

Effectiveness Bank user survey 2019

This report presents an analysis of results from the 2019 survey of users of the Effectiveness Bank service provided by Drug and Alcohol Findings. For more on that service go to:

<https://www.findings.org.uk/aboutDAF.php>

The survey as presented to site users is at:

<https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/EBank2019>

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, the survey was cut to just three questions in 2016 making it easier to respond. These questions were retained in 2019, along with three additional questions assessing the importance of the main components of our service which may help with rationalising the way we spend our time as the project progresses and the funding arrangements potentially change.

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	2019
Number of respondents	183	563	506	584	418	254	476	342
Respondent is a drug/alcohol service practitioner	79%	80%	83%	81%	80%	78%	81%	81%
Service developed thinking or changed response to substance use	69%	77%	82%	78%	80%	81%	80%	85%
Found site very or extremely useful	81%	88%	91%	90%	87%	90%	N/A	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 to also 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 4,101. Even if all respondents were on the mailing list, they would constitute just 8% of the list.

In line with the aim to target UK-based drug and alcohol service practitioners, most 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, and 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.

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

2016: https://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2016.pdf

Impact of Effectiveness Bank

2015: https://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2015.pdf

Satisfaction with research analyses; usefulness of search functions

2014: https://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2014.pdf

Satisfaction with research analyses; matrices and matrix bites

2012: https://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2012.pdf

Satisfaction with research analyses; usefulness of search functions

2011: https://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=EB_2011.pdf

Satisfaction with alerts; usefulness of search functions

2010: https://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=DAF_survey_2010_results.pdf

Reactions to documents on the site; usefulness of search functions

2008: https://findings.org.uk/PHP/dl.php?file=DAF_survey_2008_results.pdf

Reactions to documents on the site; usefulness of search functions

Methodology

On 24 January 2019 the survey link was made available on the Effectiveness Bank site. On 25 January 2019 an invitation to complete the survey was sent to subscribers to the Effectiveness Bank mailing list and to LinkedIn contacts. Reminders were sent on 13 February and 4 March 2019.

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”.

The third, fourth, and fifth questions assessed the importance of the main components of our service:

- “How important to you are our analyses of research studies and reviews?”
- “How important to you are our hot topic essays on controversial and key issues?”
- “How important to you are our alcohol and drug treatment matrices selecting and commenting on seminal and key research and guidance?”

The sixth (and final) 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.”

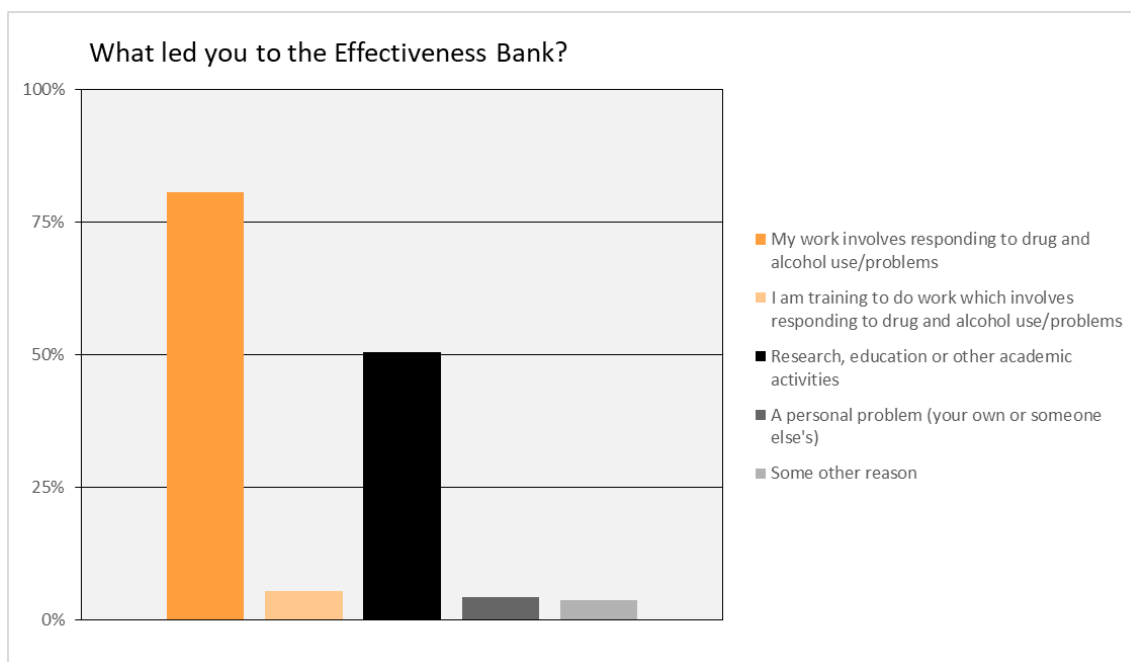
Who were the respondents?

