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Category: Social Value

Company: BMT

Client: Addiction Recovery Agency (Ara)



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Executive Summary

Addiction Recovery Agency (Ara) is a charity based in the Southwest. Optimising their digital capability was at the core of our recommendation to increase the number of people they can support and become less reliant on the referrals from a third party.

Our recommendations were based on insights gained through our conversations with stakeholders and subsequently reinforced with external research data. Our solution consisted of:

- Streamlining the referral process and working towards it being more automated.
- Integrating social media into the charity's business strategy.
- Using social media as a tool to better engage with clients and raise awareness.
- Improve their social media reporting and website analytics to ensure the charity can continue to make improvements.

Since presenting our solutions, Ara has been able to implement our recommendations, leading directly to an increase in clients using their service and therefore supporting more people suffering from gambling harms.

Key Results:

- Direct referrals via Ara's website have **doubled** and now represent **40%** of their total monthly referrals.
- Ara have increased their efficiency and saw an increase of **12%** of the total number of clients seen for gambling harms support and treatment.

Taking a collaborative approach to this problem helped to ensure the success of the recommendations as we listened to Ara's feedback and incorporated it. Our involvement allowed Ara to become more self-sufficient in their referral process and providing better support to their clients directly within less than a year of BMT's involvement.

Background

Ara (Addiction Recovery Agency) Recovery for All is a registered charity and helps people recover from mental health, drug and alcohol and gambling harms. Ara offers free and confidential services which are proven to have a positive impact on their clients' lives. Ara estimates so far, they have helped over 40,000 people with alcohol, drug, gambling, and mental health issues, and have saved an estimated £50 million in costs to the Southwest and Wales community.

The Problem

At the beginning of 2022, Ara received 50% of their referrals from GamCare, a national charity commissioned by the Gambling Commission. Ara observed a decrease in conversion from the initial triage call to the client receiving therapy from GamCare referrals.

Ara needed to increase the number of people they offer support to and improve their direct referral process.

Client Testimonial

"SME charities like Ara can benefit immensely from the business acumen that consultancies like BMT are able to offer. With funding envelopes for services to support vulnerable people at the mercy of wider societal and political factors, optimising internal processes are essential. Unfortunately, such expertise is usually unaffordable.

BMT's pro bono work with my charity directly led to improvements in the referral pathways for one of our key services (supporting people with gambling harms). The quality of deliverables was admirable, but the way the consultants interacted with my staff most impressed me, using accomplished interpersonal skills to work with people who initially had no experience or understanding of the concepts being introduced.

The work that BMT has done for Ara has led to improved outcomes for vulnerable people in crisis in the community. The consultants were fantastic, and the positive legacy of their efforts continue long after completion."

Robbie Thornhill, Ara Director of Recovery & Resettlement

The Objectives

As part of the ongoing pro-bono work BMT does with several charities, Ara tasked us to:

- Provide insight to improve their referral process to help more people suffering from gambling harms.
- Improve Ara’s ability to engage with and support 18–34-year-olds.

The Approach



Figure 1: BMT's Data Driven Approach and Collaboration Process for Continuous Improvement

The first step of our approach consisted of two research phases – internal and external. The first phase was internal research and consisted of:

- Interviews with a range of Ara’s Gambling Service stakeholders.
- Evaluation of Ara’s current client referral pathway.
- Reviewing Ara’s website analytics.

Our initial conclusions from the stakeholder interviews highlighted:

- Ara could be better at raising awareness of the services offered.
- Ara needs to become more proactive in how they reach clients.
- 18–34-year-olds are a key audience who require Ara’s support.

Improving Ara’s strategy to support more young people was a priority for all Ara’s stakeholders because if gambling harms are not dealt with at a young age, it can have a greater impact on life. This insight guided our second research phase – the external research, which consisted of:

- Gambling and internet habit research of 18–34-year-olds.
- Competitor and industry website functionality and social media analysis.

Informed by our internal research of reviewing Ara’s website analytics and client pathway, we found Ara had a high number of monthly visitors to their website, but this was not reflected in their referral numbers. To further understand how Ara could improve, we assessed competitor and industry website functionality to see how other charities were engaging with their clients and evaluated the learnings which could be applied to Ara.

The Solution

We took a stepped approach to our recommendations to ensure Ara could achieve continuous improvements and have the correct infrastructures in place before tackling the next recommendation. The solution we presented to Ara incorporated the insights from our internal research and were reinforced by data from our external research. This approach was key to Ara’s success as it ensured the fundamentals were in place and were united in the same overall goal – improve Ara’s ability to help more people.

