



**King's College Hospital**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **Patient Advice and Liaison Service and Patient Complaints Annual Report 2021-22**

**Compiled May 2022**

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## 1. Executive Summary

King's College Hospital NHS Foundation Trust provides services to local people across Bromley, Lambeth, Lewisham and Southwark from one of its five sites that include Denmark Hill, Princess Royal University Hospital, Orpington Hospital, Beckenham Beacon and Queen Mary's Hospital (with the latter four referred to as Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites).

This report provides a summary of feedback received through the Trust's complaints team and Patient Advice and Liaison Service received between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022. Throughout the period, the Trust received 1,166 formal complaints which represents a 12.9% increase in the volume of activity compared to the previous year. Analysis of data indicates that key themes arising from complaints include communication with patient, communication with relative and attitude of medical staff.

During the year 40.3% of complaints were responded to within the agreed timescale. Although this is an improvement on 2020-21 performance we recognise that further work is being completed to address the challenges.

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, our Patient Advice and Liaison Service recorded 6,881 contacts across all sites. This represents a 2.5% reduction compared to recorded contacts in 2020/2021 (7,060). Individuals contacted the Patient Advice and Liaison Service for help with resolution of issues like: delays in getting outpatient appointments, difficulties contacting services directly and rescheduling of appointments.

As a result of patient feedback and in line with the Trust's commitment to learning, a wide range of changes have been made to improve the quality of care that we deliver at King's College Hospital. From reviewing pathways through developing new policy documents to hosting 200+ reflecting sessions, learning from complaints and Patient Advice and Liaison Service contacts is embedded as part of King's College Hospital's approach to improving patient experience.

The introduction of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Complaints Standard scheduled for 2022/2023 will create further opportunities for King's College Hospital to transform its approach to managing complaints. The teams will also focus on improving accessibility of their services with a strong drive to deliver Key Performance Indicators agreed.

## 2. Complaints

In 2021/22, King's College Hospital received 1,166 formal complaints; this represents an organisational increase of 12.9% compared to 2020/2021 where 1,016 complaints were received. Throughout the year, complaints were received at an average rate of 97 per month.

The table below shows the volume of complaints and Patient Advice and Liaison Service contacts in relation to inpatient and outpatient attendances only, excluding maternity services and emergency care. Throughout 2021/2022, King's College Hospital had a higher rate of complaints and contacts regarding inpatient attendances at Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites whilst Denmark Hill attracted higher rates where outpatients services are concerned.

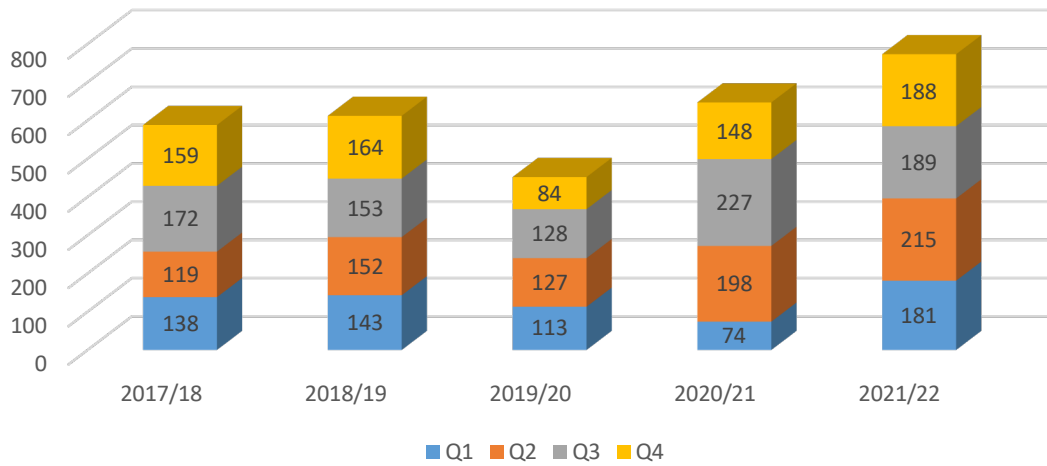
Denmark Hill site	2021/2022	Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites	2021/2022
<b>Inpatient attendances</b>		<b>Inpatient attendances</b>	
Number of inpatient complaints	220	Number of inpatient complaints	173
Inpatient episodes	133,299	Inpatient episodes	64,207
Complaints per 1,000 attendances	1.6	Complaints per 1,000 attendances	2.7
PALS contacts	873	PALS contacts	747
PALS per 1,000 attendances	6.5	PALS per 1,000 attendances	11.6
<b>Outpatient attendances</b>		<b>Outpatient attendances</b>	
Number of outpatient complaints	402	Number of outpatient complaints	130
Outpatient episodes	785,819	Outpatient episodes	460,495
Complaints per 1,000 attendances	0.5	Complaints per 1,000 attendances	0.3
PALS contacts	3,073	PALS contacts	1,701
PALS per 1,000 attendances	3.9	PALS per 1,000 attendances	3.7