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 (12 March 2019), 342 (476) responses had been received. When the survey was first released there were about 4,101 (4,254) subscribers to the mailing list.

Respondents presumably consisted mainly of mailing list subscribers. Of these subscribers, at 12 March 2019, 2,111 or 52% could be identified as UK in origin and many of the remainder will have been.

129 (146) survey respondents left email addresses enabling a guess about where they were based. Of these, 37% (49%) were evidently from the UK based on their email addresses.

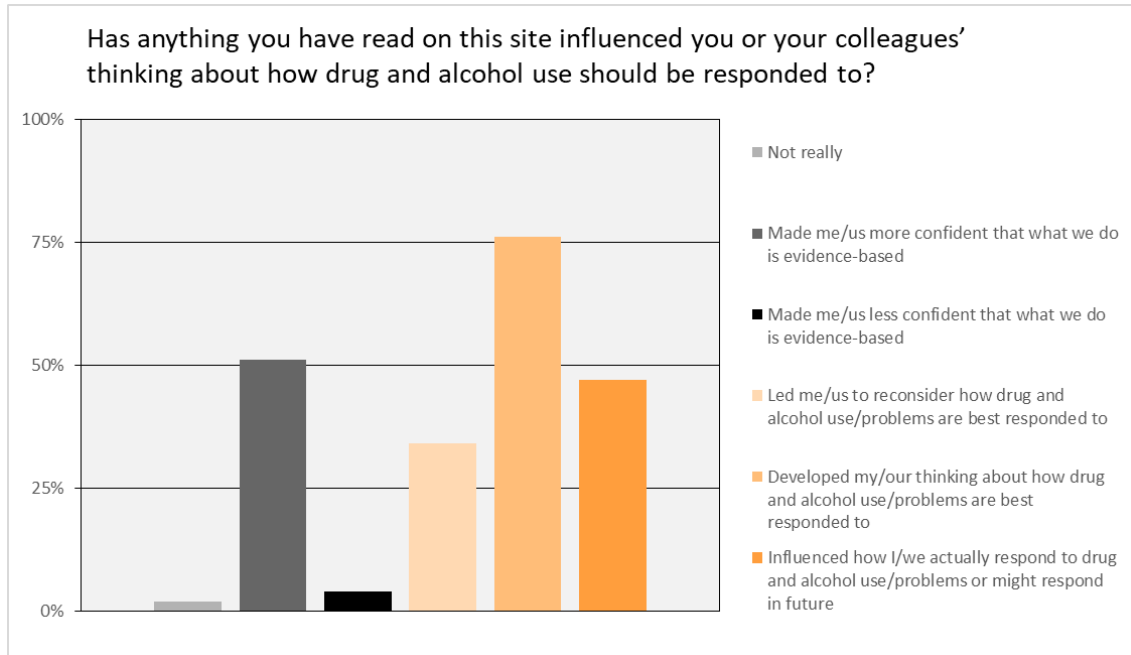


Asked what led them to access the service, 81% (87%) of respondents said they visited the site because, “My work involves responding to drug and alcohol use/problems”. At 51% (53%), about half visited as well/instead (multiple choices were possible) in the course of “Research, education or other academic activities”. Just 6% (7%) were training to work in the sector and 4% (3%) came seeking help with a personal problem.

