



Sleep Scotland Support Line

AN EVALUATION OF THE SERVICE

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Overview

This report describes an evaluation of the Sleep Scotland Support Line in September 2020. It involved gathering users' views through questionnaires after having received support from the Support Line in the previous 18 months, highlighting changes to the feedback mechanism, and COVID-19 lockdown upon the Support Line.

History

A free Support Line was set up by Sleep Scotland in April 2017 as a trial in Edinburgh, the Lothians, and Clackmannanshire to support families of children with sleep difficulties. In the pilot year, a total of 224 families were supported. As the trial was a success, this was extended to a full Scotland-wide service in April 2018. In the first year, the Support Line supported over 400 families with sleep difficulties, from 32 different local authorities. The following year (2019) saw the team supporting 488 families across Scotland; this was an increase of 16% on the previous year. 2020 is set to show a further increase. The impact of the COVID-19 lockdown will be assessed in a later section of this report.

Background

The Sleep Scotland Support Line is a free, confidential e-mail and telephone support service offering advice, information and assistance to families across Scotland with their toddlers' (18 months and over) up to teenagers' (up to 18 years old) sleep problems. The team of sleep advisers are all fully trained by Sleep Scotland, providing impartial and tailored information and advice. They also offer British Sign Language (BSL) users support using Scotland's National BSL Interpreting Video Relay Service.

There are two tiers of service provided by the Support Line. Tier 1 are Sleep Advisors, who support sleep problems in typically developing children, whereas the tier 2 are Sleep Counsellors, who support sleep problems in children with additional support needs and more complex sleep issues. Within this, Tier 2 Sleep Counsellors can also support children awaiting a diagnosis, and those in challenging situations, e.g. experienced trauma, domestic abuse. The Tier 1 Sleep Advisors will complete a sleep assessment and provide advice on good sleep hygiene for the family to follow. Whereas, if the case is more complex, a referral to the tier 2 level is offered until the sleep issue is resolved. Those who receive support at tier 1 level are offered more support, if required, at the evaluation stage.

The service has been advertised through postal mail outs to GP surgeries, local schools, community centres and libraries across the country. The service has also been promoted through several online email groups, including the British Sleep Society, Scottish Sleep Forum, BPSA and NHS Lothian mailing lists. The service has also been promoted through attending events in person including the Scottish Learning Festival 19/20, Children in Scotland Annual Conference, Aberdeen Health and Wellbeing Festival, and through hosting stalls at an NHS Lanarkshire Healthy Schools Plus Planning Event.

Feedback Systems

During the trial and early stages of the support line, feedback consisted of a text message to families around 6 weeks after their initial contact. This asked the family to score the support out of 10, whereby 1 was poor and 10 was excellent, and provide any comments. As of January 2019, 92.7% scored 7 or higher out of 10 for the service received, with 82% scoring 7 or higher out of 10 for the improvement in their child's sleep.

However, it was decided to change the evaluation systems in April 2019 to better support families and improve the service of the Support Line. This new system involves a brief online survey using Survey Monkey reviewing the sleep counsellor, the service they received, and the level of

improvement in their child's sleep on a scale of 1-10. It also asks if they require any additional support, and for any comments. Two versions of this form exist, depending if the contact was from a parent or carer, or a young person directly, with the questions aimed at the young person directly rather than at the parent or carer (Appendix 1 shows an example of both forms). All feedback is logged in a database and on an evaluation spreadsheet.

All positive feedback is shared with the team to aid motivation and ensure the person who dealt with that case receives a boost in morale to know their efforts are worthwhile and appreciated.

If the scoring is under 6, contact is made with the family offering more sleep support, even if they haven't specifically asked for it. This is done in case people are feeling hopeless or like nothing else can be done and they need a little encouragement to engage with support further. There are instances where the team cannot offer more support, for example, if the family needs support in another area (e.g. mental health, social work, GP etc). In these instances, it is good practice to speak to the family again, if they're willing, to signpost to other sources of support and/or encourage them to seek support from relevant services or professionals. For some families, the timing is not right and putting the changes in place at that time is not possible. Examples of this are if the family are experiencing a time of change – moving home, experiencing bereavement etc. In those instances, families are encouraged to contact the service again in the future.

