

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) experiences – 2023 Mini report

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Background of the report

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service, known as PALS, has been introduced to ensure that the NHS listens to patients, their relatives, carers and friends, and answers their questions and resolves their concerns as quickly as possible.

PALS also helps the NHS to improve services by listening to what matters to patients and their loved ones and making changes, when appropriate.

This information was supplied by NHS website on 24 April 2023.

This report relates to the experiences of people using PALS in Derby City who have used services at the following Trusts:

- University Hospital of Derby and Burton NHS Foundation Trust (UHDB)
- Derbyshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

In October 2022 Healthwatch Derby received a number of enquiries from people who were having some difficulties in trying to access the PALS service. The issue was quickly resolved by the Advice and Support Services Manager at UHDB.

As Healthwatch Derby regularly signposts local people to PALS it was decided to create a short survey which ran throughout January 2023 asking about local people's experiences of using PALS.



Summary of findings

Throughout January 2023, a short survey was promoted through our online media.

28 people began the survey but only 20 people completed the survey and this report only relates to those that completed the survey.

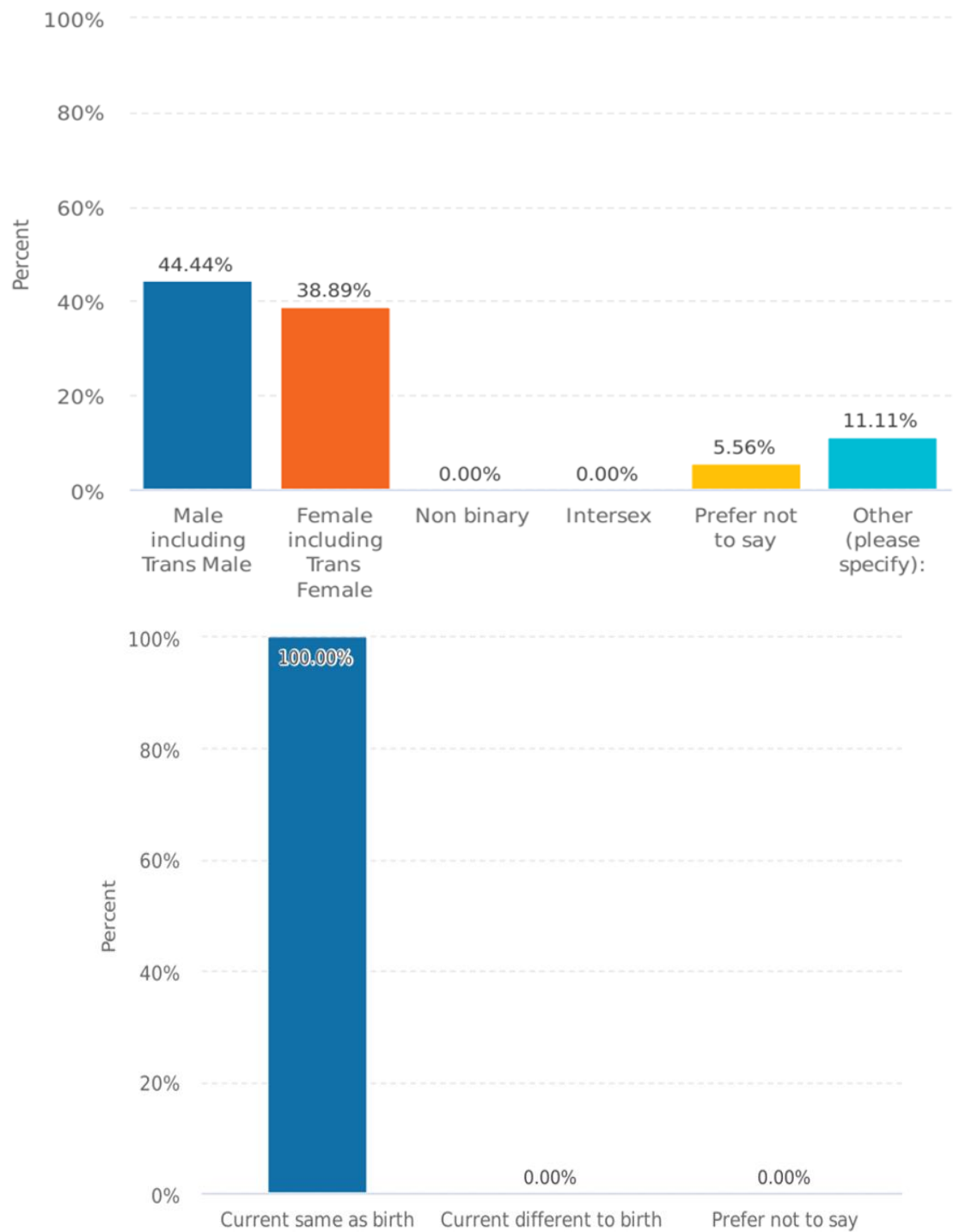
The report is only a snapshot of experiences based on a relatively small sample of people.

- ❖ 56% called to raise a complaint about a service provider.
- ❖ 28% called for advice about a bad experience.
- ❖ 50% used the telephone to contact PALS.
- ❖ 33% used email to contact PALS.
- ❖ 44% said they found it difficult or very difficult to contact PALS.
- ❖ 44% said they found it easy to contact PALS.
- ❖ The negative comments were mainly about the amount of time it took to access or get a response from PALS.
- ❖ 50% said they had been listened to or their issue had been resolved.

