North of Tyne
Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)
Annual Report 2010-2011

Introduction

PALS, the Patient Advice and Liaison Service is an NHS service which is free and confidential, providing information and advice to patients and service users, their families and carers. PALS can help sort out any problems, liaising with NHS staff members and others, if requested, to help sort things out quickly. PALS also provides information and ‘signposting’ to local and national support groups and when appropriate explains how to make a complaint.

PALS provides a person centred service, responding to contacts from the public and from staff within the health and social care community, providing information and advice with any aspect of health services and at any point on their ‘journey’ through the NHS.

This information is recorded and collated in an anonymised format and reported to Trusts on a monthly and quarterly basis, to contribute to their governance arrangements, patient experience feedback systems and service design and development.

North of Tyne PALS works within the seven NHS Trusts and all NHS services in Newcastle, Northumberland and North Tyneside including the North East Ambulance Service.

Quote from PALS client: “The service was good, quick and very supportive with my problems and concerns. It’s so nice to know that you are not alone in this world when it comes down to your health”.
Summary of activity 2010-2011

Contacts

The total number of contacts increased by 19% which continues a year on year trend.

The increases have been across organisations and localities with a significant percentage increase of contacts within Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Northumberland Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust and the North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust.

Patient experience

PALS staff receive first hand feedback from patients, families and carers across the full range of NHS services. Their knowledge and understanding of the patient experience has been utilised with increased involvement in:

- Patient Environment Action Team (PEAT) and Community Environment Action Team (CEAT) inspections
- reviewing Trust information
- developing questionnaires and other ‘tools’ and processes to capture patient experience
- contributing to the development of equality and diversity groups
- explaining the process with respect to summary care records
- answering queries and concerns and being involved with public meetings with respect to changes in service provision including the closure of a GP practice.
Links with ‘complaints’

The PALS service has good links with all complaints, patient service and patient relation services within Trusts. There is a robust process to identify a ‘complaint’ and make an appropriate referral to the relevant organisation. This ensures an efficient process for patients, their families or carers who have concerns or wish to make a complaint. Staff liaise on a regular basis to determine the most appropriate process and response.

Research

PALS details are included in information which goes to patients and carers explaining research projects, as the ‘independent’ organisation they can contact to ask any questions they may have or clarify any points of concern.

Quote from PALS client: “Very helpful and considerate. It can be difficult to negotiate the minefield that the NHS is when trying to find a contact point for a particular problem, especially when feeling vulnerable and unwell.”

Access to North of Tyne PALS

Freephone

The North of Tyne PALS consortium model approach enables the use of one freephone telephone number for any aspect of healthcare, wherever it is delivered. The freephone is staffed during normal office hours and continues to be the primary method of contacting the service.

Direct dial phones

PALS direct dial phones to the PALS freephone number (similar to taxi phones) are now in place at points within Newcastle Hospitals and in the reception area of St Nicholas hospital, Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust. PALS can also be contacted directly, free of charge, via the ‘info phones’ at key locations within Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust. This enhances direct access to PALS.

Transferred calls

Consolidating work initiated in 2009 -2010, calls to the switchboards of Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust, North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust and Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust can now be either transferred directly through to the PALS freephone or referred to PALS.
Referrals

Increasingly the role of PALS as a resource and support for staff in health and social care is recognised, which has resulted in an increase in referrals from services. This includes NHS and Local authority services and from support organisations within the community, including Citizens Advice Bureaux, Age UK Macmillan and Carers Centres.

Direct ‘face to face’ contact

PALS staff visit services and groups in the community to explain the role of PALS, to answer questions about NHS services and to respond to individual questions or concerns. They also attend consultations, and events to assist with individuals questions and problems.

There is also the opportunity for people to talk to staff at the PALS offices. These are on hospital sites across the area and are accessible to the whole community. Where they are most visible they are well used and have contributed to the increase in the numbers of people using the service.

PALS staff are also able to visit people when they are using services, for example as inpatients, and when appropriate in a community setting. They have access to Trust premises and other community meeting rooms across the area to maximise the availability of venues which are ‘neutral’, convenient and have disabled access. They can also visit people in their own home when appropriate.

Publicity material

PALS leaflets and cards are widely distributed and information is available on Trust and service websites.

Material in different formats

The PALS leaflet is available in 27 languages, large print and in easy-read format which can be downloaded from Trust websites. The leaflet contains the fax number, freepost address, email address and a text number to provide greater accessibility, particularly for members of the deaf community.

