

Using Flo as an interactive information tool

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What is Flo?

- Flo is an NHS product, delivered through NHS Stoke
- It is a simple text messaging service
- Increasingly being used across various patient pathways in the NHS (Health improvement / diabetes) – minimal use within mental health
- Growing evidence base for services using Flo as a tool to support efficiency and quality



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Background

- Healthy Minds service moved to more group delivery at step 2 ('psycho-educational groups')
- Heard about Flo – could it help improve attendance and recovery?
 - It had helped improve these measures in other pathways such as smoking cessation and diabetes
- Service decided to engage in small local pilot to test this out
- Aim was to:
 - Improve commencement and completion of stress & anxiety groups and low mood & depression groups by 15% (delivered by PWP's at step 2)
 - Improve clinical outcomes by 10% (as measured using PHQ9 & GAD7)

Local implementation

- Protocol was developed within the service and with support of Flo team
- Patients signed up to Flo at initial screening appointments
- 7 texts sent out each day leading up to commencement of the groups (aim was to reduce anxiety re attendance and improve motivation):
 - Examples:
 - *‘Well done on signing up for the stress & anxiety course. You have taken your first step towards recovery and we look forward to seeing you on [date]’*
 - *‘Don’t forget that your group starts tomorrow. It’s normal to feel anxious, but we are here to support you and we look forward to meeting you’*
 - *‘1 in 4 people will suffer from a common mental health problem at some time in their lives – you are not alone’*

Implementation continued

- Further texts sent on 2nd and 5th day after each group session (aim was to remind people about homework tasks)
- On receiving 'parent' text, user could respond (by replying #) to receive additional information about homework set (key concept in recovery)
- Potential for an additional 5 texts to be sent

– Example (after session 1):

- *'Don't forget to have a go at drawing out your own ABC-E model of emotion' #*
- *'Think about what physical symptoms you might notice – have you noticed changes to your sleep or appetite for example?' #*
- *'What might have changed in your behaviour? Are there things that you have stopped doing recently or that you have been avoiding?' #*
- *'What have your thoughts been lately? About yourself, other people and the world?' #*
- *'Is there anything that is going on in your environment that might be key – relationship issues, family / work problems, financial pressures, etc?'*

Outcomes

- 56 people were recruited
- DNA rate for those using Flo was **26%**
- DNA rate for those choosing not to use Flo was **41%**
 - Aim of improving attendance by 15% was therefore achieved
- Recovery was measured using significant improvement (a drop of 5 points on the PHQ9 & GAD7)
- The use of Flo had a **22%** improvement over the control group
 - Aim of improving clinical outcomes by 10% was therefore also achieved)



Service User Feedback



- Feedback was obtained from all individuals who used Flo
- Universally positive feedback
- Patients seemed to like the interactive nature of Flo and the fact that they were in control of the amount of information they received
- *‘Flo really helped me to remember to practise and think about what I was learning in between group therapy sessions’* (Male, 59 years old, attended stress & anxiety group)
- *‘I really enjoyed attending the mood group and the Flo service added to the experience’* (Female, 59 years old, attended mood group)

Recognition



- Won 2 national awards:
 - ‘Most innovative use of Flo’ – Flo Simple Telehealth Conference (November 2014)
 - ‘Innovation in Mental Health Award’ – Health Business Awards (December 2014)
- Shortlisted for HSJ award (September, 2015)
- Had work published on eWIN - shared via PPN
- Now working with the UoM to carry out a larger RCT



Barriers to disseminating this work

- Despite the awards / publications etc, struggled to disseminate this work
- Need to ensure such innovations are shared across the NW and that active dialogue around this kind of work is encouraged
- Hopeful that the PRN can support examples of such work going forwards?



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