

Effectiveness Bank user survey 2016

This report presents an analysis of results from the 2016 survey of users of the Effectiveness Bank service provided by Drug and Alcohol Findings. For more on that service go to: <http://www.findings.org.uk/aboutDAF.php>

The survey as presented to site users is at: <https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/EBank2016>

Unless indicated otherwise, %s are based on the total number of respondents including those who did not answer the relevant question.

Summary and discussion

The surveys combine continuity in core questions plus variable questions to explore different aspects of the service. Given falling numbers of respondents, to make it easier to respond in 2016 the survey was cut to just three questions. Reports on earlier surveys (listed below) analyse responses to other questions. Invitations to complete surveys are sent to subscribers to the Effectiveness Bank e-mailing list and other outlets to which similar alerts are sent, and featured on the web site. Below are some core figures from surveys to date.

Year	2008	2010	2011	2012	2014	2015	2016
Number of respondents	183	563	506	584	418	254	476
Respondent is a drug/alcohol service practitioner	79%	80%	83%	81%	80%	78%	81%
Service developed thinking or changed response to substance use	69%	77%	82%	78%	80%	81%	80%
Found site very or extremely useful	81%	88%	91%	90%	87%	90%	N/A

Responses should be interpreted in the light of the fact that respondents would tend to be those most positive about the service. The most engaged users are presumably those who have signed up to the Effectiveness Bank mailing list, and they are likely also to be the main source of survey responses. There will be others not reached by the survey who came across the service but did not want to keep in touch, and others who were reached by the survey but did not feel engaged enough to respond. At the time the mailing list numbered around 4,260 Even if all respondents were on the mailing list, they would constitute just 11% of the list.

In line with the aim to target UK-based drug and alcohol service practitioners, at least 8 in 10 of the mailing list are UK-based and the work of 8 in 10 survey respondents involved responding to drug and alcohol use/problems.

Among respondents there is great appreciation for the service because it is seen as fulfilling an important function (making the 'what works' literature available and intelligible to people who would not have the time and resources to access it), being practically unique in serving this function, doing so rigorously and to a high standard. They want the service to continue because of these qualities and because it has impacted on their thinking and work: 8 in 10 said using the service had developed their thinking and/or changed their or their service's present or planned responses to drug and alcohol use/problems. Above all, typically respondents want the service to continue as it is.

Several responses indicate that the web site could benefit from cosmetic and usability enhancements. From previous surveys we know that the search functions are valued by most respondents but not used by substantial minorities, partly because they do not know they exist. Respondents rely more on the 'pushed' elements of the service, especially email messages alerting them to new analyses.

Earlier surveys also asked: "In general terms, do/did you find the service useful?" and addressed the issues indicated below:

2015: http://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2015.pdf
Satisfaction with research analyses; Usefulness of search functions

2014: http://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2014.pdf
Satisfaction with research analyses; Matrices and matrix bite

2012: http://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2012.pdf
Satisfaction with research analyses; Usefulness of search functions

2011: http://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2011.pdf
Satisfaction with alerts; Usefulness of search functions

2010: http://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=DAF_survey_2010_results.pdf
Reactions to documents on the site; Usefulness of search functions

2008: http://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=DAF_survey_2008_results.pdf
Reactions to documents on the site; Usefulness of search functions

Methodology

On 17 October 2016 the survey link was made available on the Effectiveness Bank site. On 20 October 2016 an invitation to complete the survey was sent to subscribers to the Effectiveness Bank mailing list, to DS Daily, and to LinkedIn groups and contacts sent Effectiveness Bank alerts. Reminders were sent to the Effectiveness Bank mailing list only on 3 and 21 November 2016.

The survey started with two of the multiple choice questions from the previous surveys. The first was about the respondent – the interest or occupation which led them to access the service. The second asked about the degree to which “anything you have read on this site influenced you or your colleagues’ thinking about how drug and alcohol use should be responded to”. A third question invited respondents to say in their own words what they think of the service: “Your chance to tell us in your own words how we are doing and how you would like us to develop our service.”

Who were the respondents?

