, to be sent to current and potential funders to give an overall view of how the organisation was performing. I found that calls to the organisation were increasing steadily, but that this was entirely due to demand for the Men's Advice Line. From this data, I was able to predict a continuing increase in calls, reaching around 2400 calls a month by December 2019. It was interesting to note that one of the helplines had a much younger client base than the other. I found from user feedback that over 80% of callers felt that the helplines had made a positive difference in their lives.

I also found that the percentage of missed calls was increasing, but my research was used to rearrange shift times for helpline advisers which should help to address this increase.

Method

I used three main tools in my research: 'Call Handling', 'Salesforce' and Excel. Call Handling was the online programme that Respect used to collect data on their service demand – information such as when calls were made, how many calls were made and how long each call lasted. Salesforce was another online programme, which was instead used to collect data about the individual callers, such as their age, gender, sexuality etc.

Each dataset needed to be produced and downloaded using one of these programmes, and I then used Excel to clean the data, analyse the information and present my findings.

Key Skills Learnt

I developed my skills with Excel as a tool for data cleaning and analysis. I also learnt a great deal about how to present the findings of data analysis in a clear and concise way. I produced several 'factsheets', which were to be used as single page documents to be sent to potential funders.

This project allowed me to work independently and pursue some of my own research interests within the framework of this organisation, which is doing such worthwhile and important work. The freedom I was allowed helped me to produce work I am proud of and enjoy my time working with Respect.

Respect

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