Figure 1. Feedback (complaints and PALS queries) measured against Trust activity

### 2.1 Complaints for Denmark Hill site

Between 1<sup>st</sup> April 2021 and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022, King's College Hospital received 773 complaints relating to its Denmark Hill site. This constitutes a 19% increase when compared to the previous year where 651 complaints were received. Just under 7% of complaints (57) were re-opened during the year.

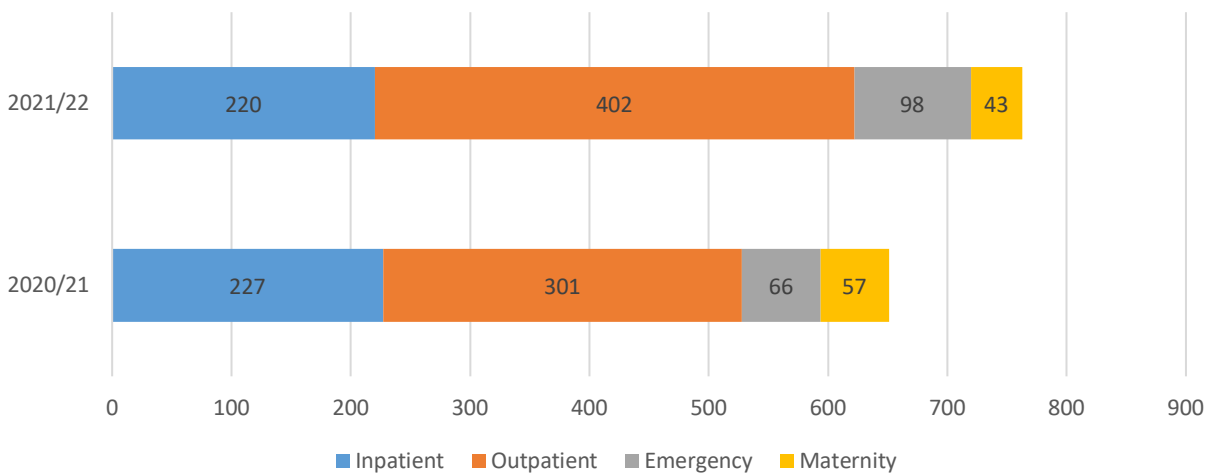
Denmark Hill - number of complaints by quarter since 2017/18



At Denmark Hill site, complaints related to:

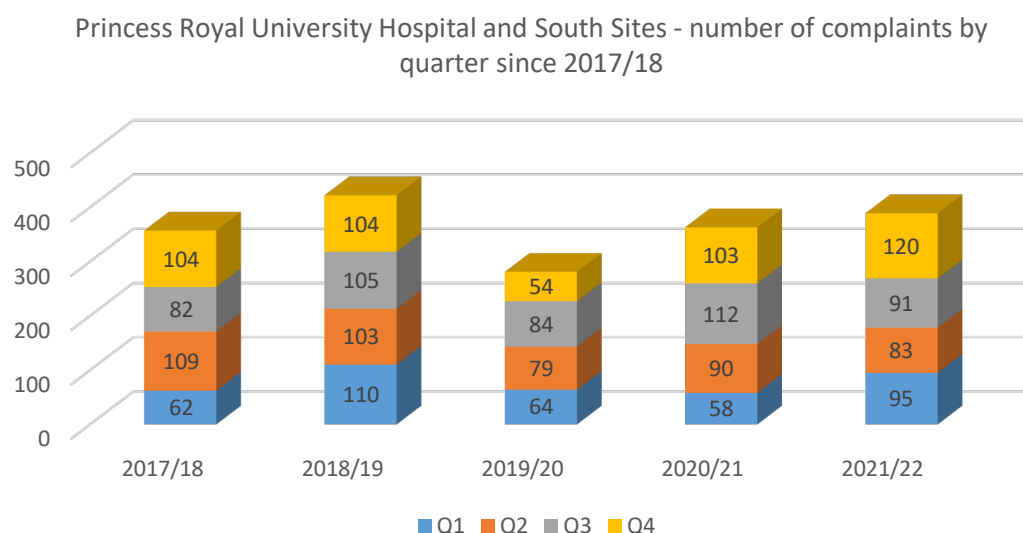
	No. of complaints	% of total complaints in 2020/2021	% of total complaints in 2021/2022	
Inpatients	220	35%	28%	↓
Outpatients	402	48%	52%	↑
Emergency Department	98	9%	13%	↑
Maternity	43	7%	6%	↓

Denmark Hill complaints by service area 2020/2021 and 2021/2022



## 2.2 Complaints for Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites

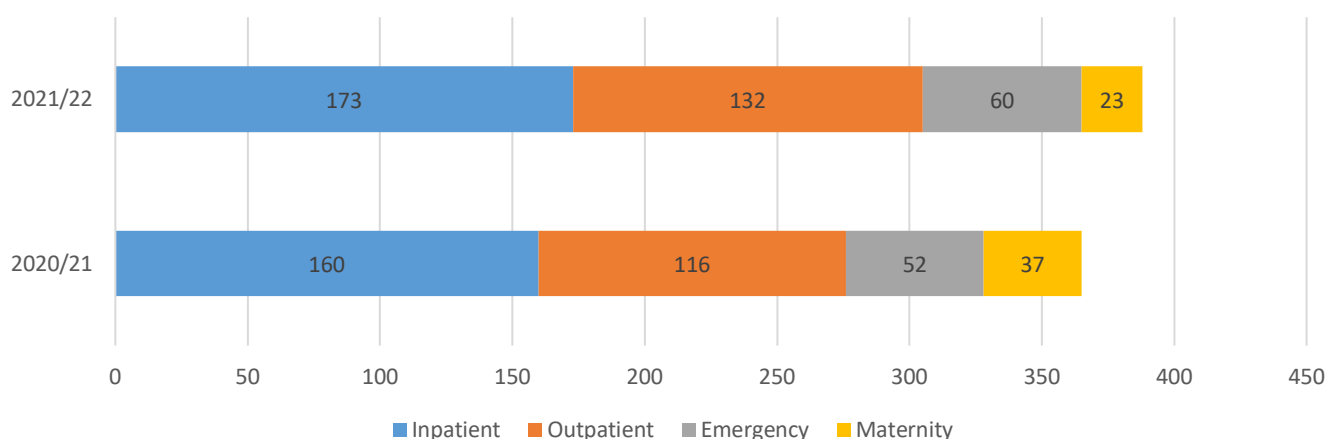
During the reporting period, 389 complaints were received in 2021/2022 for Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites. This constitutes a 7% increase when compared to the previous year where 365 complaints were received. 7% of complaints (26) were re-opened during the year.



At Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites, complaints related to:

	No. of complaints	% of total complaints in 2020/2021	% of total complaints in 2021/2022
Inpatients	173	44%	44% <span style="color: orange;">➔</span>
Outpatients	132	33%	32% <span style="color: green;">⬇</span>
Emergency Department	60	19%	15% <span style="color: green;">⬇</span>
Maternity	23	10%	6% <span style="color: green;">⬇</span>

Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites complaints by service area 2020/2021 and 2021/2022



### 2.3 Other resolution pathways

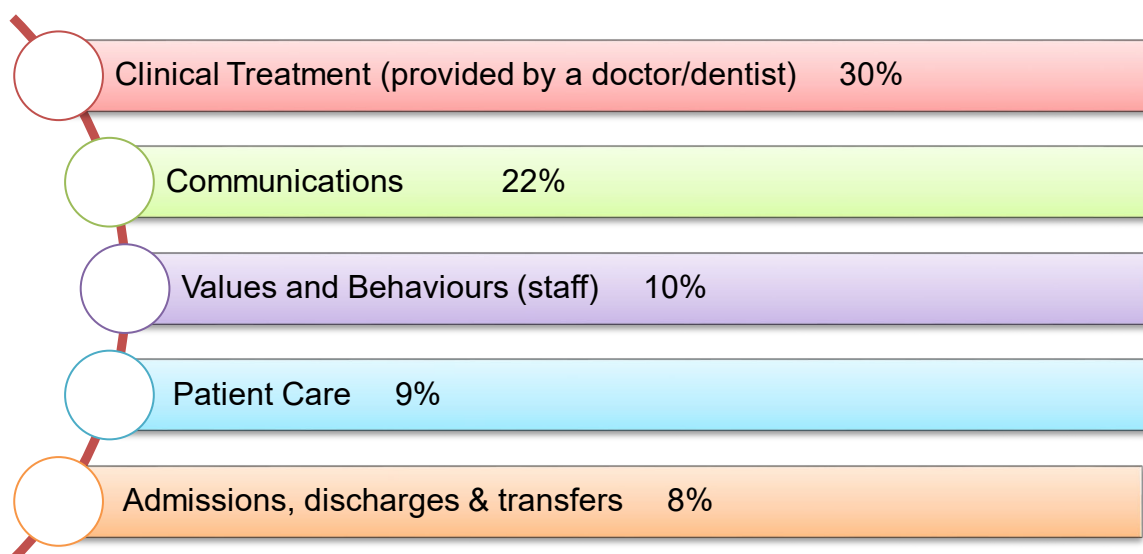
In 2021/2022, 4 concerns were raised and logged as complaints but were effectively resolved through Patient Advice and Liaison Service with the consent of the patients/ relatives/ carers.

### 2.4 Complaints themes

Review of 1,166 complaints received in 2021/2022 reveals that Trust-wide complainants shared concerns with regard to:

Access to treatment or drugs	12	1%
Admissions, discharges and transfers	85	8%
Appointments inc. delays and cancellations	75	7%
Clinical treatment	326	30%
Communications	243	22%
Consent to treatment	8	1%
End of life care	3	0%
Facilities	11	1%
Patient care	97	9%
Prescribing errors	20	2%
Privacy, dignity and wellbeing	30	3%
Restraint	2	0%
Staffing numbers	1	0%
Trust admin	17	1%
Values and behaviours	103	10%
Waiting times	43	4%
Others	90	1%
<b>Total:</b>	<b>1166</b>	

This puts the following themes as top five most complained about matters in 2021/2022:



Please note that 'clinical treatment' refers to concerns predominantly about care provided by a doctor. A separate 'patient care' category is used to categorise complaints which relate predominantly to nurse-led care, which includes patient nutrition and hydration.