Once the immediate recommendations were addressed, we included long term goals to help Ara remain efficient, further grow their community, and therefore increase the number of people they offer support to.

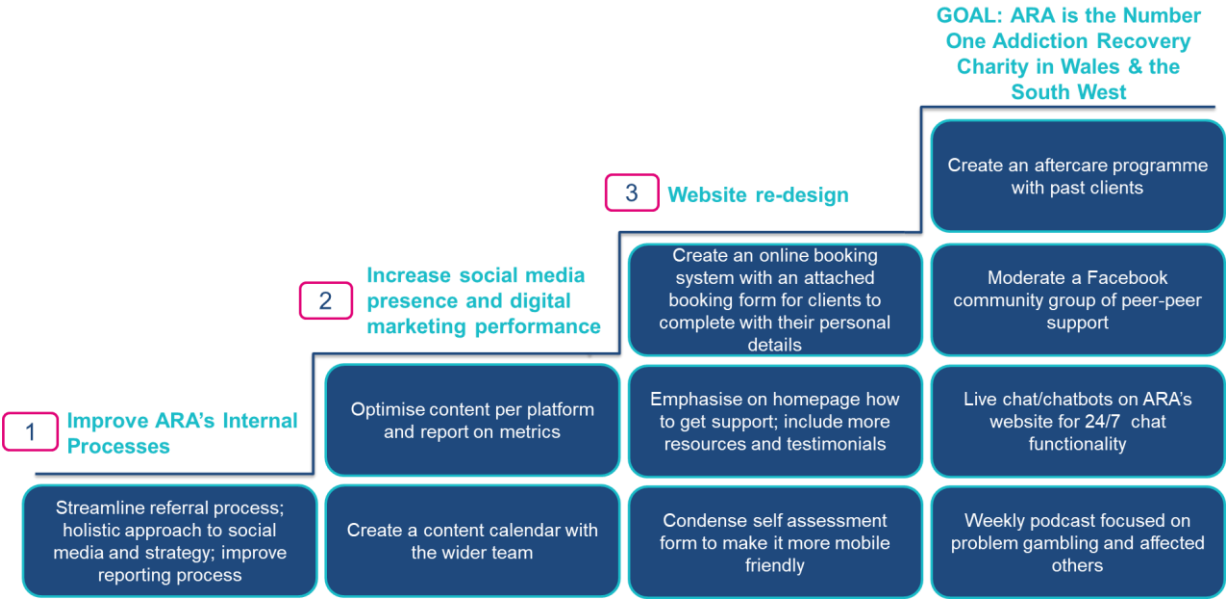


Figure 2: BMT's Proposed Steps to Success

Our recommendations were:

1. Improve internal processes for referrals and reporting

We suggested the initial priority should be to improve the internal process to establish a strong foundation before introducing more complex changes. We identified three key actions to improve their internal processes.

- i. Key to improving Ara’s efficiency was streamlining their referral process; by combining the initial call Ara has with the client and the follow-on assessment call, as this is where Ara had the highest drop off rate of clients. We suggested combining the two calls into one call would decrease the wait time, drop off rate, and could directly lead to more referrals, therefore increasing the number of clients receiving therapy.
- ii. To address our objective of improving Ara’s referral process, we documented the current client journey from the initial referral and included the systems used, the people interacted with, and timings involved. This helped us to identify the inefficiencies in the process and inform our recommendations to Ara. We then created a revised client referral journey, which incorporated our recommendations to allow the team to visualise what the journey would look like and highlight the areas of efficiency improvements made within the referral process.
- iii. Through our conversations with internal stakeholders, it was clear more collaboration across the departments was needed. For example, a key finding from our internal research was, despite an increase in month-on-month traffic to Ara’s website, only 2% of visitors had become referrals. This was a fact not being reported and therefore there was no visibility of a baseline, and a valuable client insight was also being missed. Incorporating website analytics into Ara’s monthly reporting will ensure strategic decisions are made based on their data.

We felt improving the internal process for referrals and reporting needed to be addressed as a priority as it would create the infrastructure needed for the subsequent recommendations and allow for continuous improvement.

2. Increase social media presence and performance

We recommended Ara incorporate a tailored social media and marketing approach into their business strategy and use it as a tool to increase their engagement with their target audiences. Consequently, the more people who are aware of Ara's services, the more people Ara can help. For example, our research revealed 18–34-year-olds are prevalent users of Instagram and TikTok whereas over 45-year-olds are more likely to use Facebook. Therefore, creating content to suit the platform will lead to better engagement with the target audience; increase awareness of Ara's services and an increased opportunity for Ara to support the younger demographic.

