

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
- Has been used across various patient pathways but not mental health, with promising results
- Growing evidence base for services using Flo as a tool to support efficiency and quality
- Low cost

Locally

- Healthy Minds service had started to deliver more interventions via groups but attendance was often poor and recovery was also poor (as measured on PHQ9 and GAD7)
- Heard about Flo and read how it had been used in other services – could it help us?
- Could having an interactive information process help us to improve outcomes and reduce non-attendance as it had done in other patient pathways such as diabetes and smoking cessation?
- Service decided to engage in a small pilot using Flo. The aim was to improve commencement and completion of stress and anxiety groups (stress class) and low mood/depression groups delivered by psychological wellbeing practitioners, by 15% and to improve clinical outcomes by 10%

The concept and implementation

- Protocol was developed within the service
- Patients signed up to Flo at initial screening appointments
- 7 texts were sent out each day leading up to the commencement of the groups - aim was to try and reduce anxiety re attendance and improve motivation

- Further texts were then sent on day 2 and day 5 after each session, reminding patients about what had been covered in the session and a reminder of what their homework was
- After each initial text ('parent text') patients could press # up to 5 times to receive additional information – each subsequent text built on the previous one

Examples...

Pre-course:

- 'Well done on signing up for stress class. 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'

After session 1:

- 'Don't forget to have a go at drawing out your own ABC-E model of emotion' (if # is pressed the patient receives the next message below)
- 'Think about what physical symptoms you might notice – have you noticed changes to your sleep or appetite for example?' (if # is pressed the patient receives the next message below)
- 'What might have changed in your behaviour? Are there things that you have stopped doing recently or have been avoiding?' (if # is pressed the patient receives the next message below)
- 'What have your thoughts been lately? About yourself, other people and the world?'

(The # process continues up to 5 times)

Outcomes and recommendations

- Total of 56 people were recruited to use Flo during the pilot
- DNA rate for those using Flo was 26% and the DNA rate of those not using FLO was 41%
- Recovery was measured using significant improvement (a drop of 5 points on the PHQ9 and GAD7). The use of Flo showed a 22% improvement over the control group
- Therefore, both original aims of the pilot were achieved and we would recommend the use of Flo as an interactive tool to support the delivery of step 2 groups within IAPT services

Recognition...

- Won 2 national awards:
- 'Most innovative use of Flo' – implementing effective digital health – FLO simple telehealth conference (November 2014)
- 'Innovation in mental health award' – Health Business Awards (London, December 2014)
- Now working with the University of Manchester to carry out a larger RCT of the use of Flo in this way

Feedback from patients

"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 Class.

"I really enjoyed attending the mood group and the Flo service added to the experience"
Female, 59 years old - Attended Mood Group