There are close links with the interpreting services with a protocol in place to streamline a referral to PALS.

Quote from PALS client: “Better than trying phone lines and listening to jingles lots of times.”
Deaf community

During this year PALS staff have attended the Deaflink Health Forum and worked with Deaflink, Becoming Visible and other groups within the deaf community to explain the role of PALS and encourage people to use the service. There have also been opportunities to feedback general concerns and issues to Trusts and services.

Access for people with learning disabilities

North of Tyne PALS continues to work across all Trusts and services to identify opportunities to be proactive in raising awareness about PALS, particularly where there are service changes, when people are accessing services for the first time and where they have specific needs.

‘First Contact’

North of Tyne PALS is one of a number of key organisations including Anchor Staying Put, HealthWORKS Newcastle, Newcastle Energy Centre, Newcastle Libraries Home Delivery Service, Newcastle Welfare Rights Service, Northumbria Police and Tyne and Wear Fire service and Your Homes Newcastle Community Care Alarm Service, involved in the ‘First Contact’ initiative in Newcastle. Front line staff, from an increasing number of organisations and services working in the city, have questionnaires which they ask older people when they are visiting them, the ‘first contact’. This generated queries and requests for information from older people who would not usually have used the service.

Equality and diversity

PALS is a member of Equality and Diversity groups within Trusts. Staff have been involved with a number of equality and diversity activities and contributed experience and knowledge to audits and reviews.
Recording and Reporting

Database

North of Tyne PALS records and collates details of all contacts and issues raised on a DATIX database, configured to record and collate information across Trusts and services, taking account of the separate structures and reporting requirements within each Trust.

This local configuration enables the database to be amended, as requirements change, to ensure that the records reflect the nature of issues and that reports remain relevant to the needs of each constituent organisation. The categorisation of issues and subjects are reviewed on an annual basis to ensure the relevance and consistency of recording. Changes are also made on an ad hoc basis to enable the reporting and reporting of specific topics or issues, for example requests for information following communication to all households about summary care records.

Reports

Reports are submitted to Trusts on a monthly and quarterly basis as agreed.

‘Raw-data’ reports

These are submitted to operational managers for their review and dissemination, particularly with respect to any actions taken or lessons learnt as a result of issues having been raised via PALS. These reports, which record ‘real time’ feedback of the experiences of individual service users, their families and carers, are essential in providing opportunities for learning, to stimulate service development and to evidence organisation and service specific Strategic Health Authority and Department of Health targets and requirements.

Summary reports

Quarterly summary reports are collated to include statistics, an analysis of any themes and trends, an activity report and information on changes to service delivery or systems made as a result of issues being raised via PALS. These reports are presented to clinical governance, quality groups and committees and discussed within patient involvement, patient experience and complaint, litigation, risk and incident groups.

‘Ad hoc’ reports

In addition to routine monthly and quarterly reports information about patient experience, which has been provided on request, to various monitoring and service development groups as ‘real time’ patient feedback to help inform their work.
During 2010-11 these have included discharge from hospital, falls, privacy and dignity, patient safety and questions relating to summary care records and GP practice closure.

Reports were presented to: -

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<tr>
<th>Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust</th>
<th>Complaints concerns and claims monitoring group</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newcastle upon Tyne Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>Patient and Public Involvement sub committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>North of Tyne NHS (Newcastle and North Tyneside PCT’s and Northumberland Care Trust)</td>
<td>Joint Integrated Clinical Governance Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>Newcastle and North Tyneside Community Health</td>
<td>Governance and Risk Management Committee</td>
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<td>Northumberland Care Trust</td>
<td>Integrated Governance Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>Northumberland Tyne &amp; Wear NHS Foundation Trust</td>
<td>Complaints Assurance Group</td>
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<td>North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust</td>
<td>Patient Involvement &amp; Complaints group and Clinical Governance Committee and then with effect from October 2010 ECLIPs (Experience, Complaints Litigation and PALS group)</td>
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</tbody>
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**How PALS helped**

Customer service

PALS is the ‘customer services’ team for NHS services in Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland and the North East Ambulance Service. North of Tyne PALS provides advice and support at all stages in the patient journey; queries about access to services and information about the range of services; assistance to resolve any problems ‘on the spot’ and advice and support when the patient their family or carer is unhappy with their experience.