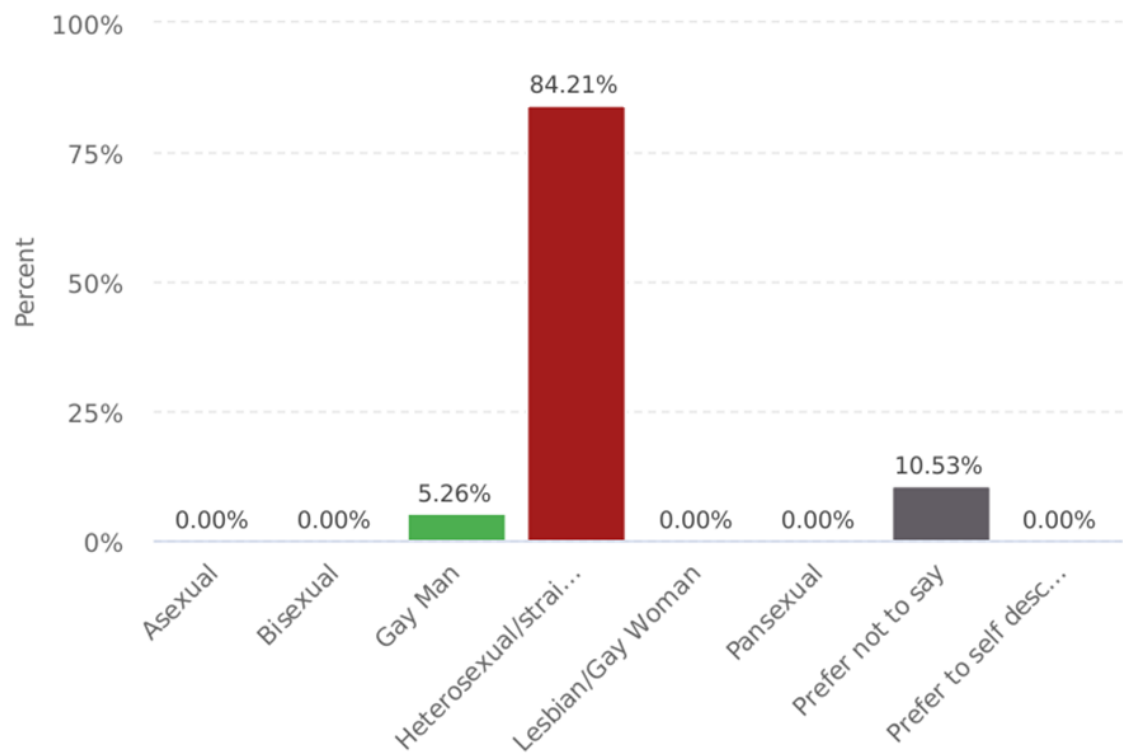
Recommendation

Due to the size of the sample it is difficult to make any real conclusions. However, further research is recommended.

