

Using a Telephone Line to Deliver Extended Brief Interventions to Support People with Alcohol Use Disorders

“SP is now fully back to a positive routine and feels ‘happy and involved’ with her family, friends and peers as well as physically and mentally ‘rejuvenated’.”

Overview of Service

The Alcohol Telephone Line provides a short-term, open-access confidential service for people who are worried about their drinking. This provides an Extended Brief Intervention for people who need more support than that offered by universal services, such as GP practices, but who do not need the multiple therapies or pharmacotherapy for alcohol dependency, known nationally as Structured Treatment.

Method of Delivery

The specialist Substance Use Disorder Service runs a separate, free telephone line. It can be accessed directly, without a referral.

Following an assessment of individual need and risk, people typically receive up to 6 sessions of telephone support to help them achieve realistic goals and take control over their drinking. Around 6-weeks post-support, people receive a check-in to see how they are doing and to offer further support as needed.

Results

- The service had an average of 17 new referrals or direct approaches a month in the first 27 months (451 in 27 months).
- Following assessment, 45% people began an Extended Brief Intervention by telephone (200/451). A further 15% were instead referred to Structured Treatment (68/451)

By their final session

- 92% of all clients reduced their drinking
- 98% of clients who completed their intervention reduced their drinking

By their 6-week check-in, of all contactable clients

- 90% had sustained a reduction in the amount of alcohol they were drinking
- 91% had sustained a reduction in the frequency of their drinking
- 96% reported achieving what they wanted to regarding their drinking

Table 1. Characteristics of people accessing or referred to Alcohol Extended Brief Interventions Telephone Support, October 2020 to December 2022

Category	Total	%
Total Referrals	451	
Most Common Referral Route: Self Referrals	298	66%
Most Commonly Referred Gender: Male	246	55%
Most Commonly Referred Age Group: 25-45	185	45%

Fig 1. Referral Outcomes, October 20 to December 22 (451 Total Referrals)