Clinical treatment concerns noted include:

- delay/failure to diagnose (18 complaints)
- delay/failure to follow up (15 complaints)
- failure in treatment/procedure (14 complaints)

## 2.5 Complaints response rate

The Trust set its target at 100% of complaints responded to within the deadline. For 2021/2022, the overall response rate was 40.3% (up from 33.5% in 2020/21) broken down as follows:

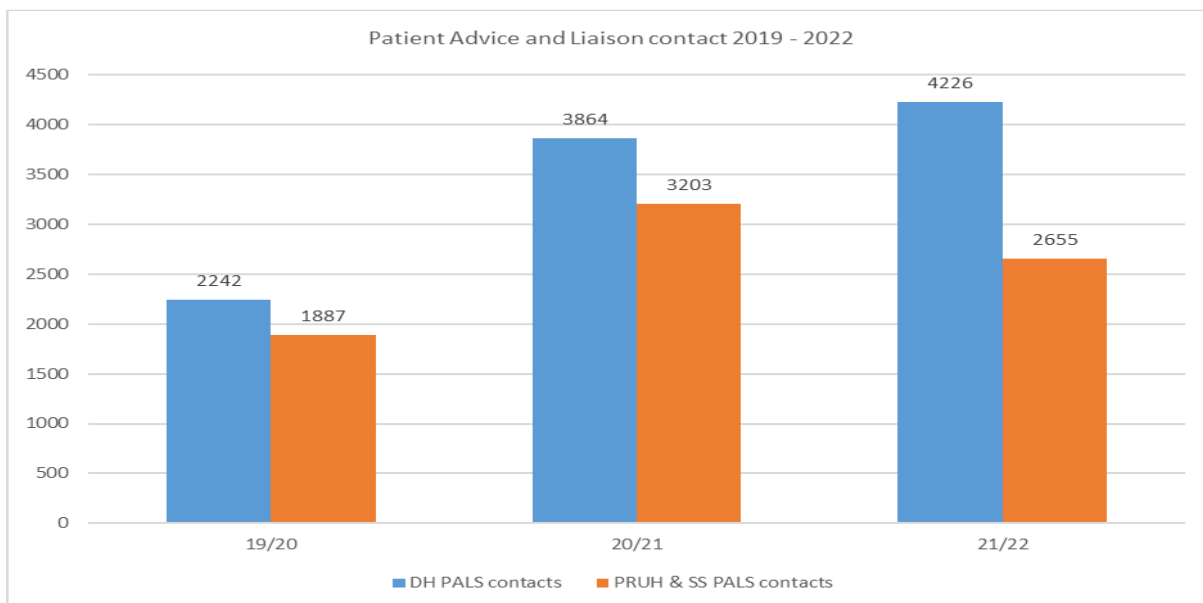
Trust-wide	Denmark Hill site	Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites
453 / 1124 (40.3%)	311 / 688 (45.2%)	142 / 436 (32.6%)

The plans to improve performance are set out in the final section of the report.