Who we spoke to – Gender identity

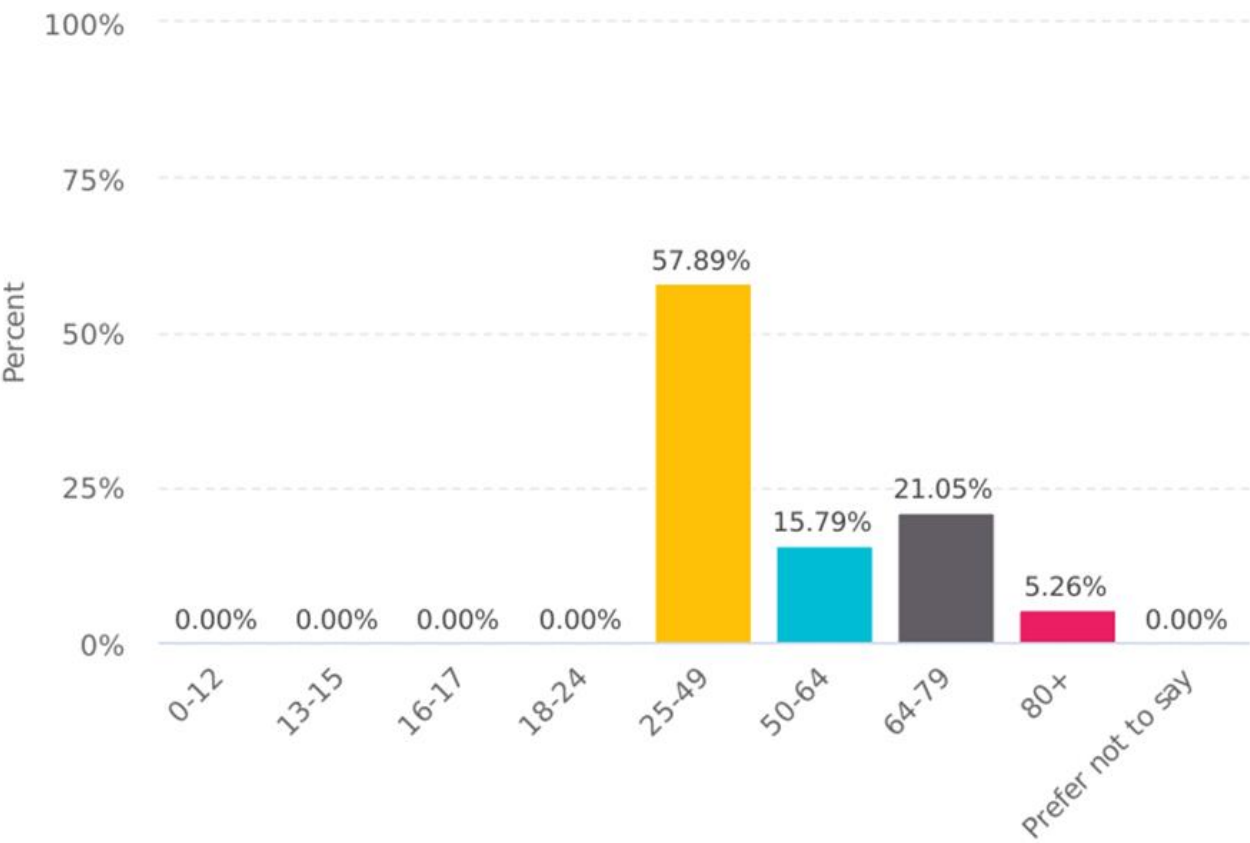


Who we spoke to – Sexual orientation

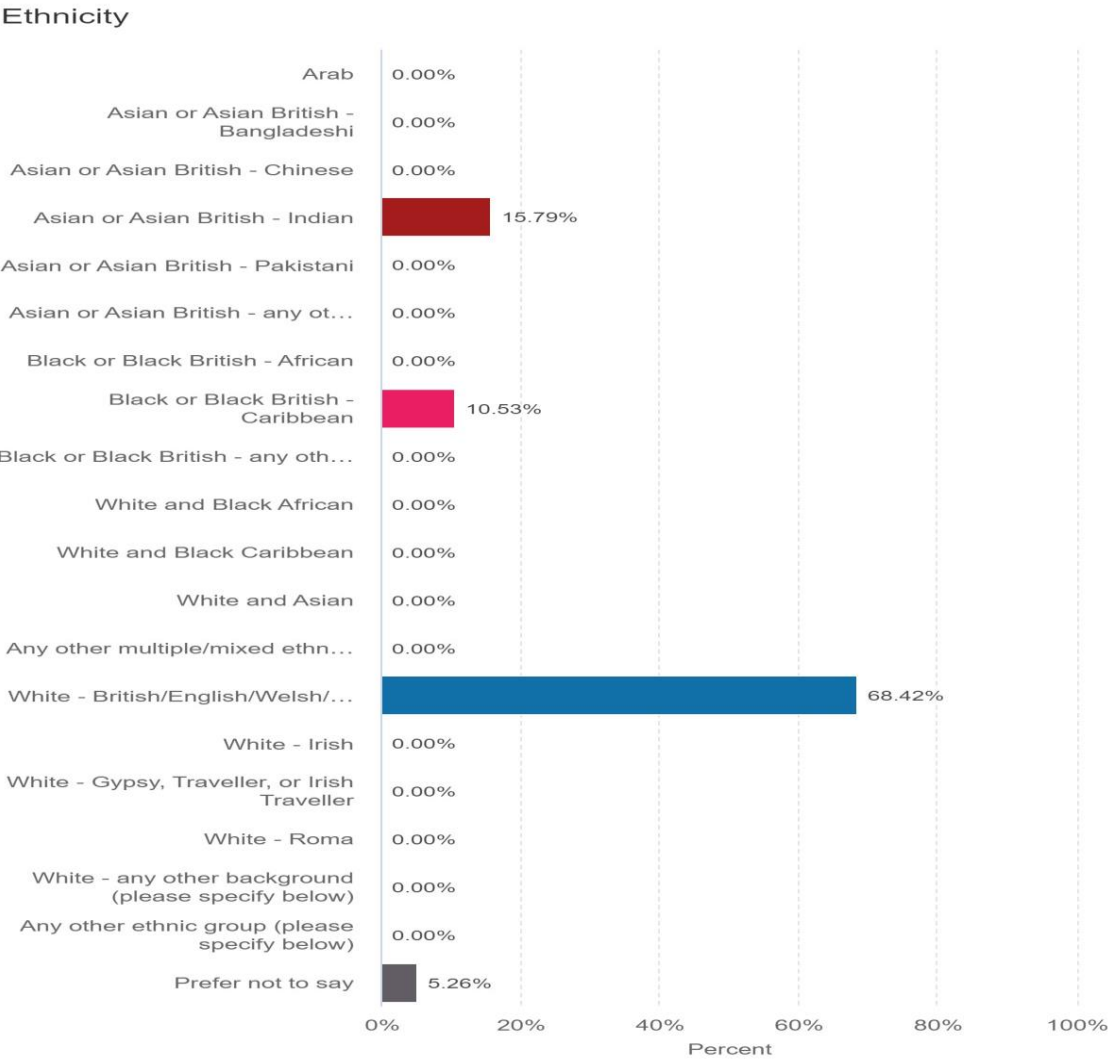


84% of respondents identify as Heterosexual.