**Type of Contact**

- **Concern**: 36%
- **General Enquiry**: 59%
- **Comment/Suggestion**: 3%
- **Compliment**: 2%
Types of issues

During 2010-2011 PALS continued to respond to a wide range of issues including those relating to appointments and waiting times discharge from hospital and transfer of care privacy and dignity parking and lost property information about services and treatments access to GP's and dentists bereavement and how to complain.

Changes to services

Services have been proactive in advising patients, their families and carers to contact PALS if they have any questions where there were changes to services, and PALS staff have assisted services by staffing ‘drop in’ sessions to answer questions and provide reassurance.

New initiatives

During the course of the year a range of information was disseminated to patients about summary care records. PALS staff received updates and guidance about the process and were able to provide answers to questions. In recording and collating these queries PALS was able to highlight areas of concern, flagging up possible problems.

Appointments

PALS support has enabled patients to keep appointments and avoid DNAs (did not attend) highlighting issues with services, where appointment details hadn’t been confirmed or where there was confusion or problems about transport to appointments via the Patient Transport Service. PALS has worked alongside services in their developments to update patients about appointments.

Improving relationships

The intervention of PALS in finding answers and resolving problems quickly has facilitated positive relationships between the patient, service user, family member or carer and Trusts.

Using PALS mediation skills has resulted in positive outcomes for many people, influencing and often changing their perception of NHS services.

Enhancing the patient experience

Providing explanations and answers to questions and putting people in touch with relevant support, as the need arises, has provided reassurance, avoided the necessity for contact with a number of separate organisations and minimised the need to utilise additional specialist resources at a later stage when issues may have become more complex and distressing.
‘Real time’ feedback

All questions and issues which are raised with PALS are recorded and reported to Trusts, providing ‘real time feedback’ on services. In Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust PALS staff and volunteers assist with patient surveys and questionnaires and they are a resource for the Patient Experience Team within Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust.

LINks (Local Involvement Networks)

PALS has ongoing contact with Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland LINks and with the LINk group for the North East Ambulance Service. PALS reports are received by LINks from the Trusts and help inform their work. PALS staff attend LINk events and individuals or groups who approach the service with general areas of concern or comments which are specific to an individual are referred to LINks.

What people think of PALS

Where appropriate PALS clients receive an evaluation form to record and report their views about the service. 97% of those responding, were satisfied with the PALS service, would recommend PALS and would use PALS again. The additional feedback clients provide informs the development of new ways of publicising the service. Some of the additional comments are incorporated into the body of this report.

Quote from PALS client: “A wonderful service, I got my questions answered”

Accountability

The North of Tyne PALS service is directed by a Stakeholder Consortium Group made up of directors of the constituent NHS Trusts. This is chaired by the Chair of Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, the host organisation for employment and operational purposes. The purpose of the group is to receive reports from the PALS Manager, make decisions regarding the strategic direction of the service and monitor its activities.

PALS activity is also monitored via the reporting mechanisms to Trust Clinical Governance, Patient and Public Involvement, Complaints and Incidents, Patient Focus and Patient Safety groups. The direction of the service and resource allocation is informed and influenced by the requirements of Trusts, as agreed within these groups.
Staff

At the end of this year 9.6 w.t.e. PALS Officers were in post with one being a temporary fixed term contract to cover maternity leave and a vacancy.

Staff Support

All staff have regular 1:1 meetings and annual appraisals. There are monthly staff meetings to disseminate information and discuss operational issues and support meetings to discuss practice issues.

Location

PALS Officers are based throughout the area, enabling them to be accessible, and be part of the local 'team' of health professionals. Each PALS Officer responds to questions and concerns from across the whole area. However each also has a 'lead' responsibility for the Trust and/or locality where they are situated. The 'lead' responsibilities include:-

- having a detailed knowledge and understanding of the Trust/locality and its services and being a resource for colleagues, sharing knowledge and information
- to be aware of the key themes and issues relating to the Trust/locality
- establishing links and key contacts
- promoting PALS within the Trust/locality explaining the role of PALS

Quote from PALS clients: “Staff very pleasant and extremely helpful and sorted my problems out very quickly.”

Quote from PALS clients: “I felt very supported and understood PALS dealt with me like an individual with no politics involved.”
Volunteers

PALS volunteers are recruited from across the North of Tyne area. After they have received Criminal Records Bureau and Occupational Health clearances they complete comprehensive training and induction. Their main objectives are:

- to raise awareness by talking and listening to patients and distributing leaflets
- to enhance accessibility by acting as a gateway to PALS
- to collect, record and feed back comments and suggestions from patients, families and carers

Volunteers collect a number of compliments about services with Trusts and especially their provision of care. This is fed back to the staff and managers have told the service that this is a positive influence on morale.

