



# Patient Advice and Support Service

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**Annual Report  
2019-20**





The Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) supports clients to give feedback to the NHS, and with complex queries and complaints, providing clients with information and advice to enable them to make informed decisions.

## Key Statistics for the period April 2019 – March 2020

Due to the Coronavirus pandemic, all Citizens Advice network advice is being provided remotely. To continue to support their clients, patient advisers are working from home, providing support with complex queries by **telephone** and **email**. The **helpline** continues to support clients during the usual opening hours.

As this report covers the period to 31 March, there has been little impact on client numbers or the type of advice provided.

- > Bureaux supported **3896** individuals with **9636** enquiries, an increase over the previous year. Around **60%** of clients had one contact, **15%** had two contacts and **25%** had three or more contacts with advisers
  - > The majority of support, **78%** was provided at level 2, defined as giving advice, exploring options and helping the client to initiate action.
  - > The most frequent advice provided was on clinical treatment, for **51%** of clients, followed by advice on staff attitude and behaviour, for **20%** of clients.
  - > We record the outcomes achieved for clients. This year, **58%** of clients were enabled to take action on their own behalf, while **8%** received a response or explanation, **6%** received an apology and **4%** had their issues resolved locally.
  - > The helpline dealt with **4023** inbound calls, an increase of **37%** over 2018/19 call volumes.
- Full statistics are contained in the Appendix.

### Case study - Support for a client to receive an apology

After initial treatment, a client was left waiting in a corridor with no staff contact for an unacceptable length of time. The Patient Adviser liaised with the client to agree a letter of complaint, which the adviser sent on behalf of the client.

NHS Complaints spoke to the client to apologise for the unsatisfactory way in which they were treated. The client withdrew their complaint, and thanked PASS for their help.







# The work we do to support clients

Patient Advisers undertake a range of tasks to support clients, depending on the complexity of the case and the support needs of the client. Over the year:

- > The majority of clients, **88%**, were given information and / or advice
- > Advisers supported **14%** of clients to write a letter, **9%** with a complex complaint letter and **5%** to redraft a letter
- > Information on clients' rights and responsibilities was provided to **9%** of clients
- > **3%** of clients were helped to review their medical records
- > **2%** of clients were assisted in meeting NHS staff.

## Case study – NHS Dental Care

PASS supports clients with issues in all types of medical care.

The client was struggling to understand why he was repeatedly paying to replace a filling that kept falling out. The Patient Adviser:

- > Checked the criteria for payment for treatment
- > Carried out an income maximisation check for the client
- > Sought clarification from the dentist, received details of the treatment and communication with the patient over this.

As a result, the client understands the treatment process, and has received a good will gesture of credit against future treatment. The Patient Adviser will continue support for the client once dental treatment is possible again.



## The work we do to support clients

Following the lockdown due to COVID-19, Patient Advisers have been working from home. CAS and bureaux have ensured that the appropriate equipment is available, such as laptops and access to the helpline phone system. Feedback from Patient Advisers indicates that the technology is working well, with good support from CAS as appropriate, although IT limitations mean that it can take longer to undertake some tasks at home.

Advisers are continuing to support clients; much of the work undertaken by Patient Advisers was already via phone or email,

however the absence of face to face meetings means that it can be more difficult to build rapport and trust with clients, particularly those who are more vulnerable or who have complex health issues.

In common with other bureau services, the number of referrals from external organisations has reduced as they ceased face to face provision, however numbers are starting to increase again. We anticipate an increase in queries once the care provided by the NHS starts to return to pre-COVID levels.



# Outcomes achieved for clients

PASS provides clients with information and advice which enables them to make informed decisions about what they would like to do. There may be multiple outcomes recorded for each client, depending on what is achieved. The most frequent outcome, for 58% of clients for whom an outcome was recorded, was that they

were supported to take action on their own behalf. Other outcomes include:

- > Response or explanation received in **280** cases
- > Apology received in **232** cases
- > Local resolution in **144** cases
- > Complaint withdrawn in **139** cases.



## Case study – access to treatment

Patient Advisers can support clients in wider dealings with the NHS, before the complaint stage is reached. In this case, a client requested help to access a medical trial offering an alternative treatment, having initially been refused. The Patient Adviser supported the client with:

- > An extension request for a review of the Extra Contractual Referral (ECR)
- > Subject access request for information about the original decision
- > Freedom of Information request
- > Scottish Government Information relating to medical trials
- > Liaison with the NHS to identify the most appropriate route for a successful outcome
- > Completion of the submission for re-evaluation of the ECR decision

As a result, the Health Board agreed to part fund participation in the trial and provided a clear explanation.