## 3. Patient Advice and Liaison Service

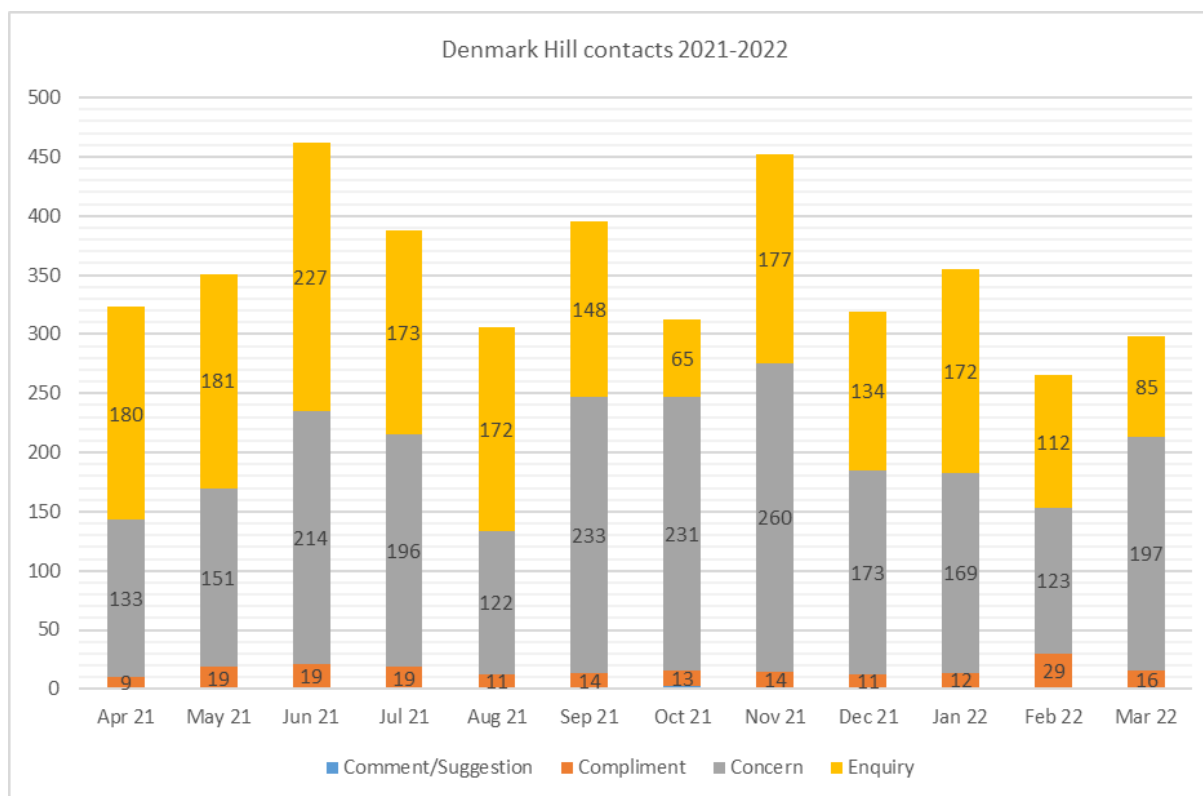
During 2021/2022, Patient Advice and Liaison Service recorded 6,881 contacts across all sites. This represents a 2.5% reduction compared to recorded contacts in 2020/2021 (7,060). The table below shows the activity levels reported over a three-year period; concerns at Denmark Hill have increased by 88% compared to pre-Covid pandemic levels.