North of Tyne PALS has continued to be successful in recruiting volunteers from black and minority ethnic communities.
The age profile of North of Tyne PALS volunteers differs from the usual profile of volunteers working within health or social care in that we have a large proportion of 16-25 year olds which can be a ‘hard to reach’ group when recruiting volunteers. This means that young people are actively involved in the delivery of the PALS service.

Younger volunteers have told us that they have chosen to volunteer with PALS because they want to gain experience of how the NHS operates and how patients have a voice. They feel that the experience gained is helpful whilst studying for and embarking on a career in health and social care.

The volunteers help to raise awareness by chatting to patients and leaving a leaflet in case they need PALS at a future date.

Volunteers refer patients to PALS Officers when they want help with concerns about, for example, their worries about coping when they are discharged or on how to register with a GP.

General comments and suggestions are collected then recorded on feedback sheets. These are circulated to the relevant managers and incorporated into the PALS quarterly reports. This ensures that valuable patient views and feedback are not lost.

Volunteers collect a number of compliments about services with Trusts and especially their provision of care. This is fed back to the staff and managers have told the service that this is a positive influence on morale.
Quote from PALS client: “It is nice that you are part of the NHS that listens and can influence changes in services.”

Background to PALS – NHS Plan 2000

‘The Patient Advice and Liaison Service was established throughout the country, in all NHS Trusts, in 2002 as part of a new system of patient and public involvement to provide:-

- confidential advice and support to patients, their families and carers
- information on the NHS and health related matters
- confidential assistance in resolving problems and concerns quickly
- information on and explanations of NHS complaints procedures and how to get in touch with someone who can help
- information on how you can get more involved in their own healthcare and the NHS locally
- a focal point for feedback from patients to inform service developments
- an early warning system for NHS Trusts, Primary Care Trusts and Patient and Public Involvement Forums (now replaced by LINks) by monitoring trends and gaps in services and reporting these to the Trust management for action.

PALS act on behalf of their service users when handling patient and family concerns. They liaise with staff, managers and where appropriate, other relevant organisations, to negotiate speedy solutions and to help bring about changes to the way that services are delivered. PALS will also refer patients and families to local or national-based support agencies, as appropriate.’

NHS Plan 2000

Quote from PALS client: “I did not know what to expect when I contacted PALS but was very impressed with the service provided and I was kept informed at all times.”
PALS North of Tyne

In the area **North of the Tyne** (Newcastle, North Tyneside and Northumberland) all NHS Trusts decided on a partnership approach with the Trusts working together to develop a PALS service, managed as one service but working within and operating across all Trusts.

The advantages of this approach are:-

- A freephone access point which is staffed at all times during office hours.

- A seamless service for patients, families and carers across NHS trusts so they only need to have contact with one PALS even though their concerns about health care may involve two or more Trusts.

- The ability to cover annual leave, sick leave, attendance at meetings and training to ensure that there is always a PALS officer available to deal with a concern wherever it is raised within the North of Tyne health community.

- The infrastructure necessary to provide a service across a large geographic area.

- An appropriate infrastructure to ensure the sharing of resources and good practice. The ability for PALS officers to develop a ‘lead’ for both a specific Trust and an area of health provision.

- The ability to ‘act independently’ separate from the infrastructure and hierarchy of individual Trust department frameworks.

- A comprehensive, specialist knowledge of all NHS, social care and third sector provision within the area, shared within the service.

- The economies of scale to enable the provision of a ‘professional’ volunteer service to promote PALS and a PALS ‘culture’ in health service provision in a wide range of contexts to complement the work of PALS Officers and contribute to the Patient Carer and Public Involvement function.

- The ability to respond flexibly to changes in demand and expectations.