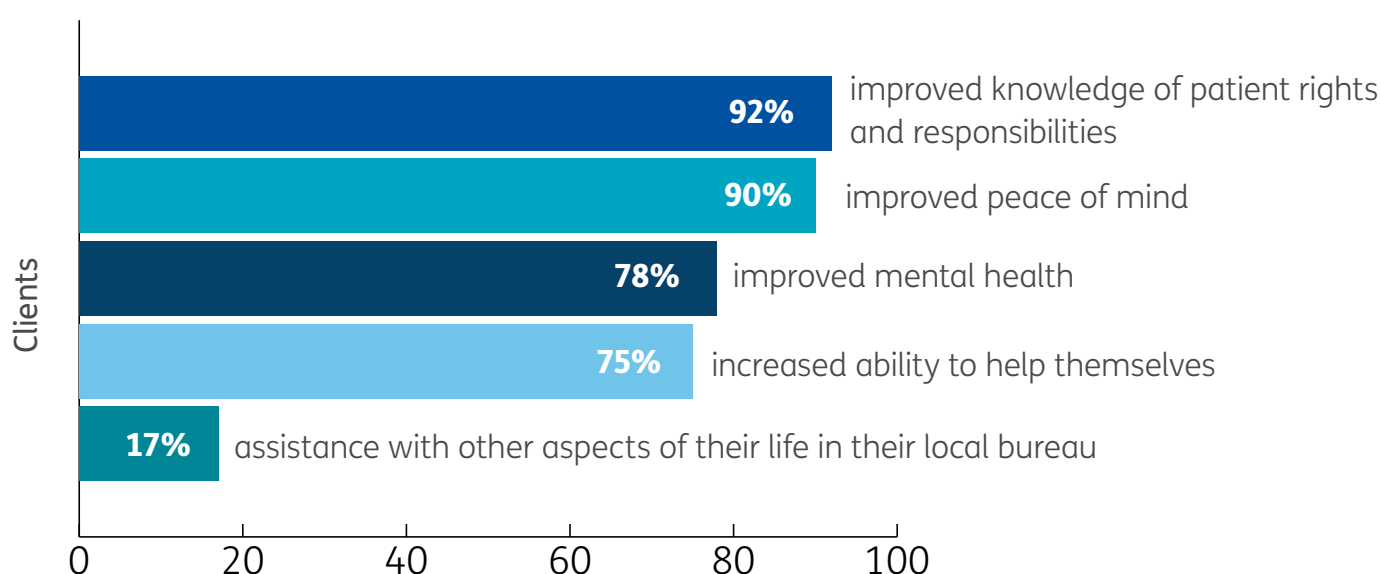
# Client feedback

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Bureaux gather client feedback from PASS clients on an ongoing basis. Between April 2019 and March 2020 feedback was received from **308** clients. The response was very positive, with **97%** of respondents very

satisfied or satisfied with the service they received; **95%** felt it was very easy or easy to contact PASS.

Clients reported positive outcomes as a result of the support PASS provided:



Clients were overwhelmingly supportive of the service they received, with **97%** stating that they would use the service again if the need arose.

Clients contact PASS for multiple reasons. While **65%** of people completing the survey stated that they wanted support

to make a complaint about the NHS, **56%** stated that they were looking for information about their rights and responsibilities, **34%** wanted support to give feedback to the NHS and **31%** were looking for help in sorting out problems that were affecting their health.

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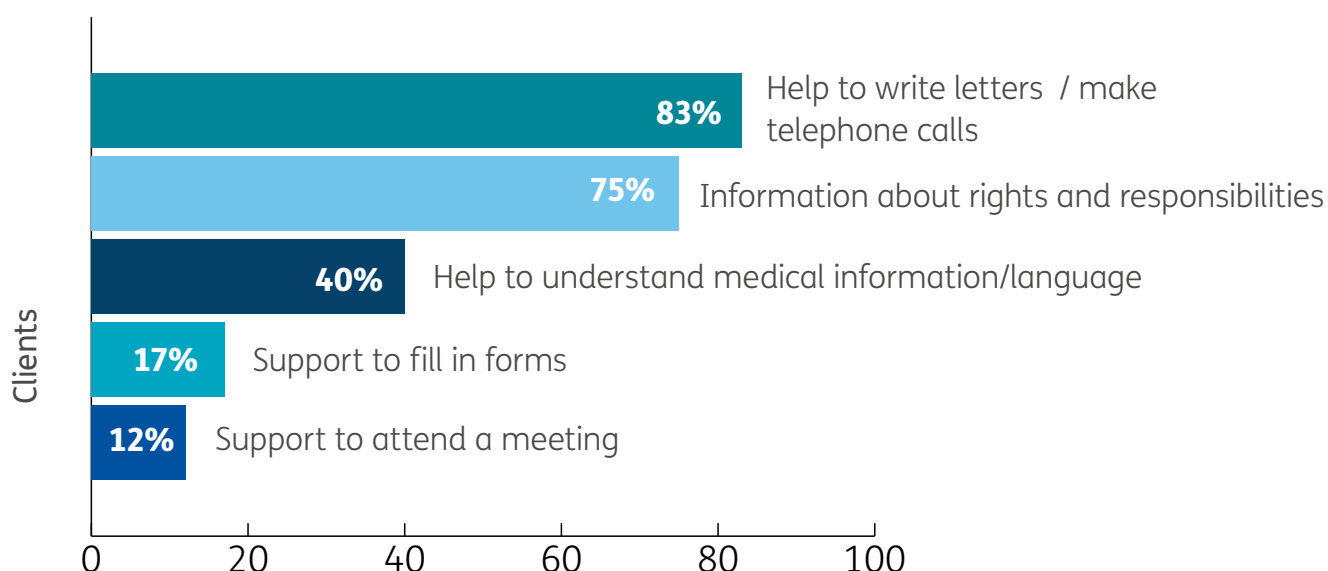
“May I take the time to thank you for your help with this process. An earlier appointment is a welcomed result however I appreciate more your empathy for my frustration and your help to articulate and voice my concerns.”