Changes with Covid-19 Lockdown

March 2020 saw the lockdown of many businesses and services throughout the UK due to the COVID-19 outbreak. This included services provided by Sleep Scotland. However, the support line remained open, although remotely, with initial contact made by email, before one of sleep advisors would telephone the family or young person to offer support.

Methods

All feedback was placed on Excel dividing it up by location, type of call (Tier 1 or Tier 2), and source of phone call. This data was analysed using LibreOffice's equivalent of Excel (Calc) with quantitative statistics and graphed to look for trends amongst it. All results were analysed and compared with known campaigns.

Results

Feedback ratings

The average rating for the Support Line in April 2017-March 2018 was 9.2, but this was prior to the change in what feedback was requested, and as the written comments suggested this was not giving a fuller picture of the service (Figure 1).

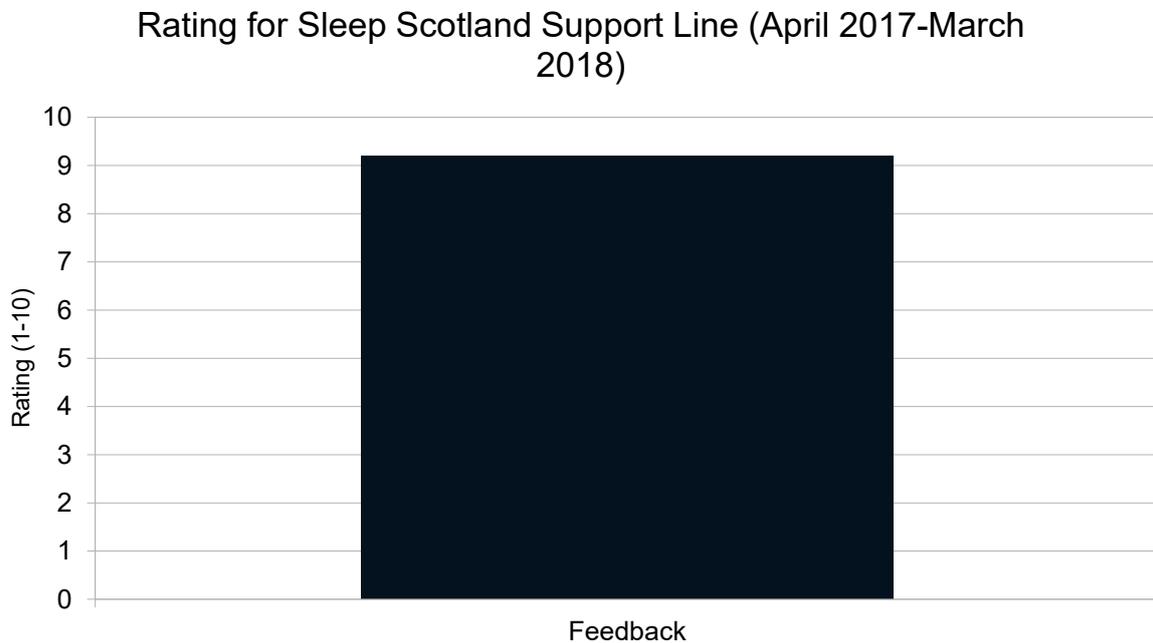


Figure 1

For example, one service user commented: *10 in terms of support but not getting any more sleep unfortunately.* This suggested the score was an overall for the service given, not the help that had been offered. There was also negative feedback in the comments: *Advice was what I already knew. I wanted an appointment for a face to face consultation but was declined it. Bit disappointed really, sleep consultant wasn't able to help much. Sorry.* However, the positive feedback far outnumbered the negative. This included: *I can't thank you enough for the transformation in my daughter and our family life. Great listening and understanding. Not trying to trot out standard advice but taking time to make sure it fit our family.*

Ratings for Sleep Scotland Support Line (April 2019-September 2020)