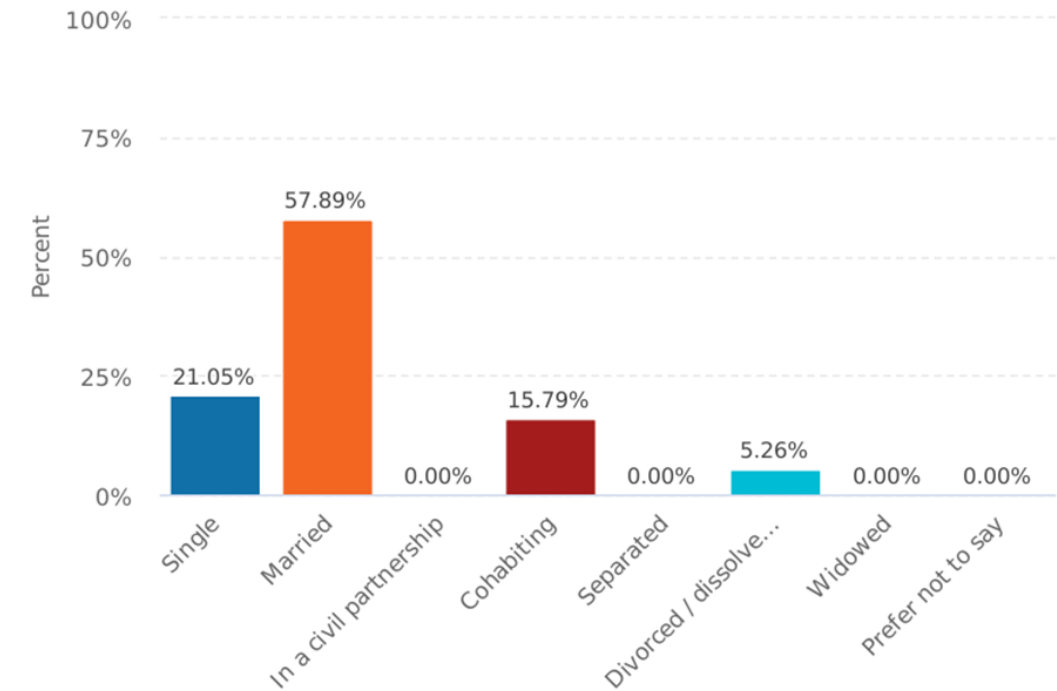
Who we spoke to – Age



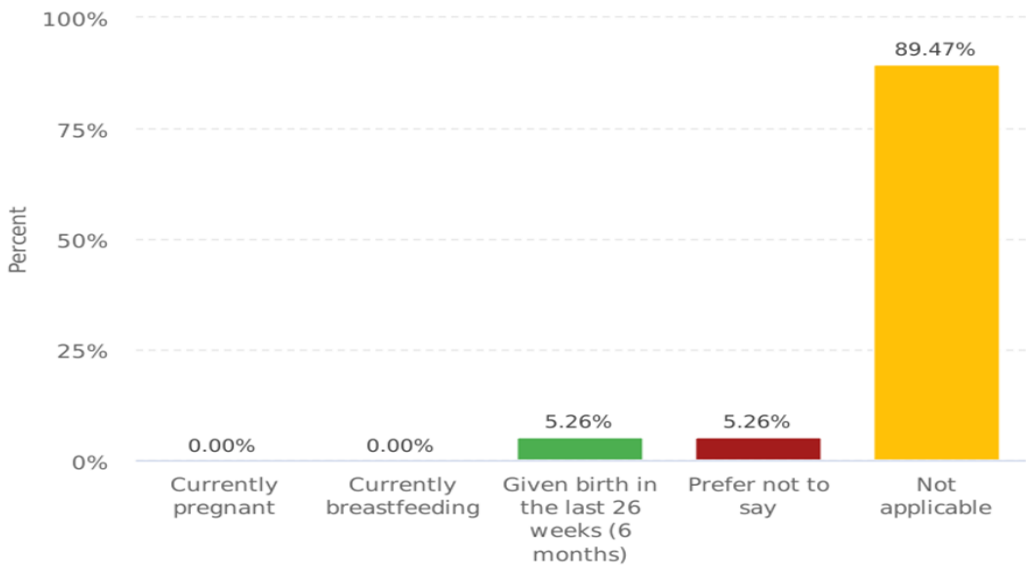
Who we spoke to – Ethnicity



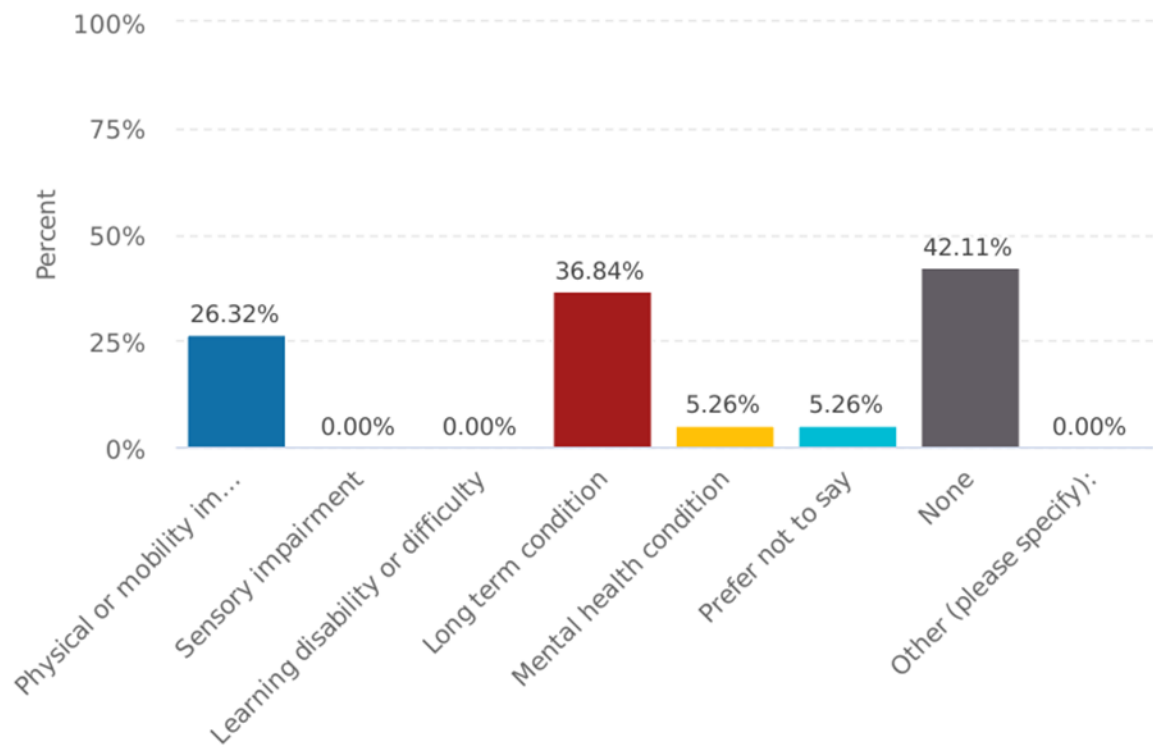
Who we spoke to – Marital status