**Quote from PALS client:** “**PALS provided me with support and understanding when I needed it**”
PALS North of Tyne works across and within:-

- Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust (NuTH)
- Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust (NHCT)
- North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust (North East area) (NEAS)
- Northumberland Tyne & Wear NHS Foundation Trust (North of Tyne area)
- Newcastle Primary Care Trust (NPCT)
- North Tyneside Primary Care Trust (NTPCT)
- Northumberland Care Trust (NCT)
- Independent contractors

PALS works for a local population of over 750,000 and also for patients, their families and carers who live outside of the area but who use these services:

- over 500 square kilometres, (not including the area south of the Tyne covered by NEAS)
- 22 hospital sites
- 126 general practitioner practices
- 109 dental practices
- 75 opticians
- 176 pharmacies

**Quote from PALS client:** “An essential ‘go between’ service.”
Newcastle Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

The PALS office in the new Victoria Wing continues to ensure that PALS has a presence in a front of house public area to make it easier for patients, their families and carers to access the service.

For occasions when staff are not available, either during office hours or at evenings and weekends there is a dedicated telephone which gives direct access to a PALS Officer during office hours and to the answer phone at other times. There are similar PALS telephones at the RVI Leazes Wing reception and at the Freeman hospital main reception where there is no permanent dedicated PALS staff presence.

PALS staff maintain a regularly updated database of information about services, their location and key members of staff.

PALS has worked with departments where there have been changes to services to assist with communication between staff and patients and to resolve any issues.

PALS staff continue to promote the service through talking to staff, patients and families and by the distribution of leaflets, posters and cards.

In addition there have been several targeted initiatives to explain the role of PALS. Information sessions have taken place with key staff. PALS are part of the induction process, the ‘patients are people’ training, the modern matrons masterclass, nurse perceptorship and final year medical students orientation. The PALS Manager and Assistant Service Manager meet with managers and directors on regular basis.
PALS contributes to the Equality and Diversity Human Rights Working Group, Patient Information Panel. PALS works with the Learning Disabilities Specialist Nurse in resolving issues and concerns and assists with supporting patients with communication needs. PALS staff attend the Deaflink Health Forum, to ensure that members know the process for asking questions or seeking answers to problems and feed back any issues or concerns relating to Newcastle Hospitals.

During the ongoing building work and refurbishment within the RVI PALS officers have assisted with giving directions to patients and raised awareness of signage issues and problems with access, particularly for patients with disabilities or mobility problems. PALS also assisted in providing information, answering questions and disseminating publicity materials during the transfer of services from Newcastle General Hospital.

PALS continues to monitor gender, age and ethnicity of people who contact the service to inform the promotion of the service.

Equality & Diversity:
North of Tyne NHS: - Northumberland Care Trust, North Tyneside Primary Care NHS Trust, Newcastle Primary Care NHS Trust

PALS has worked closely with colleagues in NHS North of Tyne, Newcastle and North Tyneside Community Health, Northumberland Care Trust and independent contractors across the whole of the area, providing information and helping to solve problems for patients their families and carers.

PALS staff have held information sessions and been a focus for advice and information during service changes, when GP practices have closed and when there have been changes to the access and scope of services.

They have distributed information and publicity materials, talked to staff groups in all NHS services and in a variety of community settings and encouraged the inclusion of details about accessing PALS in patient and service user information.

During the course of the year a range of information was disseminated to patients about summary care records. PALS staff received updates and guidance about the process and were able to provide answers to questions. In recording and collating these queries PALS was able to highlight areas of concern, flagging up possible problems.

PALS staff are part of the Newcastle and North Tyneside Community Health CEAT (Community Environmental Action Team) visits to inspect premises with regard to infection control.

North of Tyne PALS has been one of a number of key organisations involved in the ‘First Contact’ initiative in Newcastle. This generated queries and requests for information from older people who would not usually have used PALS.
Northumberland Care Trust

Total Contacts - Northumberland Care Trust

Means of Contact
- Phoned Officer direct: 14%
- Email: 9%
- Face to Face: 11%
- Freephone: 66%

Type of Contact
- Concern: 6%
- General Enquiry: 35%
- Compliment: 59%

Gender
- Male: 58%
- Female: 42%

Age
- Under 18: 0%
- Adult: 80%
- Older People 60+: 20%
Newcastle and North Tyneside Community Health

**Total Contacts - Newcastle & North Tyneside Community Health**

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<th>Year</th>
<th>Contacts</th>
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<td>2008-09</td>
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<tr>
<td>2009-10</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>63</td>
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**Means of Contact**
- 83% Email
- 10% Face to Face
- 5% Letter
- 2% Freephone

**Type of Contact**
- 44% Concern
- 56% General Enquiry

**Gender**
- 68% Male
- 32% Female

**Age**
- 67% Older People 60+
- 33% Adult
- 0% Under 18
Independent Contractors

Total Contacts - Independent Contractors
(including GPs, pharmacies and opticians)