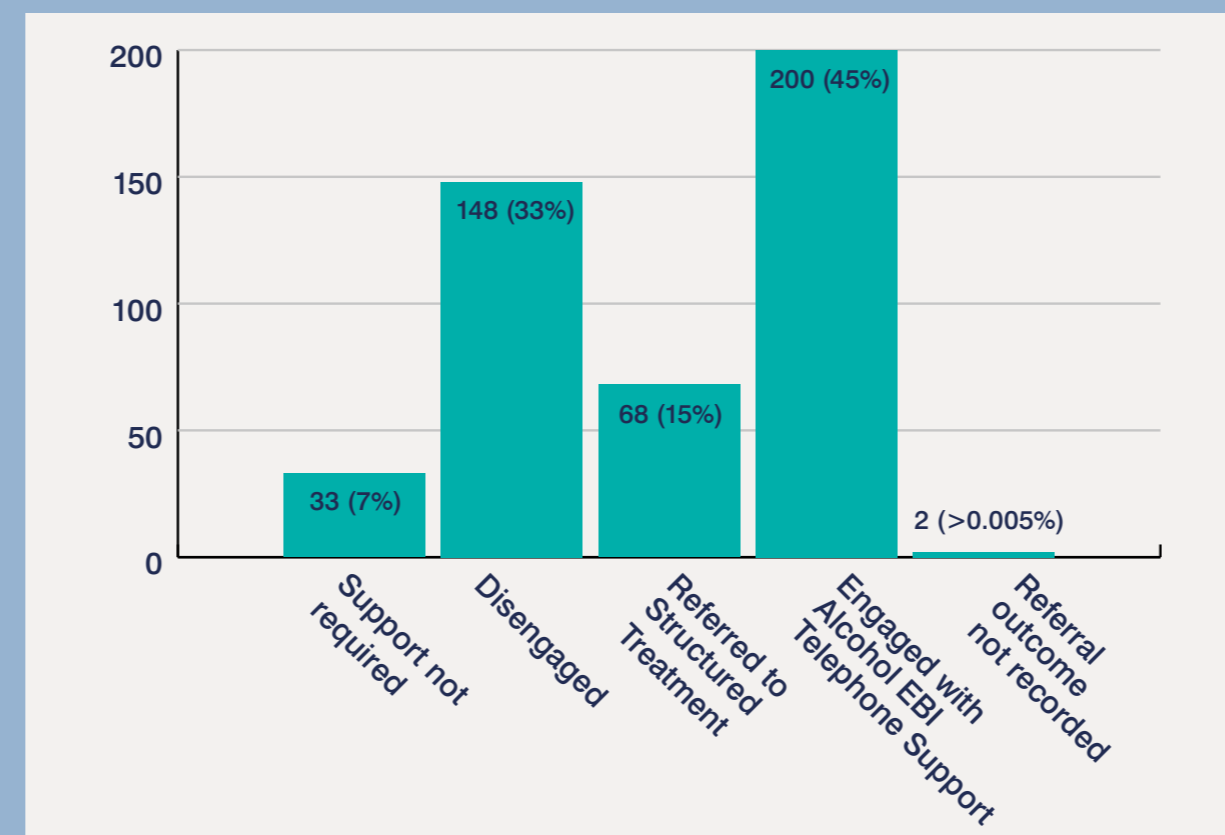
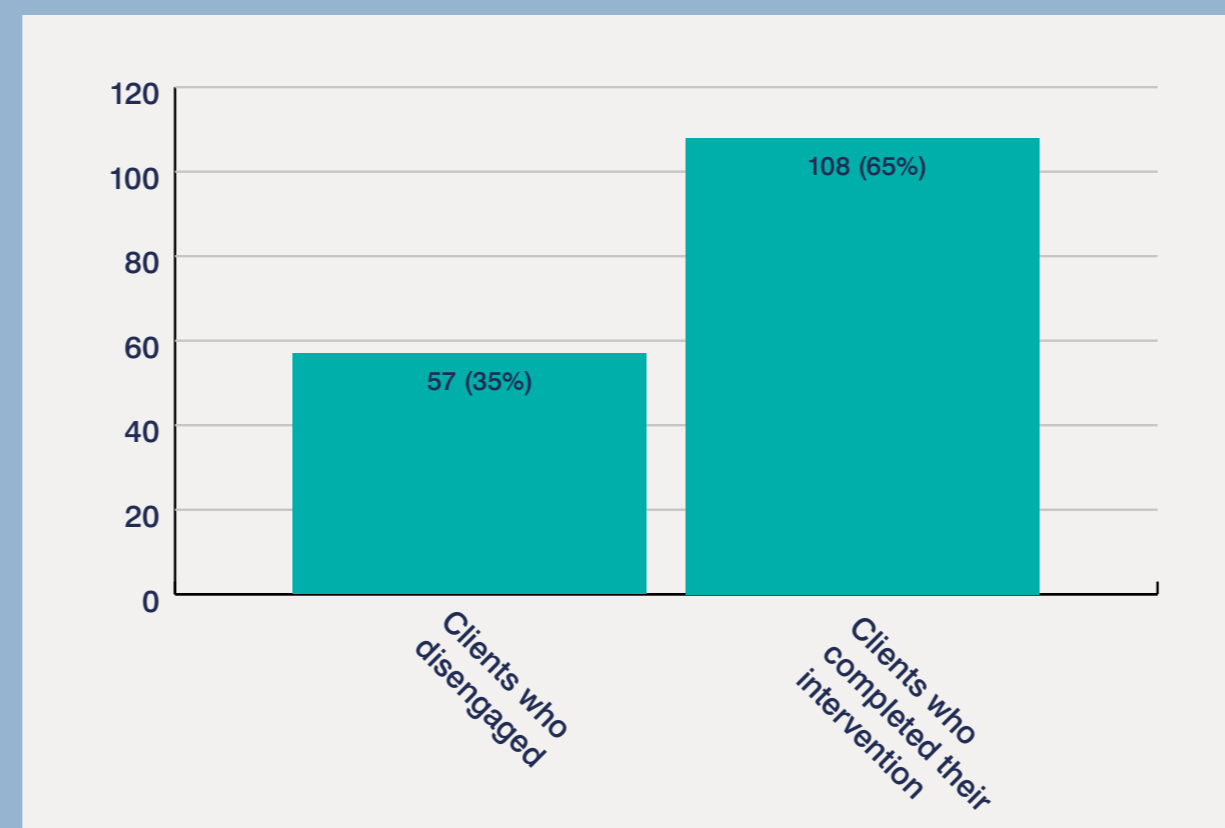


Fig 2 Final Session Outcomes, October 20 to December 22 (165 Total Exits)



Conclusions

- It is feasible, acceptable and effective to provide Extended Brief Interventions by telephone to reduce harm from alcohol.
- The Alcohol Telephone Line provides a much-needed intermediate level of intervention for people who need support with their alcohol consumption prior to developing alcohol dependency.
- The service achieves a meaningful reduction in alcohol consumption for those who may have otherwise been unable to access support for alcohol use and strengthens the pathway into Structured Treatment for those who need it.
- The service began during the Covid-19 Pandemic and access to support by telephone was particularly useful.
- We do not know if the impact of the telephone line would be different if it was not provided by the specialist service.

AG

Assessment: AG felt he has high levels of stress working as a Logistics Manager - he used alcohol at the end of each working day as an easy way to relax. He scored 19 points on the Alcohol Audit - Harmful.

Audit Recommended Alcohol Intervention: Simple advice plus brief intervention i.e., counselling for health awareness and reduction of alcohol consumption and continued monitoring.

Goals: To accept Extended Brief Intervention and achieve total abstinence.

Barriers to Change: AG found it difficult to discuss the details of his stress and emotions. He also struggled with being completely honest about his full drinking patterns and routines. Therefore, initially played 'lip service' to his agreed structured reduction plan and unfortunately nearly received a driving ban for drinking alcohol.