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“Prior to our discussions, I had not heard of the Patient Advice and Support Service however it is clearly a fantastic and much needed service; thank you for the work you and your colleagues undertake.”



## The type of support clients received from PASS



PASS supported people to raise and resolve their issues with the NHS:

	Raise issue	Resolve issue*
Fully	82%	68%
Partially	8%	16%
Not at all	1%	5%
Doesn't apply to situation	3%	4%
Other	5%	12%

\* clients can chose more than one response so totals are greater than 100%

**“I was so surprised at the high quality of advice, the building was welcoming and my adviser was so informative, very professional and a huge help. I was offered as much time as I needed and all the help that I needed too. For free advice, this is a truly amazing service and appears to be run to such a high standard. I can only say thank you.”**

Feedback from clients accessing support via the helpline showed that:

- > **87%** were very satisfied or satisfied with the service they received on the helpline

# Prisoners supported by PASS

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In the year 2019/20, PASS was accessed by prisoners:

Prison	Clients	Contacts
HMP Addiewell	6	6
HMP Dumfries	2	5
HMP Glenochil	1	1
Total	9	12

Work is ongoing to raise awareness of PASS among prison healthcare staff as client numbers remain low.

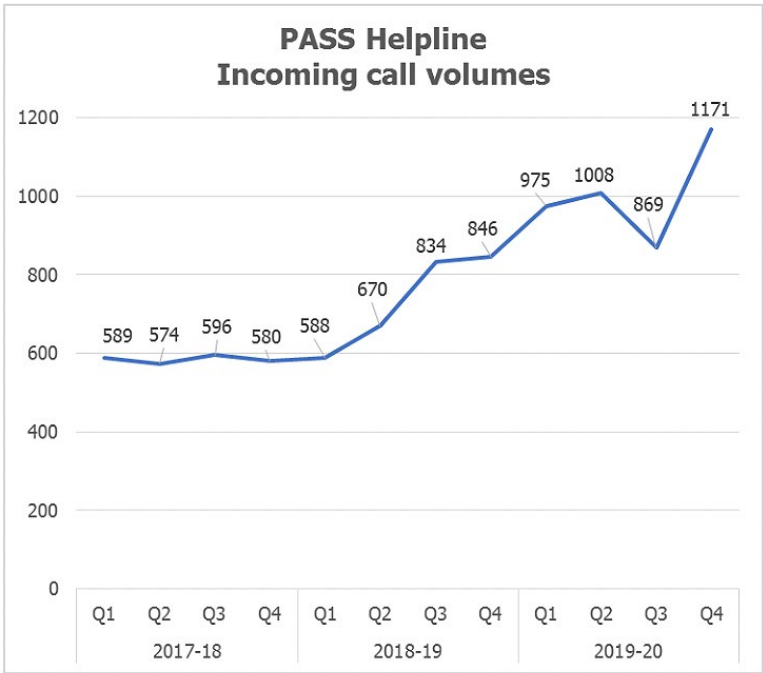






# PASS Helpline

The number of calls received by the helpline has increased each year since it was launched.



This increase in calls led to the introduction of a dedicated Helpline Patient Adviser in August 2018. They answer calls, emails and webchats, and return voicemails, reducing the demand on regional Patient Advisers to support the helpline, increasing their capacity to support clients locally and better manage their caseload. This has resulted in lower waiting times for local appointments.

In the last year, **30%** of the calls were answered by the Helpline Patient Adviser, and **76%** of these calls were closed at the first contact. The Helpline Patient Adviser provides support through the allocation of emails and voicemails to other Patient Advisers, ensuring that clients receive a timely response.

# Patient Adviser training and regional events

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Citizens Advice Scotland (CAS) organises regular Patient Adviser training days and regional events. In the last year these have included training from external organisations including the National Complaints Personnel Association, CAPS Independent Advocacy (for users of mental health services), and information on working with clients who have mental health support needs from NHS 24, in addition to opportunities to share best practice.

The events scheduled for March 2020 were curtailed, with one regional event cancelled due to the introduction of social isolation measures. The events will be continued when it is appropriate to do so; CAS on-line and remote training support continues to be available.

## Complaints about PASS

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Every quarter, CAS gathers performance management information from bureaux, including information on complaints about the service. In the year 2019/20 there were no complaints made about PASS.

## Contact us

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### The service can be accessed by

- > phoning us on **0800 917 2127**
- > chatting to us online at **[www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk](http://www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk)**
- > via any Scottish citizens advice bureau
- > using the contact form at **[www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk](http://www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk)**
- > emailing us at **[pass@cas.org.uk](mailto:pass@cas.org.uk)**



[www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)



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