



CASE STUDY

Charity

Calls on mobile handsets “literally saves lives” during nationwide lockdown

About the customer

When COVID-19 reached our shores in March 2020, the consequent forced closure of UK businesses came as a shock. For a charity working with 80-90,000 vulnerable people, that shock was palpable. The entire operating model relied on face-to-face contact between service users and counselling and support services, so there was an urgent need to ensure that support wasn't severed, that those who relied on these services weren't left to fend for themselves, and that people battling mental health issues and alcohol and substance abuse weren't isolated during the pandemic. The charity needed to find a different way to engage.

The challenge

As an existing Wavenet* customer, we began a conversation about whether pay-as-you-go mobile handsets, given to service users in place of face-to-face appointments, would be a viable option. However, the existing mobile fleet setup – which ran off the corporate network to enable staff to carry out their core workloads – was not designed to support the needs of service users as well.

There was a real risk that such a setup could be open to abuse and that providing handsets might, in some cases, lead to misuse. This sparked a bigger conversation about ownership

and responsibility: who would decide who received a phone, who would manage topping up handsets, and who would handle the ongoing administration? The charity did not want the corporate responsibility of deciding who got a phone, how it was paid for, and how it was used.

The implications for time and resource were significant. There would be billing queries to manage, mobile usage to oversee, and all the general admin that comes with running a large mobile fleet. The charity appeared to be facing a dilemma.

At a glance

Industry: Charity

Sites: 1 - 50

Employees: 101 - 500

Solutions:

- Unified communications
- Support & Managed Services

Products:

- Nokia Mobile Handsets
- O2 SIMs
- MiFi devices
- Laptops
- Tablets

The solution

Fortunately, we were already well on our way to making this work.

- **Decentralised decision-making and cost control**
Each individual project (initiatives run at branch level across the country) was put in charge of deciding who would be provided with a handset. Costs and billing for each set of devices were handled by the projects themselves, each with its own cost centre. Thanks to the existing working relationship, we already held the granula data needed to support this model.
- **Wavenet-managed project delivery**
We took on the management of the entire undertaking, removing the burden from the charity's corporate team at a time when every organisation was dealing with major disruption to BAU operations. With the potential to reach up to ninety thousand service users, the charity was understandably nervous about how big the need would become, making our project management support the most sensible option.
- **Best-fit network and secure configuration**
After reviewing all networks, we selected O2 as the best fit. Through O2, we could lock down SIMs to prevent misuse and ensure handsets were used solely for maintaining contact between service users and the charity, mirroring the pre-lockdown support model.
- **Right devices for the right use cases**
For most users, we provided O2 voice-only SIMs (removing the need for data plans) paired with Nokia handsets, which were simple MiFi devices, laptops, and tablets to enable access to the charity's online services, including counselling sessions, seminars, and focus group meetings.
- **Managed mobile service wrap**
For an extra 50p per handset, we provided a managed mobile service wrap, and proactively handled each connection, including stopping or changing numbers and dealing with any requests that would usually require a call to a service desk. Changes were then communicated directly to the relevant project, minimising administration for the charity.

The results

Having this large and complex undertaking to us meant the charity could concentrate on running its services and navigating a period of unprecedented upheaval, without the additional strain of managing a new mobile estate.

- **Scale and responsiveness**
What began as around 100 connections at the start of the pandemic grew to 7,000 handsets delivered on an ad-hoc, as-needed basis, supporting users through lockdowns, tiering systems and beyond.
- **From temporary fix to core service**
The initial short-term solution led to formalising the arrangement into a one-year contract, which has since been renewed for another year. A stop-gap measure to bridge the gap in face-to-face services evolved into a core element of the charity's operating model.
- **Improved engagement and life-saving impact**
The mobile solution not only maintained continuity of support but improved engagement and enhanced the services provided. Most importantly, in the customer's own words, it has 'genuinely saved lives.'
- **Choice and flexibility for service users**
The solution now gives service users greater choice in how they communicate. Many still prefer face-to-face contact, but others find that phone-based check-ins reduce anxiety around appointments and lower the risk of missed sessions.
- **Recognised organisational success**
During the charity's annual review of key achievements, the mobile project with us was highlighted as a major success. Increased engagement with service users has had a profound impact across the organisation.

This project has demonstrated that the charity is willing to think creatively and adapt its approach to reach vulnerable people in new ways. For now, that means providing mobile handsets and an alternative communication channel that remains fit for purpose even after the worst of the pandemic has passed. Looking ahead, evolving with the times will stay firmly on the agenda for both the charity and us, as they continue to explore new ways to support those who need them most.

Let's talk
0333 234 0011

contact@wavenet.co.uk
wavenet.co.uk