Means of Contact
- Phoned Officer direct (2%)
- Email (11%)
- Face to Face (7%)
- Fax (1%)
- Freephone (79%)

Type of Contact
- Concern (1%)
- General Enquiry (32%)
- Comment/Suggestion (66%)
- Compliment (1%)

Equality & Diversity:

Gender
- Male (62%)
- Female (38%)

Age
- Under 18 (0%)
- Adult (43%)
- Older People 60+ (57%)
North East Ambulance Service NHS Trust

North of Tyne PALS responds to requests for information and advice and helps to solve any problems patients, their families, and carers may have experienced from across the whole of the area covered by the North East Ambulance Service.

People contact PALS directly, via the freephone, email, or letter. NEAS reception staff transfer relevant calls to the PALS freephone number. This makes access to PALS as seamless as possible and provides a timely answer to questions and problems.
Referrals to North of Tyne PALS are also received via local PALS staff based in acute or primary care NHS Trusts in the area south of the Tyne. There is a protocol in place to clarify the process for the recording and reporting of these issues.

Equality & Diversity:

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<th>Gender</th>
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<td>66%</td>
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<th>Age</th>
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<td>0%</td>
<td>33%</td>
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Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust

North of Tyne PALS delivers the PALS service for the North of Tyne area of Northumberland, Tyne and Wear NHS Foundation Trust, liaising with NTW PALS colleagues working in the South of Tyne area, as appropriate.

During the course of 2010 to 2011 work has continued to promote PALS and for the service to become further integrated into the work of the Trust.

A range of events, activities, meetings and social activities have been undertaken and attended to explain the role of PALS to service users, carers and members of staff. This has resulted in an increase in the issues which have come to the service, specifically with respect to learning disability and older people.
PALS staff have been part of initiatives within St Nicholas’, Northgate, Prudhoe, St George’s Park, Walkergate Park hospitals and with community based services. This has included being part of PEAT inspections, being involved in initiatives with respect to essence of care, food and nutrition, health and well being and infection control and also being represented on the relevant site and Trust wide groups.

PALS continues to be involved in the ‘How’s it going?’ programme of seeking the views of service users. During the year this was further developed to include ‘How’s it going now?’ questionnaires which are undertaken after the service user has been with the service for three to six months and also questionnaires specifically for people within the autism services at Northgate hospital. These questionnaires are undertaken to assess how things are going. They are also an opportunity to ask questions and raise any problems.

PALS has been involved in the planning and implementation of a range of activities involving service users and carers in the design and development of services. This has included being part of the Involving Patient Action Group within Children, Young People and Specialist Services, meeting with Roycroft Unit and Prudhoe ‘champions’ meetings, carers meetings and liaising with advocacy services.

Equality & Diversity:

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<th>Gender</th>
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<th>48% Female</th>
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| Age    | 83% Adult | 17% Under 18 | 0% Older People 60+ |
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Patients their families and carers continue to access PALS via the freephone or by calling into offices at North Tyneside General Hospital, Wansbeck General Hospital and Hexham General Hospital. When PALS staff are elsewhere the service can be contacted via the info-phones now placed at key points within services which provide direct access to the PALS freephone which is staffed during office hours and has an answerphone at other times.

PALS has been involved in various activities and initiatives to enhance access to the service. Visits are made regularly to wards and services to explain the role of PALS and to liaise with staff.

In addition to general publicity about PALS, through talking to staff, patients and families and the distribution of leaflets, posters and cards there have been several targeted initiatives to explain the role of PALS. Information sessions have taken place with reception staff and contact centre staff.

PALS is represented on the Patient Information Group, the Equality and Diversity Group, and PALS staff have been part of PEAT (Patient Environment Action Team) visits. PALS is represented on the Discharge Planning and Transfer Group, which meets monthly, providing reports and information.

Information about PALS is included in the induction process for all staff and the scope and role of the service has been discussed with Governors.
PALS staff have been involved in the planning around the upgrading of the entrance to North Tyneside General Hospital entrance and the proposed Emergency Care Centre.

An initiative from the Equality and Diversity Group, which began in 2009-2010 has continued with PALS acting proactively in targeting the provision of information about PALS to people with disabilities, their family and carers to provide them with a contact point whilst accessing services in the Trust if they have any questions or problems. PALS liaises closely with specialist resources including the Learning Disabilities Specialist Nurse.

Equality & Diversity: