

CCSS Helpline - Pilot Report

We are extremely grateful to the Tudor Trust for funding the start-up of the Helpline and their recognition of a much-needed service.

Helpline – Numbers of Contacts

Our Helpline is open Monday – Friday 09:00-19:00 and Saturday 09:00-14:00.

We commenced the pilot on 12.03.2018 and ran for 26 weeks, ending on 08.09.2018. During this time, we took a total of **231** contacts, both telephone calls and emails.

We have seen a steady increase in the number of contacts coming through each month. A breakdown of which is as follows:

Month	Contacts
March	18
April	27
May	41
June	38
July	37
August	53
September (first two weeks)	17

Opening times of Helpline

The calls have been broken down in to the times the calls/emails were received by the Helpline.

The following table shows the number of contacts received per hour.

Hours	Number of contacts
09.00-09.59	22
10.00-10.59	26
11.00-11.59	34
12.00-12.59	14
13.00-13.59	26
14.00-14.59	22
15.00-15.59	31
16.00-16.59	27
17.00-17.59	10
18.00-19.00	9

Please note that some volunteers have not recorded times when responding to contact – 5 phone calls and 5 e-mails.

Breakdown of Contacts

The following table shows the ratio between calls and emails. It also shows who is contacting the CCSS Helpline.

	Number of Contacts
Phone calls	200
Emails	31
Repeat Callers	46 Some of these contacts may have called more than twice. This hasn't been broken down any further. The most any one service user has contacted us is 3 times.
Third party callers	33
Witnesses	11
External Agencies	28
Complainants	14
Wrong numbers	3

Callers 'complaints' have been recorded when our service user has asked for information on how to make a complaint to an organisation; where they have asked what they can do if they are not satisfied with a service provided; or where they have informed us that they have already lodged their complaint with the relevant authority.

Of the 231 contacts, **100** of those required the call taker to undertake follow up action. This included the following:

- Contacting a CCSS Lead Volunteer to confirm volunteer attendance on a particular day
- Contacting a CCSS Coordinator/Helpline Manager for them to take action
- Contacting Coroner's Office on behalf of the caller
- Contacting CCSS Coordinator/CCSS Director for advice on specific issues
- Calling our service user back, either by telephone or emailing information.

We **signposted 45** contacts to 26 different agencies or Coroners' Offices.

Some of the agencies signposted to include:

- Coroner's Office 13 times
- Action against Medical Accidents (AvMA) 8 times
- The Compassionate Friends 5 times
- The Ministry of Justice (MoJ) Guide to Coroner Services 5 times. We have also sent copies of this booklet out to callers.
- Cruse Bereavement Care 5 times.

All other agencies were signposted to once or occasionally twice.

Reason for Contact

The following table shows some of the reasons for people contacting us. Legal and disclosure matters would have been signposted to the Coroner's Office.

Reason for Contact	Number of Contacts
Inquest Process	109
Post Mortem	14
Legal	38
Disclosure	19
Jury	2
Emotional Support	73
CCSS Support at Court	30
Other	68

Please note that some contacts would also have covered more than one topic.

'Other' contacts include matters that do not fit into the above. These included:

- Enquiries relating to which courts have CCSS volunteers
- How to find out which Coroner's Office dealt with an historical Inquest
- Social Services enquiring about assistance with the cost of repatriation
- External agencies checking our contact details for use in their own publications or websites
- A novelist wanting to research the Coronial process for a book they were writing
- Press enquiry
- Callers wanting to contact other staff (this is a small percentage of the 'other' calls).

Feedback about our Service

We asked call takers to document any unsolicited feedback their caller may give them during the call. We have recorded feedback **14** times. Some feedback recorded is as follows:

- "You've been fantastic, thank you."
- Caller thanked us for our prompt response.
- "You've given me more time than anyone else has. You sound like you are listening to me and taking it in."
- Coroner's Officer thanked us for our support saying "...it's a great help."
- "Wonderful and amazing." Caller stated it was the first time that she felt listened to.
- Referring to our Helpline, caller stated that we had "... been my only help."
- CCSS website – "...very helpful indeed."
- "You do a marvellous job."
- Good job - few people understand these additional pressures following a sudden death.
- Caller stated that she was "... impressed with our service, can she recommend us to others?"
- Thanked us for our wonderful service.
- "The support you give is amazing."

We also received the following feedback from a CCSS Court volunteer who supported a woman who had used the Helpline:

“A woman attended her husband's Inquest on July 18th. She came with several family and friends and when we asked whether she had attended an Inquest before she was quick to tell us that although she had not, she had been given a great deal of understanding about what to expect by speaking to a man on the Coroners' Courts Support Service Helpline. She had Googled 'Coroners 'Court' and come up with the Helpline details. The person on the Helpline had told her to expect a CCSS volunteer at the court, and she came in asking to speak to us, having been advised about our existence, and being grateful that there would be someone at court whose role was to provide support and information to her.

It was a very busy atmosphere, as there were many friends and family at the event supporting the wife, so I don't recall any specific details about what she had found helpful in her phone call, but the fact that she spoke for an hour with the Helpline indicates that a lot was covered. I also gained the impression that it was very helpful for her to understand in advance the exact purpose of the Inquest, which was not to determine guilt of any kind.”

Further feedback was received from another CCSS volunteer who spoke with the police officer who attended the same Inquest:

“When we were in yesterday we were chatting to the police officer who had been at the same Inquest. The officer said the leaflets would be useful for her and her team as they dealt with a lot of sudden deaths, hangings etc. In the cases which would inevitably end with Inquest, she could hand them this leaflet as she says lots are very confused and frightened by the prospect of an Inquest.”

Summary

The pilot has identified that there is a need for this type of support soon after someone has died and the death is referred to the Coroner. At this early stage, we feel the Helpline pilot has been a success. The benefit to those who called, particularly bereaved families, is evident in the feedback we have so far received.

During the pilot we also identified that some calls may need additional safeguarding issues to be considered. We are in the process of developing further guidance and training for all Helpline volunteers to ensure they are confident they have asked the right questions, signposted appropriately and sought additional support from staff where needed.

The Helpline is very much in its infancy and we will continue to evaluate it to learn and further develop the services we provide to ensure we support bereaved families, witnesses and others who might benefit from such a service.