Who we spoke to – Pregnancy/maternity status



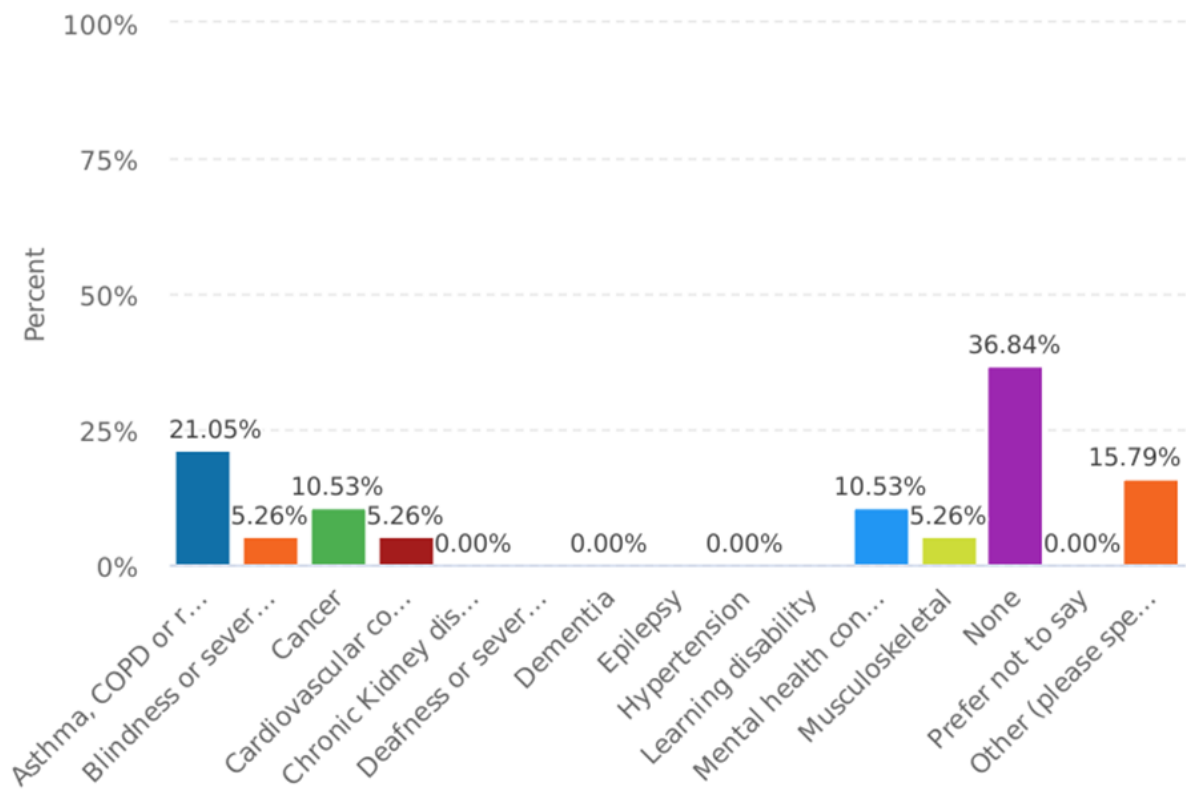
Who we spoke to – Disability



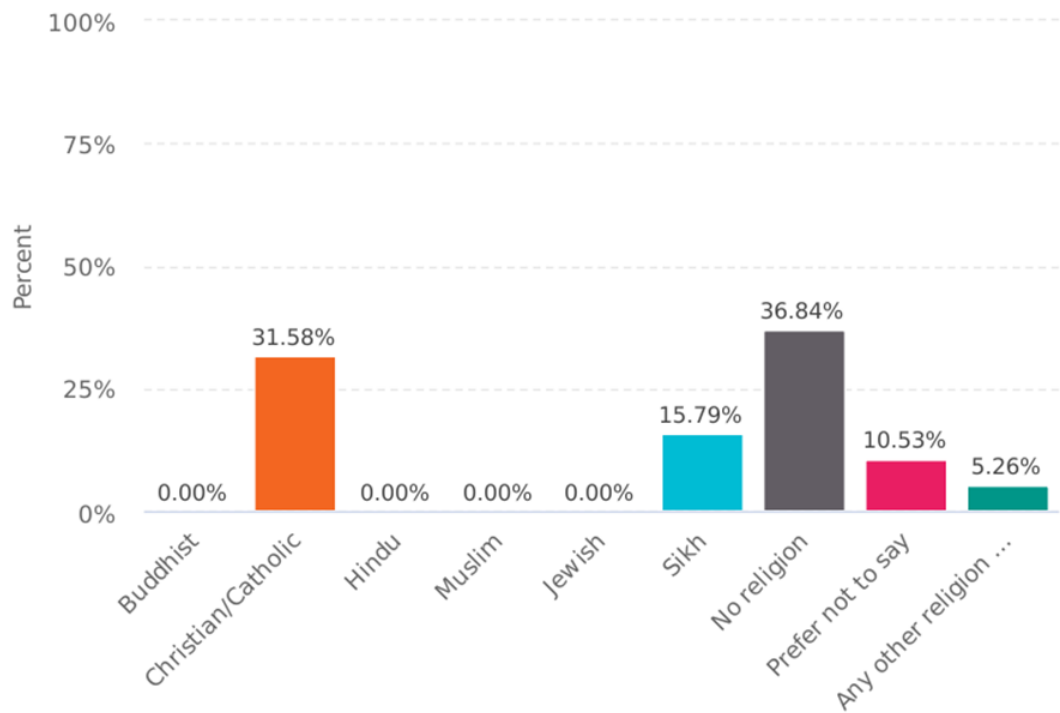
41% of respondents stated that they did not feel that they had a disability.

