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BACKGROUND

COVID-19 has caused unprecedented strain on the Scottish National Health Service (NHS) resulting in patients having to wait longer than usual for access to specialist pain services. In response to this Pain Concern received Scottish Government Funding to enhance the support options available to people with pain on waiting lists for these services.

Pain Concern created a national telephone helpline with a dedicated telephone number for pain patients in Scotland. The helpline was manned by paid helpline operators, recruited out of Pain Concern's existing pool of trained volunteers, and they received bespoke training to support callers and evaluate the service.

This small project showed that patients waiting on lists for specialist pain service can be helped by the skilled support and resources of a telephone helpline, and use of Pain Concern's *Self-Management Navigator Tool*. [2]

However, it revealed that most regional health boards do not have a mechanism to communicate with patients on their 'pain' waiting lists. This project with NHS Forth Valley is an example of joint working with a territorial health board and the third sector.

It continued Pain Concern's mission of supporting self-management and capitalised on Forth Valley NHS's capability of communicating regularly with pain waiting list patients.

AIM

The aim of the project was to provide pain education and emotional support to pain patients waiting to see Pain Specialist services.

METHOD

Three methods gathered information: a caller feedback form, and outcome measurement and indicators, capturing casual moments and observations of the call handlers. Quantitative and qualitative data were thus collected.[1]

TESTIMONIALS

"Wow! This really is a fantastic help, as was our discussion yesterday. I am extremely grateful to you – thanks very much"

"Thank you so much for all these links – I will take my time going through all that you have suggested"

"Working on the helpline has been a wonderful opportunity to work directly with service users and understand that, whilst we can't provide a cure for the pain, even the smallest amount of information, new resources or suggesting techniques that they may not have tried yet, can make such a big difference. I have also been able to expand my communication and interpersonal skills which is going to be invaluable when it comes to applying for jobs"

REFERENCE

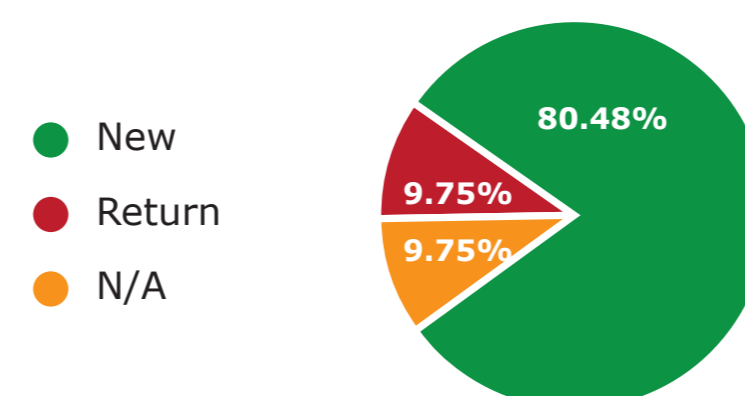
[1]Donabedian in Evaluating the quality of medical care. *The Millbank Memorial Fund Quarterly* July Vol 44 No 33 p166-206

[2] Pain Concern *Self Management Navigator Tool* 2017

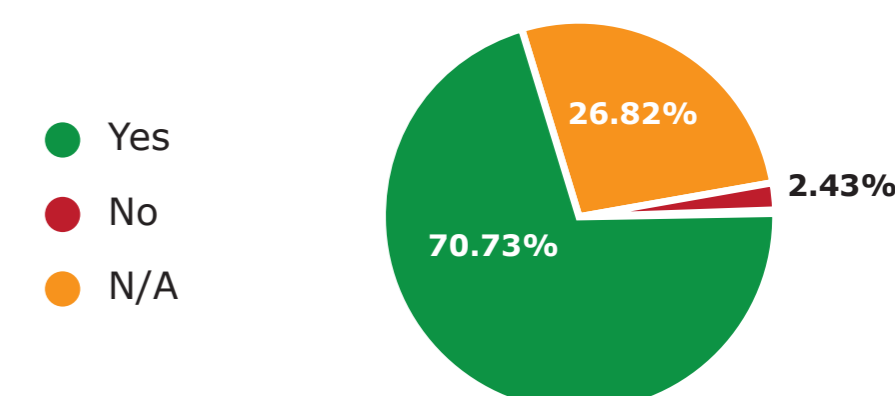
RESULT

Almost 20% of NHS Valley's pain waiting list patients used the helpline service and five patients were escalated to the health board for urgent attention.