If these figures are representative, it seems the intended audience – 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.



Just 2% (4%) had "Not really" been influenced in some way or another. At the other end of the scale, 47% (41%) endorsed, "Influenced how I/we actually respond to drug and alcohol use/problems or how we might respond in future", indicating that 1 in 2 respondents had or would alter service-provision in response to Effectiveness Bank communications.

At one step down, 76% (72%) 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, 85% (80%) 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, 51% (49%) felt "more confident that what we do is evidence-based".

Importance of the main components of our service

Almost all respondents said that our analyses of research studies and reviews were "very important" (75%) or "somewhat important" (23%), and just 1% said they were "not important at all" (one respondent) or they "never looked at them" (one respondent).

On the importance of hot topics, a considerable majority said these were "very important" (60%) or "somewhat important" (38%), with 2% saying they were "not important at all" (six respondents).

In comparison, 54% of respondents said that the matrices were "very important" and 42% "somewhat important", with 4% saying they were "not important at all" (eight respondents) or they "never looked at them" (five respondents). While this suggests that respondents were less enthusiastic about the matrices than the analyses and hot topics, overall the considerable majority still indicated that they value the matrices. A

lesser number endorsing “very important” is to be expected as the matrices focus on treatment and will be of lesser interest, for example, to prevention or enforcement specialists or those primarily interested in public health.

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”. 219 (309) comments were received from 64% (65%) of survey respondents.

Generally the comments were complimentary and along the lines of ‘keep up the good work’. However, many respondents also took the time to identify what they most value – either the resources themselves or the way we deliver the work – and some gave suggestions about how we could build on what we are doing well and/or extend the service.

The word ‘invaluable’ was used frequently, suggesting that Findings is not just delivering a good service, but offering something unique and essential.

Suggestions of how Findings could extend its work included broadening the outlook from the UK to the context in other countries, producing work around a particular theme, producing video and audio content (eg, video and podcast), and giving evidence to inquiries.

At least three respondents found that the language could be more accessible. While this constitutes a very small minority of respondents, and smaller minority again of readers, if even a few feel we could improve on that front, we are happy to accept that we have more work to do.

“I’ve only just started getting these. I think they are great, however some of them are a bit technical for me– either there isn’t an explanation on how to understand the means/averages and symbols that are used or I’ve not found a link to it anywhere, so often at a bit of a loss. however, I get the general gist of it and rather like them...”

“The evidence bank is very useful. To help shape commissioning and policy I think some articles which summarise key trends in language more accessible to non-professionals would be very powerful.”

“Thank you very much for an extremely useful service. Reports of studies and reviews sometimes too dense for treatment staff, who would benefit from reading them.”

The main aim of Findings writers/editors is to produce practitioner-friendly content, and traditionally feedback has indicated that we are achieving this. Some comments from the present survey include:

“Effectiveness bank is a great resource, with user friendly summaries of the literature.”

“A brilliant resource, and fairly unique. Well written and user friendly for the busy clinician. Keep it up!”

“This continues to be the very best resource that I know of across the entire world (certainly the English-speaking world) to help translate and comment on important research findings and make them accessible (but never ‘dumbed-down’) to policy makers, practitioners and fellow –researchers. It is a fantastic service and the FINDINGS team are truly brilliant communicators, with vast in-depth knowledge of the field.”

"Findings is far and away the most user-friendly source re alcohol / drug addictions available ... striking an optimum balance between high quality evidence-based programming, pragmatic applicability and human & workplace implications. Continued funding is deeply to be hoped."

The 'word cloud' below shows repeatedly used words in people's comments, with greater size indicating greater frequency.



An additional word cloud distills survey responses into words most commonly used to describe the service, showing that it is held in high regard (from the most frequently used word "great" at 37 times, to "invaluable" at 18 times, and "love" which was used 8 times).