17% felt that they had a physical or mobility impairment and 16% felt that they had a long term condition that was a disability.

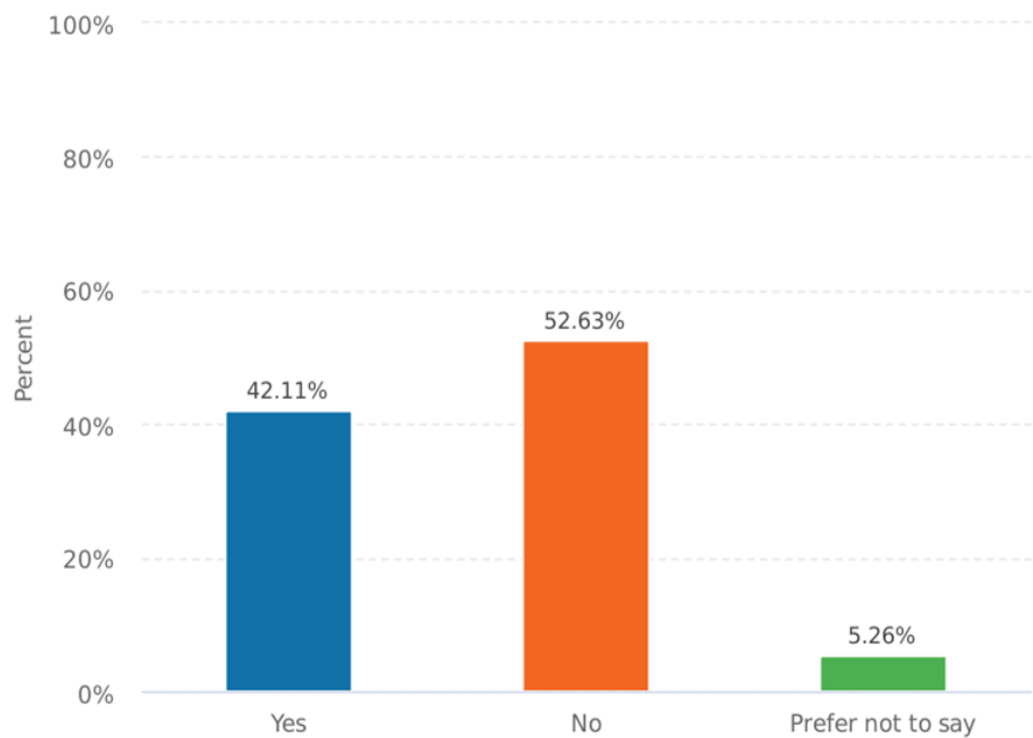
Who we spoke to – Long term condition



Who we spoke to – Religion

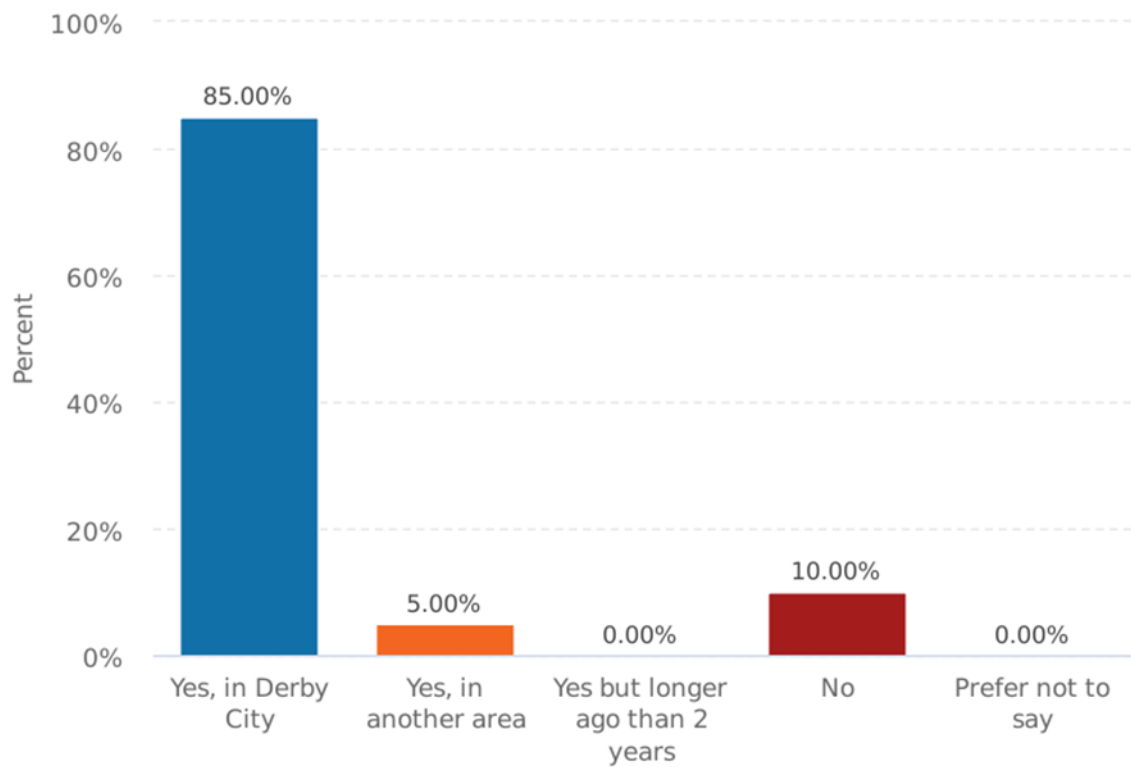


Who we spoke to – Carers



Question 1

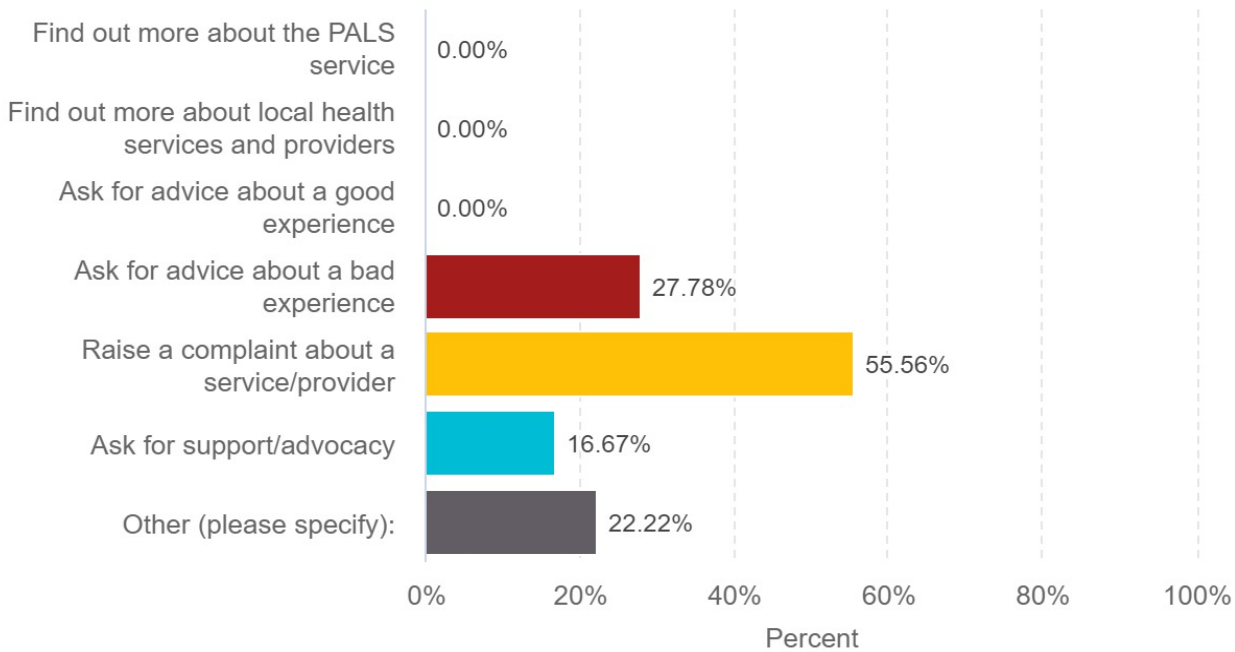
Have you contacted PALS within the last year?



There were 20 responses given to this question. 17 said they had used PALS in Derby City.

Question 2

If you did contact PALS, what were the main queries that you were hoping to discuss?



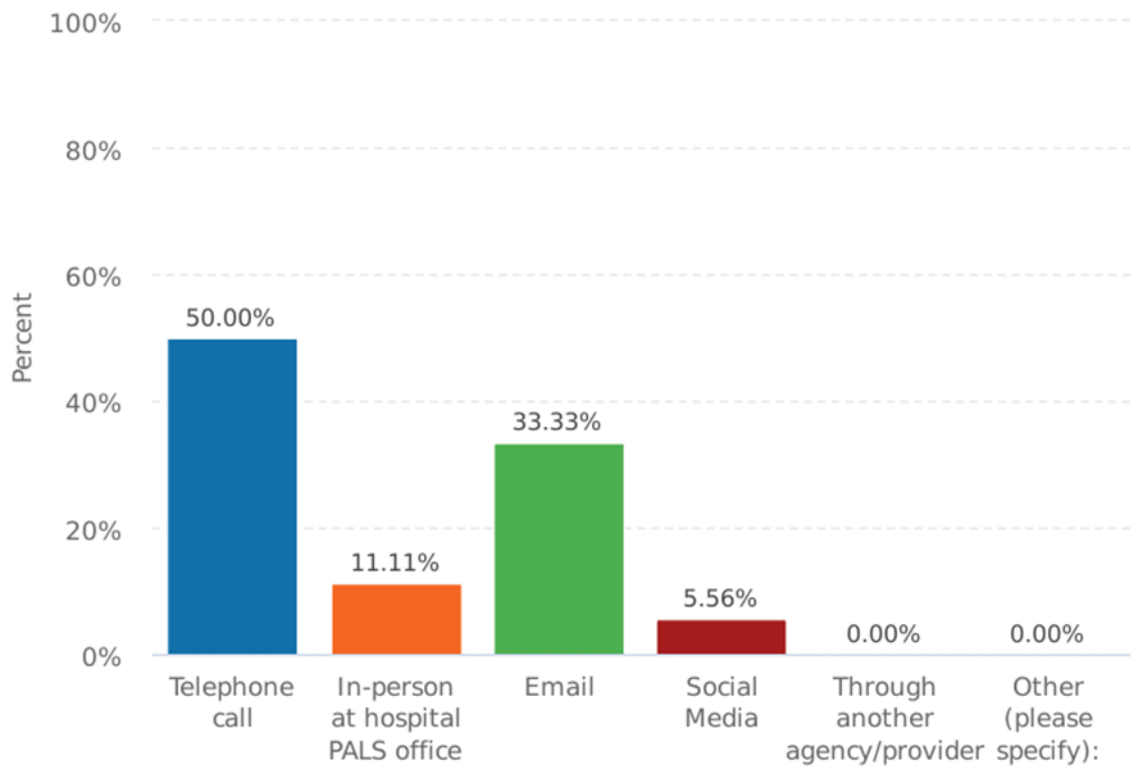
Other comments/why people were contacting PALS

1. Find out why a patient experience survey had been requested by the hospital but when I clicked on the link the system blocked the link and told me I wasn't allowed to do the survey as I did not have a 36 digit code. When I tried to contact PALS to discover why they did not answer phone just told me to ring the number I had called on. The phone then cut off and subsequent efforts did the same thing.
2. My induction of labour was postponed because there was no bed available but we'd been told that it was unsafe to go over the scheduled date so PALS arranged for the service to contact me and schedule in my induction ASAP.
3. Ask for advice about mother's treatment.