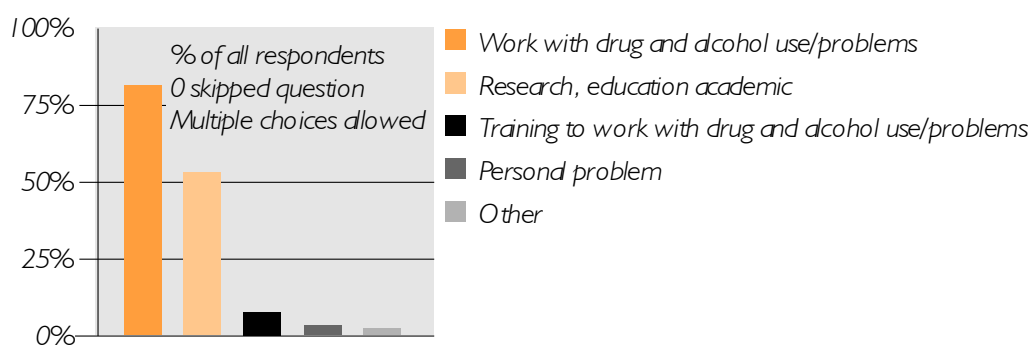
In this and later sections, where appropriate comparable figures from the previous survey are given in brackets in italics, eg, (56%).

At the time data for this analysis was harvested (11 January 2017), 476 (254) responses had been received. When the survey was first released there were 4254 (4330) subscribers to the mailing list.

Respondents presumably consisted mainly of mailing list subscribers. Of these subscribers, 81% (76%) could be identified as probably UK in origin via .uk (3145) or .nhs.net (306) in their email addresses.

146 (67) survey respondents left email addresses enabling a guess about where they were based. Of these, 49% (45%) could be identified as based in the UK.

What led you to access the Effectiveness Bank?



Asked what led them to access the service, 81% (78%) of respondents said they visited the site because, “My work involves responding to drug and alcohol use/problems”. At 53% (50%), about half visited as well/instead (multiple choices were possible) in the course of “Research, education or other academic activities”. Just 7% were training to work in the sector and 3% (6%) came seeking help with a personal problem.

If these figures are representative it seems the intended audience – UK drug/alcohol field practitioners – is being well targeted. However, a large minority also have research or educational roles. We may be especially missing out on practitioners without these roles and on trainees.

Influence on thinking and action

The ‘bottom-line’ question was, “Has anything you have read on this site influenced you or your colleagues’ thinking about how drug and alcohol use should be responded to?” Respondents could tick as

many options as they liked.

Has anything you have read on this site influenced your or your colleagues' thinking about how drug and alcohol use should be responded to?



Just 4% (5%) had “Not really” been influenced in some way or another. At the other end of the scale, 41% (39%) endorsed, “Influenced how I/we actually respond to drug and alcohol use/problems or how we might respond in future”, indicating that 4 in 10 of respondents had or would alter service-provision in response to Effectiveness Bank communications.

At one step down, 72% (70%) endorsed, “Developed my/our thinking about how drug and alcohol use/problems are best responded to”. Together with those who endorsed the previous question, and after eliminating overlap, 80% (81%) of respondents said the service had developed their or their service’s thinking and/or changed present or planned responses to drug and alcohol problems.

Additionally or instead, 49% (43%) felt “more confident that what we do is evidence-based”. From comments we know that an important function of the service is to give people the confidence to sustain what research shows is good practice, and to back them up in their relations with colleagues, commissioners and funders.

Open comments

The final question gave respondents an opportunity to make a general comment not tied to any feature of the service: “Your chance to tell us in your own words how we are doing and how you would like us to develop our service”. 309 (139) comments were received from 65% (55%) of survey respondents.

Generally the comments indicated enthusiasm for the service and a desire for it to continue as it is, because it opens up access to research that would otherwise be unavailable to this largely practitioner group, and offers related insights and practice ideas. Its analyses are relied on and considered unbiased – the service has credibility. There was some desire for extensions to the service to improve usability and ability to find previously accessed material and for a more appealing, user-friendly presentation. These will be followed up and implemented if desirable and feasible within our limited resources.