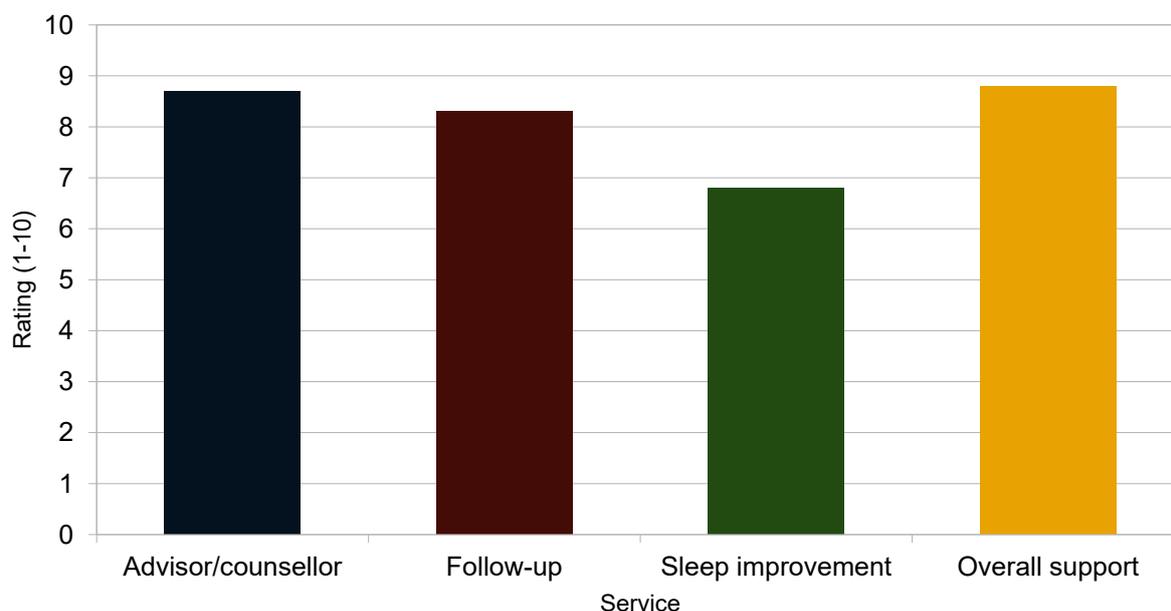


Figure 2

With the change in feedback system in April 2018, a clearer picture emerged (Figure 2). People were happy with the service provided, scoring an average of 8.7 for the advisor/counsellor and 8.8 for overall support. However, it also showed that there had not always been an improvement in sleep, which scored on average 6.8. Positive comments included: *Close to a year of sleep problems for my 7-year-old fixed (for the most part) within two weeks of following your advice.* As well as: *I have to credit Sleep Scotland with saving my sanity, and resolving my daughters sleep issues and resulting behaviour issues. I am forever grateful.*

Negative comments began to show how COVID-19 lockdown was impacting on sleep, with returning users with comments such as: *My daughter was sleeping much better, but this has worsened due to COVID-19 situation. I only hope it improves when she returns to school.* Even with lockdown easing, comments show the impact in its broader sense: *It was very difficult to try and do anything positive in lockdown.*

Call Source

From the evaluation database, the 12 months from April 2019 to March 2020 488 phone calls were made, 54.30% of calls were Tier 2, and 45.70% were Tier 1 respectively, this is a notable increase on the previous six months (October 2018 to March 2019).

From the data analysis and Figure 3 the majority of calls were as a result of recommendation from a health visitor (17.01%), nurseries/schools (15.78%) and visits to the GP/nurse (11.48%). The high position of nurseries and schools could be related to the Sound Sleep programme, which is an educational training course and set of resources that raises awareness in schools of the importance of sleep for health and wellbeing, and helps pupils implement positive sleep habits in their routines. Previous contact with Sleep Scotland accounted for 4.30%.