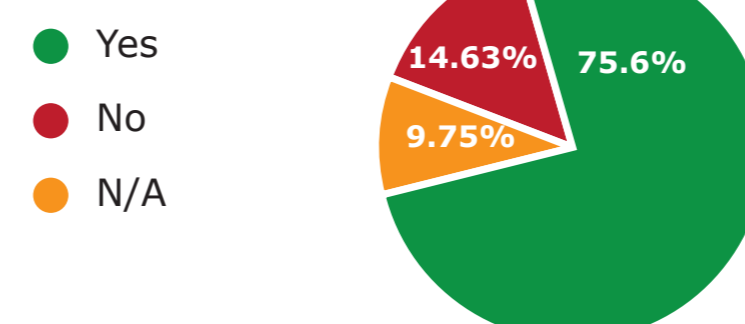
Is the caller a new patient on the waiting list or a returning one?



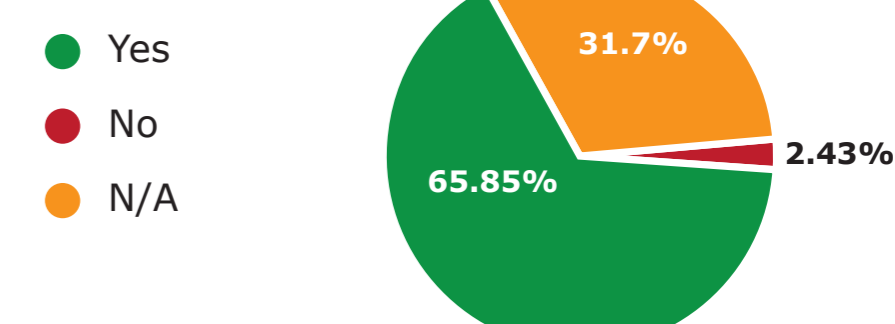
Did the caller felt better/more positive after contacting the helpline?



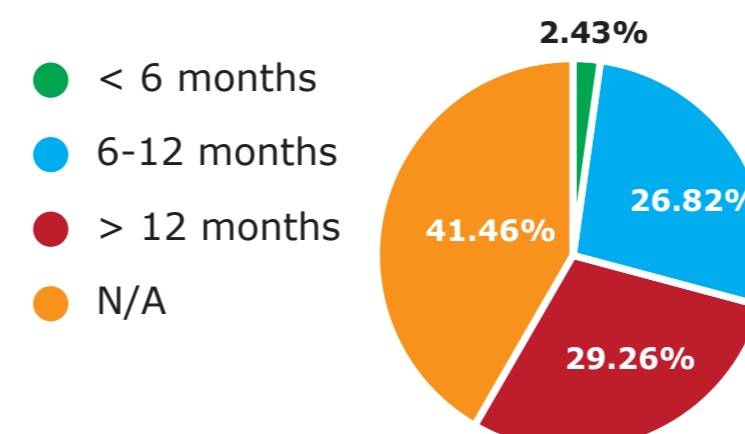
Were resources sent to the caller?



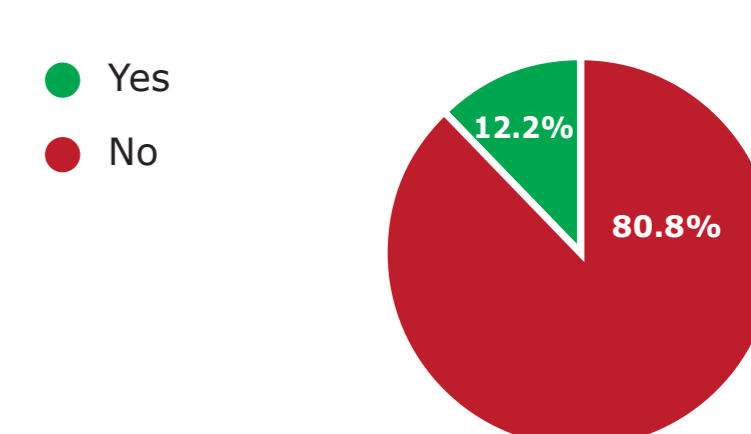
Did the caller feel better prepared for their healthcare appointment?



How long had the service user been waiting



Did the operator escalate this call to Forth Valley Pain Team?



CONCLUSION

Most callers stated that:

- they felt empowered to tackle the broader problems of daily living, and
- felt able via self-management advice to, and understand pain, and activity management [2] and
- deal with emotional distress to prevent further decline in function
- they would be better able to make best use of NHS pain services when seen

The project reach extended beyond individual benefits with NHS Forth Valley becoming increasingly aware of Pain Concern's resources, and the latter more aware of primary and secondary care, and how services link up with local groups. An innovative research tool was developed to get helpline feedback from users.

Consistent messaging (by Pain Concern and Forth Valley pain services about each service) is now possible, and a long-term relationship has been established.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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visit our website