The success of this recommendation relies on Ara to have social media reporting in place from the previous recommendation. This will create the opportunity for Ara to continuously improve and refine their social media strategy, provide insight on how their content is performing per platform and identify learnings.

We drew upon the experience of the consultant with specialist knowledge in this area, which was instrumental in our approach to this project. Her experience of audience insight directed our research to understand how young people gamble and interact digitally and contributed to informing our recommendations to Ara.

3. Increase self-referrals via Ara's website

Our final recommendation was to improve the functionality on the Ara website and look to incorporate an online booking system. This would allow all clients to refer themselves via Ara's website and book a timeslot for their initial call. We highlighted this would not replace the current methods of referral via call or email. Instead, this would be an additional digital referral solution to appeal to the younger audience who are more comfortable interacting digitally.

We proposed this third recommendation be addressed once Ara is satisfied with the efficiency of their internal processes and social media approach. We suggested this because improving the website functionality requires the initial infrastructure in the previous recommendations - data, reporting and a defined internal process, to be in place.

Finally, we included additional recommendations for Ara to consider as part of a continuous improvement process, such as creating an After Care Programme to further build their community and continue to support their client's recovery journey.

The Client and Consultant Relationship

We worked closely with Guy Hawker, Gambling Service Manager and Robbie Thornhill, Director of Recovery and Resettlement and had weekly updates where we discussed our ideas openly and they provided feedback. This allowed us to consider any potential resistance and what could be done to rectify this and incorporate the solution within our recommendation.

For example, one of our recommendations was to explore the use of a ChatBot on Ara's website to take the initial information from clients and conduct the screening questionnaires. Guy asked if we had considered what the process would be with high-risk clients who require immediate support. We took this feedback on board, discussed the current process with project workers and incorporated this into our proposed solution.

As a result of our collaborative approach, we didn't experience any direct challenges as we listened to the stakeholder feedback and incorporated this into our solutions. This approach ensured our recommendations focused on what could be achieved practically within Ara's resources.

Results and Outcomes

The recommendations we produced for Ara contributed to:

- A 12% increase from the previous year of the total number of clients seen for gambling harms support and treatment.
- Direct referrals via Ara's website represent 40% of Ara's total monthly referrals, up from around 20% previously.
- The increase in number of self-referrals via the website is due to an improved social media strategy and reporting. Monthly reports with data tracking have helped to inform decision making on content and has improved audience reach.
- There has been an increase in referrals received from 18–34-year-olds via social media.

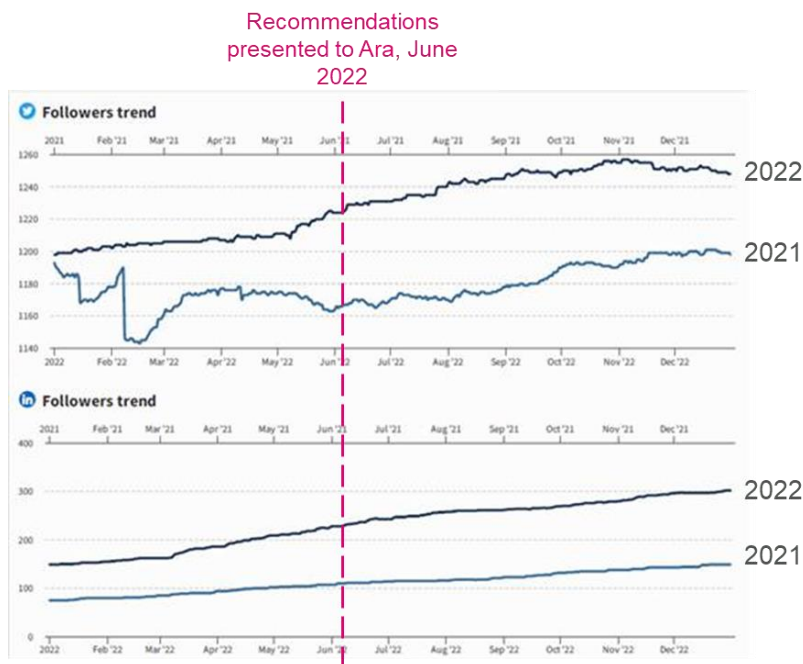


Figure 3: Ara's Twitter and LinkedIn Followers Trend, 2021 Vs 2022

- The triage and assessment call have been combined where possible and this has resulted in a lower waiting time for the first counselling appointment from ten to seven days.
- The dropout rate from the initial contact to assessment has decreased, resulting in an increase in conversion rate from an average of 50% to 73%, allowing Ara to support more people during a crisis.
- Ara is currently in the process of setting up an after-care system for clients and are scoping a chatbot function for the website.