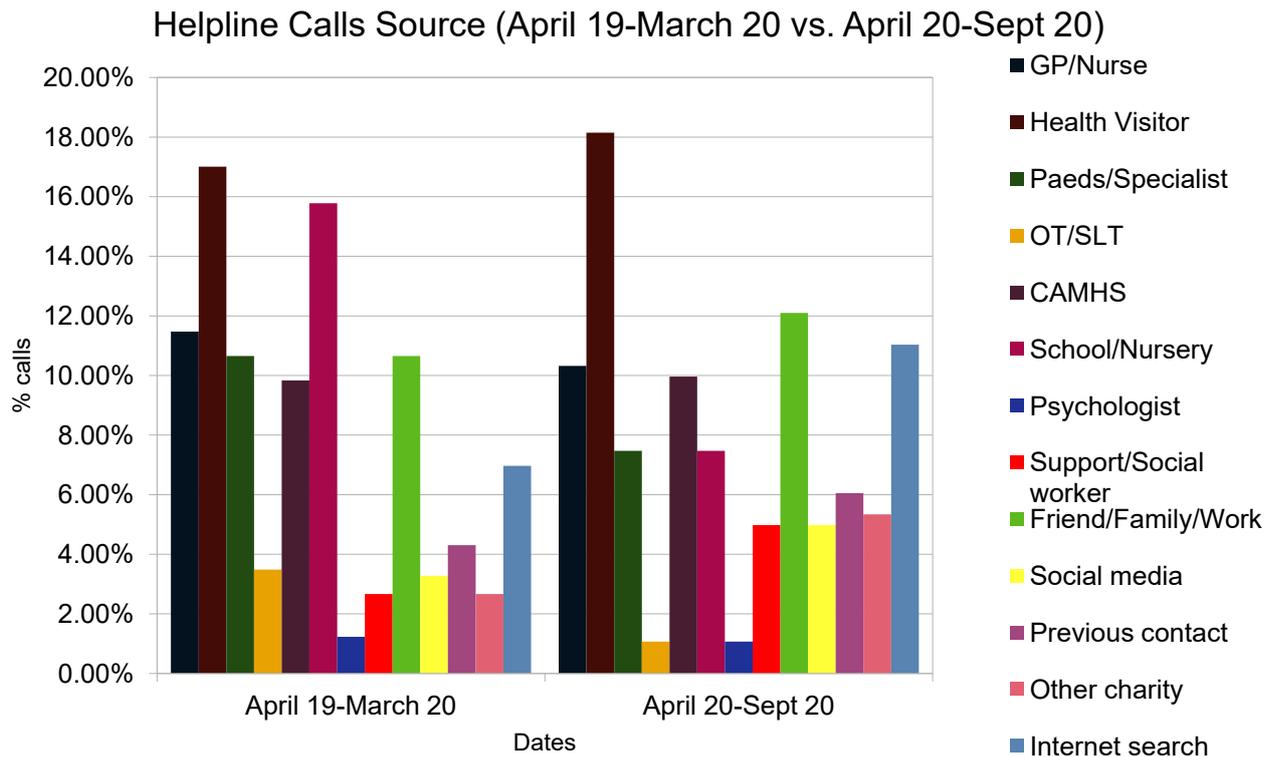


Figure 3

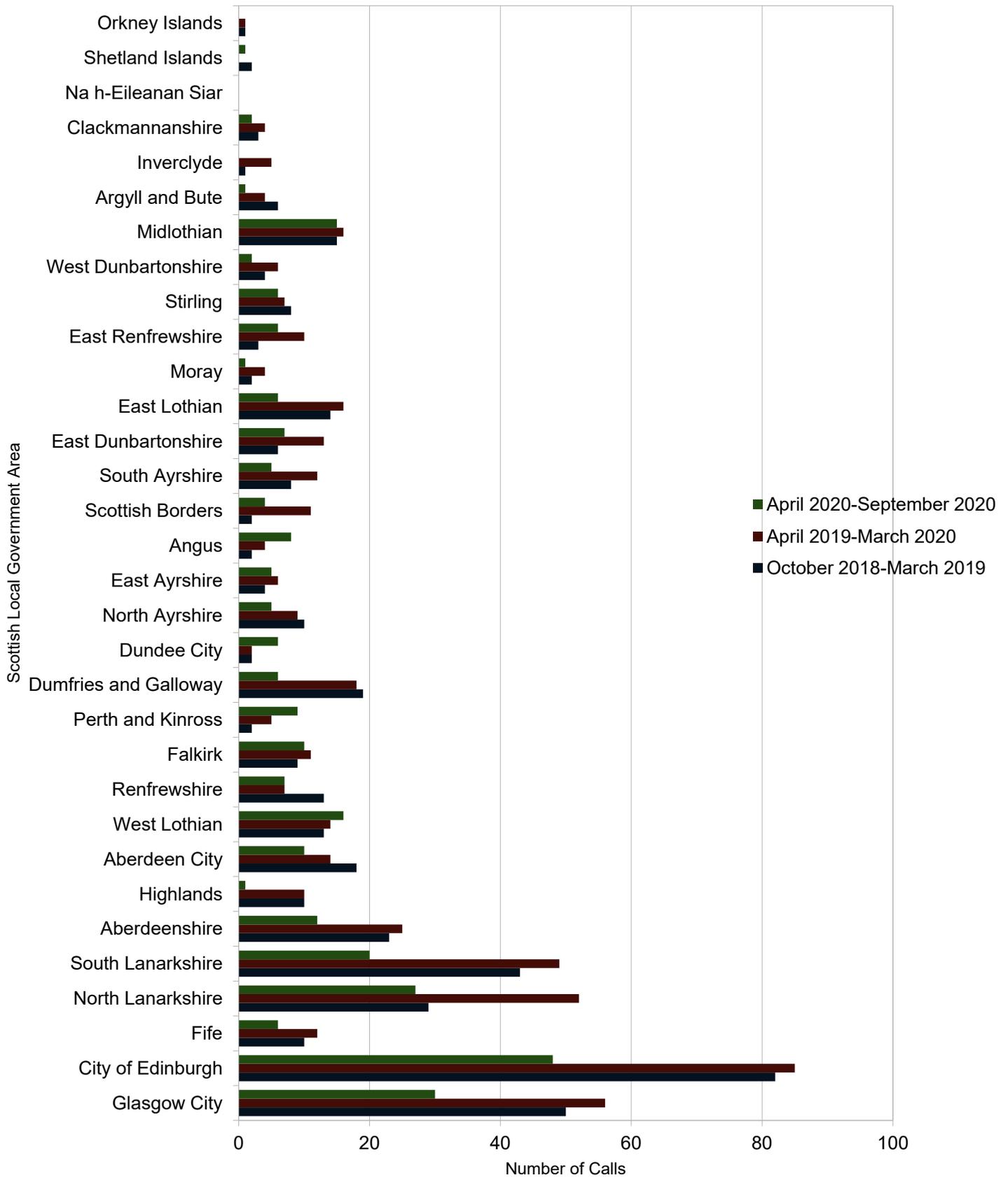
In 2019, Sleep Scotland’s online presence was revamped; a new logo was created, the website and social media revised and refreshed. These changes may account for 3.28% of people discovering the Support Line through social media, and 6.97% from the website.

Of the 282 calls made between April 2020 and September 2020, 47 of these referred directly to COVID-19, over 4 in 25. This period saw an increase in callers requiring Tier 2 intervention, with 58.16% Tier 2 c.f. for Tier 1 41.84%. It also saw an increase in repeat callers, 6.05%, and recommendations from friends/family/work saw an increase to 12.10%, c.f. 10.66% in the previous six months. Callers becoming aware of the service through social media and internet searches also saw an increase to 4.98% and 11.03% respectively. This increase may be due to the COVID-19 lockdown and more people looking for help online rather than the visits with a health visitor or GP/nurse that would normally have occurred.

The increase in demand during lockdown was also seen in the demand in hours per week by staff. In Tier 1 there was an average of 47 hours per week of support provided, which increased to 64 (142%) following lockdown, and Tier 2 provided an average of 12 hours per week, which increased to 35 (292%) (A O’Brien, Personal Communication).

A comparison since October 2018 by local authority can be found on P6 (Figure 4), and a comparison of Tier 1 and Tier 2 since April 2019 across local authorities can be found on P7 (Figure 5). The comparison across the local authorities shows the greatest number of calls came from Glasgow City, the Lanarkshires (North and South), City of Edinburgh, and the Lothians (Mid, East and West), and Dumfries & Galloway. This is also reflected in the tiers, but no trend can be found in the areas that had one or two calls over the evaluation period.

