

Service directory app providing support services to members of the public

An internal app which is accessible on mobile, laptop and desktop devices, to all operational officers and staff, containing details of roughly 500 support services. It is intended to assist officers to signpost members of the public to alternative support services.

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Key details

Stage of practice	Untested
Purpose	Diversion
Topic	Public Protection, Safeguarding & Vulnerability Adults at risk Drugs and alcohol offences
Organisation	North Yorkshire Police
HMICFRS report	PEEL 2023–25 Police effectiveness, efficiency and legitimacy: An inspection of North Yorkshire Police
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Region	North East
Stage of implementation	The practice is implemented.

Key details

Start date	April 2023
Scale of initiative	Local

Aim

The app is intended to maximise opportunity to signpost members of the public to appropriate support services and reduce demand on police and other emergency services.

The aim is to provide operational officers and staff with:

- an accessible tool on mobile, laptop and desktop devices which provides details of support services
- an effective engagement tool to check and support the needs of the public, signposting them to the right support services.

Intended outcome

The intended outcomes are as follows:

- Increased signposting to support services.
- Earlier intervention and support to prevent escalation of issues.
- Reduction in demand on front line policing and other partners.

Description

North Yorkshire Police designed an internal mobile application for use on mobile, laptop and desktop police systems. The force wide project was led by the safeguarding senior management team and supported by the project team.

The app was built in-house using the IT and existing Microsoft Power BI software and there was no cost involved. The service directory contains a vast repository of information from the force and charity sector, offering a one-stop solution for users to access support information. The app's design enables users to search for services based on specific vulnerabilities or themes, such as

substance abuse or mental health. Users can also filter search results by geographical location, allowing them to find services in their area.

Each service listing within the app provides detailed information, including:

- service description and intended provision
- physical location and address
- operating hours and availability
- contact details, including phone numbers and email addresses.

To facilitate easy sharing of support service information, the app allows users to send a summary email containing service details to members of the public, promoting seamless referrals and connections to essential services.

A member of police staff was seconded for 18 months to implement and market the app.

Overall impact

Officers and staff report that it is operationally useful being able to access information about available services from their mobile devices, which allows them to help members of the public who need some support but not necessarily from the police.

The effectiveness of the referral is dependent on the member of the public (MOP) following up the signposting, so difficult to measure the overall outcomes.

Learning

Lessons learned from the development and implementation include:

- Information overload: the app's vast repository of services can be overwhelming for users. To mitigate this, the force implemented a search function and filtering options to help users quickly find relevant services.
- Awareness and adoption: raising awareness of the app's effectiveness amongst officers and staff was a challenge. The force learned the importance of dedicating resources to marketing and promoting the app to increase adoption.

- Data management: the app requires regular updates to ensure service information remains accurate and up to date. The force learnt the importance of having a dedicated staff member to manage data input and updates.
- Measuring effectiveness: the service directory's effectiveness is difficult to measure, as it relies on users following up on signposted services. It is essential to develop a robust evaluation framework to measure outcomes and improve the app's impact.
- Ongoing marketing: to maintain usage and increase adoption, ongoing marketing efforts are necessary. The force learnt the importance of allocating resources to promote the app and encourage continued use.

North Yorkshire Police provided the following recommendations:

- The allocation of dedicated resources to marketing and promoting the app to increase adoption and maintain usage.
- The continuous update and refinement of the directory's search function and filtering options to improve user experience.
- The development of a data management plan to ensure service information remains accurate and up to date.
- The integration of features to track user engagement and outcomes to improve the impact of the service directory.