RESULTS

- 6 Extended Brief Intervention Sessions & 4 Follow-Up Sessions Attended
- 100% Goal Achievement (Abstinence)
- 60 Days free of alcohol

CONCLUSION

It took 4 additional sessions from the 6 initially planned for AG to begin to trust and connect with the Recovery Co-ordinator. AG initially engaged with the service based on his partner's desires for him to abstain.

Once AG realised he needed and wanted to personally take ownership of his problem and abstain, then the real work started.

AG had to start with being honest with himself about his negative association with alcohol, which he believed helped him with the stresses at work.

AG really opened up with the Recovery Co-ordinator which helped him deal with his personal issues and he managed to work on various distraction and delay techniques to help him through the cravings and urges.

AG continues to benefit from follow up sessions with Extended Brief intervention and is currently engaging with some of the Group Programmes on offer.

Change Grow Live - Southampton

SP

Assessment: SP is a 69-year-old female who self-referred to the Alcohol Telephone Line in January 2022 after a 3-week relapse. She had been sober for two years (and 24 years prior to that). SP had been alcohol dependent since the age of 16 and had drunk throughout her whole adult life. She scored 18 points on the Alcohol Audit - Harmful.

Audit Recommended Alcohol Intervention: Simple advice plus brief intervention i.e., counselling for health awareness and reduction of alcohol consumption and continued monitoring.

Goals: To accept Extended Brief Intervention and achieve abstinence.

Barriers to Change: It had taken a lot to re-build her relationship with her daughters and grandchildren after she first got sober so she was afraid to even tell them about her relapse as she thought they might 'cut her off for good'. SP reported that she believed she had relapsed because of 3 recent bereavements, living with a lot of physical pain and, above all else, the isolation and loneliness of the pandemic. As a Buddhist, she had also let her practice lapse and lost touch with her peers.

RESULTS

- 6 Extended Brief Intervention Sessions Attended
- 100% Goal Achievement (Abstinence)
- 60 Days free of alcohol

CONCLUSION

When SP started Extended Brief Intervention sessions, the Recovery Co-ordinator encouraged her to reach out to her Buddhist support network, and also to access some of Change Grow Live's psychosocial groups. Despite being somewhat immobile, SP started to attend the Women's Group every week, travelling by taxi with the money she would have spent on alcohol. She also told her daughters what was going on and they were very supportive, despite SP fears they would reject her.

After 5 Extended Brief Intervention sessions, SP was completely abstinent, back to keeping a regular timetable and doing daily Buddhist practice. She was also attending the Women's Group every Wednesday and had started to make new friends.

Initially SP experienced some cravings for alcohol but noticed that these became few and far between as the weeks went by. She is now fully back to a positive routine and feels 'happy and involved' with her family, friends and peers as well as physically and mentally 'rejuvenated'.

Change Grow Live - Southampton

NR

Assessment: NR is a busy, single Mum with two jobs, a mortgage to pay and a car to run. She noticed that her drinking had increased over the pandemic to 2 bottles of wine every night. She self-referred to the Alcohol Telephone Line at the beginning of January 2021. She scored 18 points on the Alcohol Audit - Harmful.

Audit Recommended Alcohol Intervention: Simple advice plus brief intervention i.e., counselling for health awareness and reduction of alcohol consumption and continued monitoring.

Goals: To accept Extended Brief Intervention and achieve moderation.

Barriers to Change: NR had suffered several significant bereavements in a relatively short period of time and this added to her feelings of unhappiness; she was also previously in a domestically violent relationship with her daughter's father. NR was using alcohol to numb her feelings and escape depression and anxiety. However, she recognised that her alcohol use was leading to hangovers, poor judgement, a deterioration in her mental health, a clouded mind as well as exacerbating her negative emotions.

RESULTS

- 6 Extended Brief Intervention Sessions Attended
- 100% Goal Achievement (Moderation)
- 70% Reduction in Weekly Alcohol Consumption

CONCLUSION

Through weekly Extended Brief Intervention sessions, NR was referred to Change Grow Live's psychosocial groups that she started attending regularly. She found these to be a real eye opener and started to feel that she wasn't alone in struggling with her alcohol use. The Recovery Co-ordinator referred NR to SWW for counselling to help deal with the bereavements and domestic violence she'd suffered and she has now had an assessment and is waiting for sessions to begin.

Over the course of her sessions, NR was able to gradually cut down the amount she was drinking and recently reached her goal of moderate drinking i.e., a couple of glasses of wine twice a week.

She reports feeling much better in herself, happier, more energetic, and more capable of handling her job, looking after her daughter, and maintaining healthy relationships with family members. She also reports that her mental health has improved significantly. NR was ready to move on from Extended Brief Intervention support at the beginning of March 2022, after 6 sessions.

Change Grow Live - Southampton