Number of Calls to the Sleep Scotland Support Line by Scottish Local Government Area



Tier 1 vs Tier 2 Calls to the Sleep Scotland Helpline (April 2018-September 2020)
Number of Calls

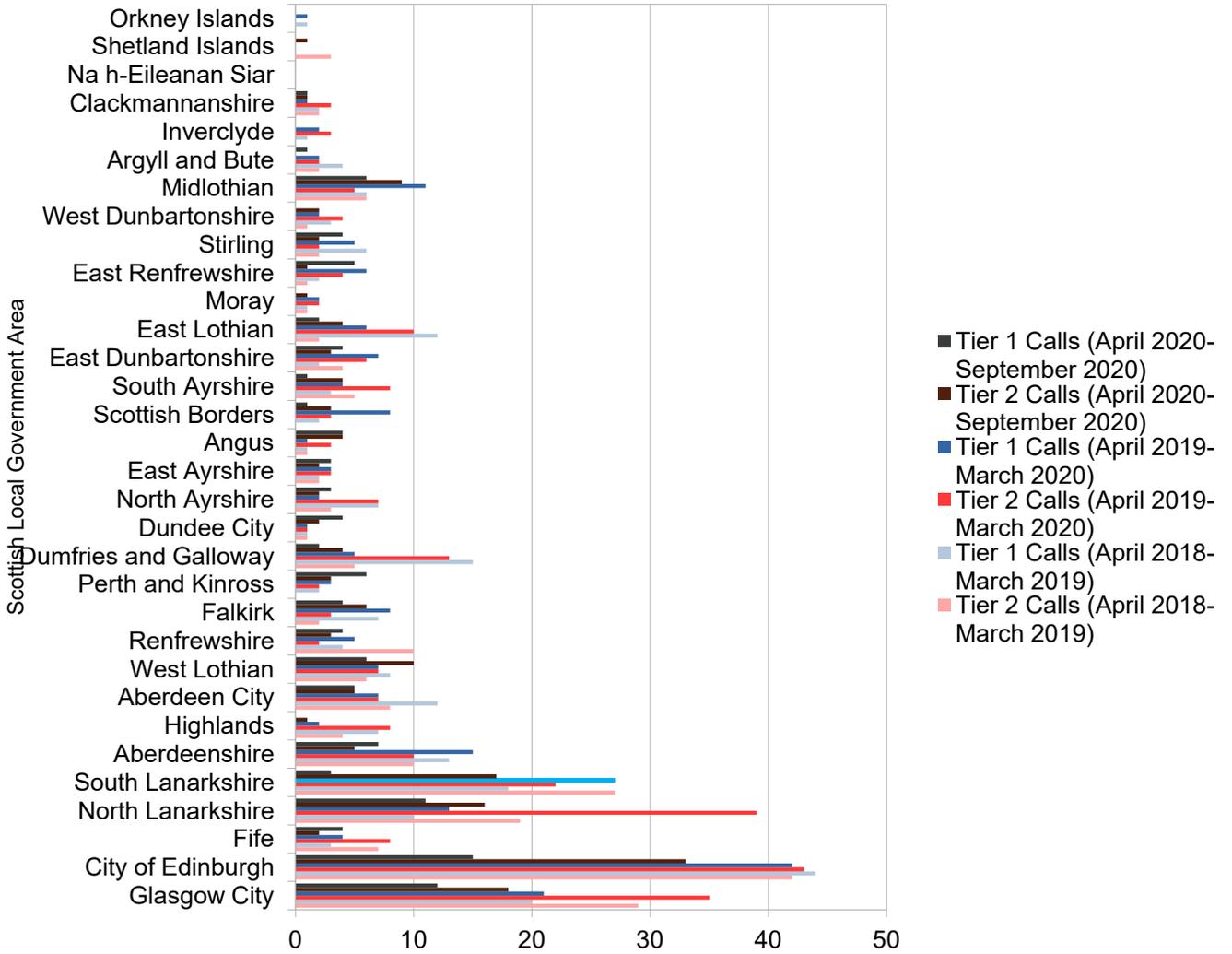


Figure 5

Discussion and Conclusion

Looking at the results of the updated evaluation showed it was useful to make the change to what callers were asked to complete and will enable the team to continue to improve staff feedback and training. It also shows how necessary this service is, as it continues to provide support to an increasing number of families year on year.

Call source can be directly linked to promotional based activities. Equally, it shows the revamp in website and social media has had a positive impact, particularly with the COVID-19 lockdown, leading to more hits/likes and in return, contact to the support line.

The origin of calls shows a bias in urban local government areas, although calls from Dundee was considerably less than those of City of Edinburgh and Glasgow City. It also showed fewer calls from the West and North of Scotland, which highlights areas for more promotion and training of sleep counsellors in these areas.