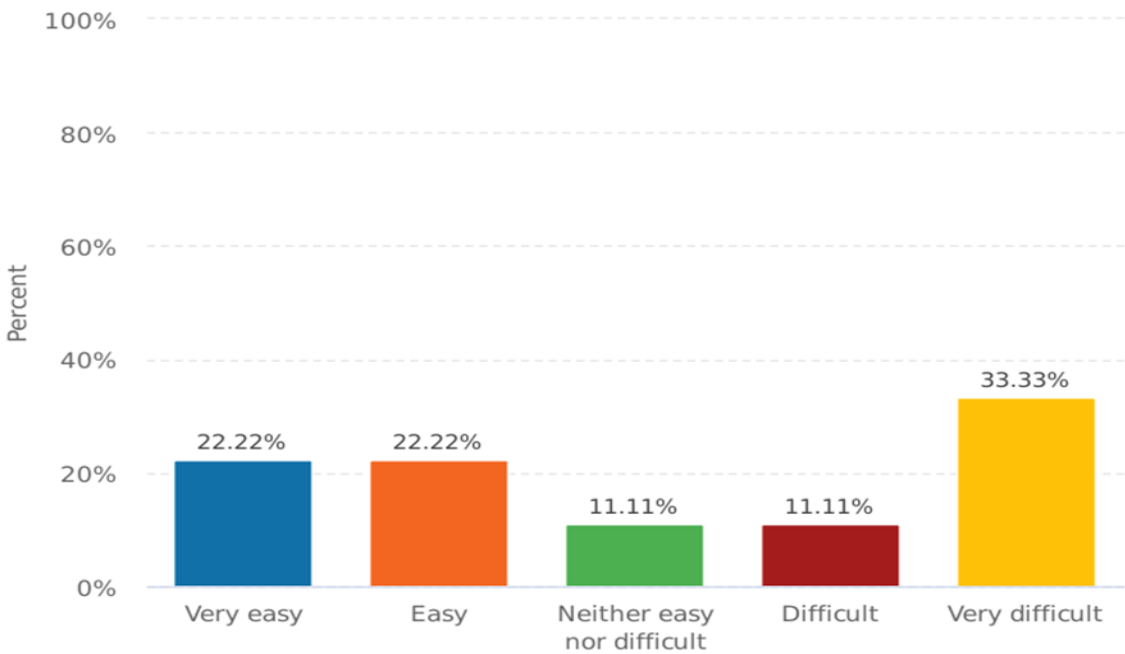
Question 3

What method did you use to contact PALS



Question 4

If you contacted PALS, how easy did you find it to access?



Comments

- Didn't answer the phone and system cut call off.
- Bit of a wait on phone.
- Bit slow on responding.
- Could not get through, was at work in my dinner break so could not email, and too complex for social media. Wanted to talk to someone but kept being cut off and told to ring number I was dialling on. I gave up.
- I made a complaint about my father's treatment whilst having an operation in July. He was not kept fully in the loop, felt like he was forgotten about and not listened to and felt that the ward staff were rude to him. I have raised the issue with NHS complaints.
- Could not get through, was cut off twice.
- Had to call 4 times before I got through, my time is limited as I work the same hours PALS open, only get 30 minute break and too much to explain to use social media.
- Tried to call, waited in queue, got told I was third in queue then told new number which was the one I called, then I was cut off. Tried again same happened.



Question 5

What worked well for you when you contacted PALS?

- Could not get through to talk to anyone.
- Nothing (four respondents).
- I was given some good advice and a full explanation of what I could do if I was unhappy still. But I felt the situation was resolved and I had been listened to.
- Spoke to a wonderful person who explained everything I needed to do. They were great.
- They explained my options, what I should expect of the service, what I could do if not happy, which I was not. I have made a complaint and am awaiting a response.
- Was listened to and given some good advice. Not decided whether to make an official complaint as of yet.
- Easy to email, took a little time to get response but got a call after initial emails and got a full explanation to my issues.
- Legal advice on our rights which PALS did not make clear, total waste.
- Having waited for over a year for an appointment for a surgical consultation, I was given an appointment within 2 weeks having contacted PALS.
- They were responsive and sorted my issue by liaising with the ward and asking them to make direct contact to resolve.

14 people answered this question. 50% did not think anything worked well. However, 50% thought they were listened to or the issue had been resolved.

Question 6

Are there any improvements you feel could be made to improve the PALS service?

Yes, allow a person to answer the call.

Someone take the call.

Try answering the phone.

Quicker response.

Yes, answer phone.

Too many to list.

No.

It could be less defensive and quicker, more responsive.

Answer call.

Make it easier to get through to talk to someone.

May be bit quicker to respond.

No worth improving, has no merit.

12 people responded and the main theme was response time and making it easier to talk to someone.

Question 7

Do you have any other comments about the PALS service within Derby City?



Rubbish.

Waste of space.

If there is one, it was making it impossible to contact by phone.

Rubbish. I never did raise my complaint. I gave up. Guess that's what they wanted.

its just there to protect the hospital.

Brilliant.

No point.



Provider Response

I will share within our team and my senior managers, and also discuss this at our next available governance meeting.

The situation regarding telephone contact has been resolved and we have not had any further issues since then.

We have increased our staffing levels since then to support our increased contacts.

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