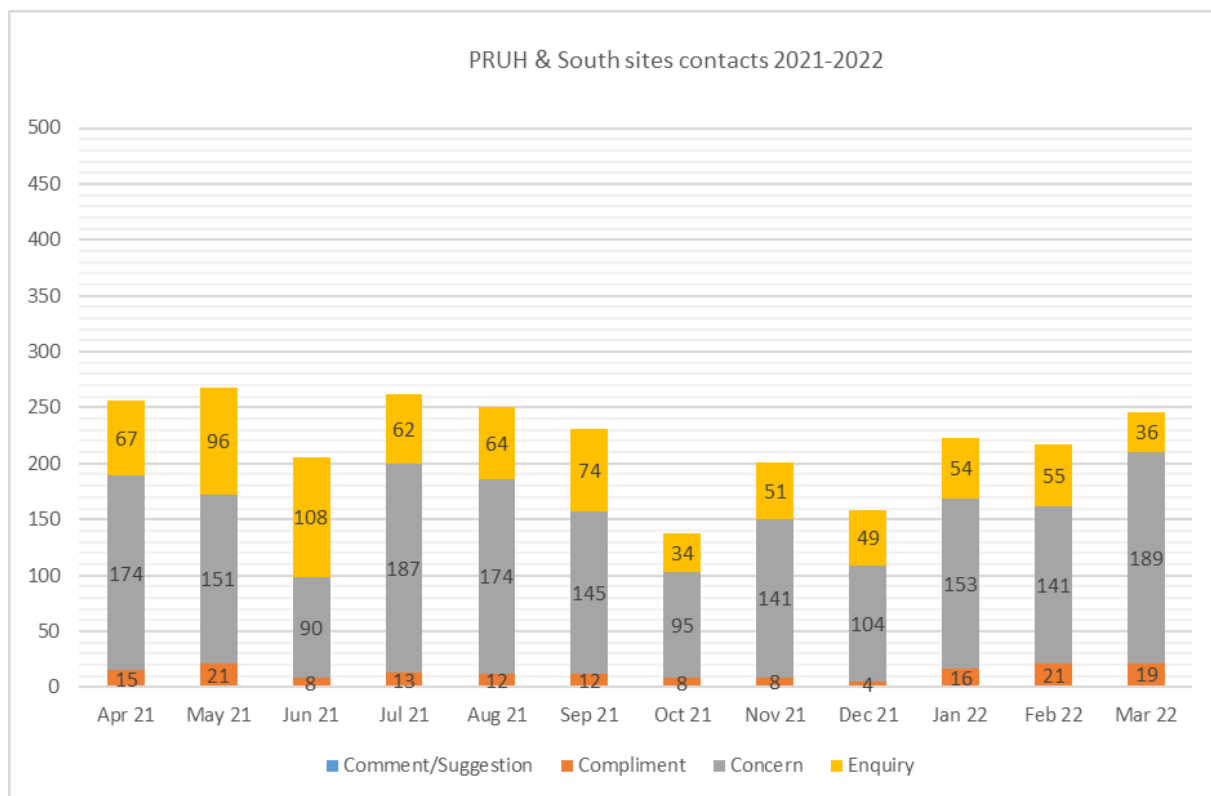




Denmark Hill recorded 4,226 contacts, averaging 352 per month, with 2,655 contacts for Princess Royal University Hospital and South Sites, averaging 221 per month. In addition, 343 compliments were received during the year and these represent 5% of the overall contacts made.

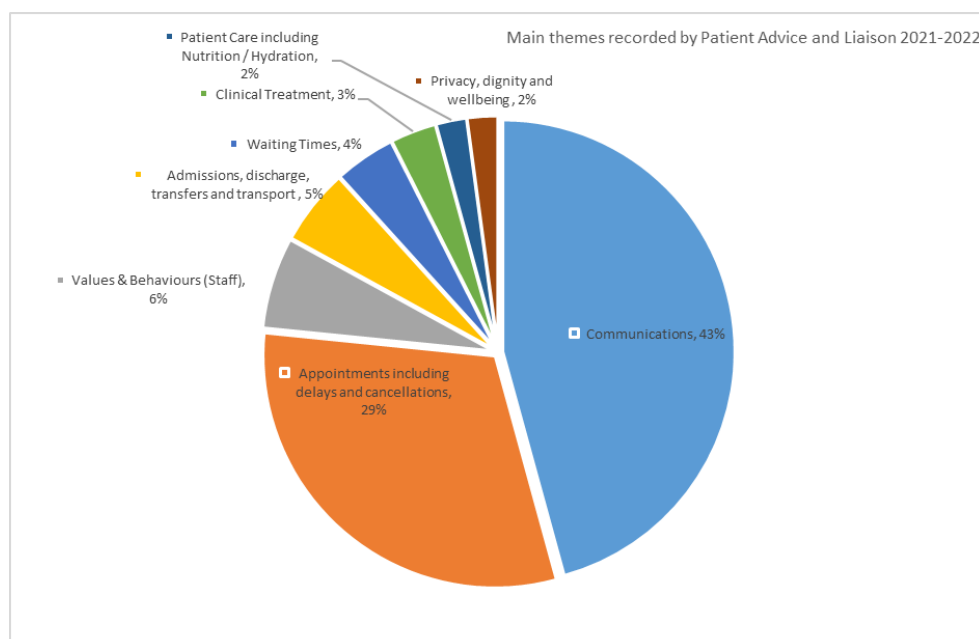
The breakdown of PALS contacts for each site is set out in the charts below:





Measuring Patient Advice and Liaison Service casework against Trust activity shows that there were 3.8 outpatient related contacts per 1,000 outpatient attendances and 9 inpatient related contacts per 1,000 inpatient admissions. Overall, outpatient issues represented 70% of the reported casework. We observed higher rates of concerns (based on volume of outpatient attendances) at the DH site and higher rates of concerns (based on inpatient admissions) at the PRUH site.

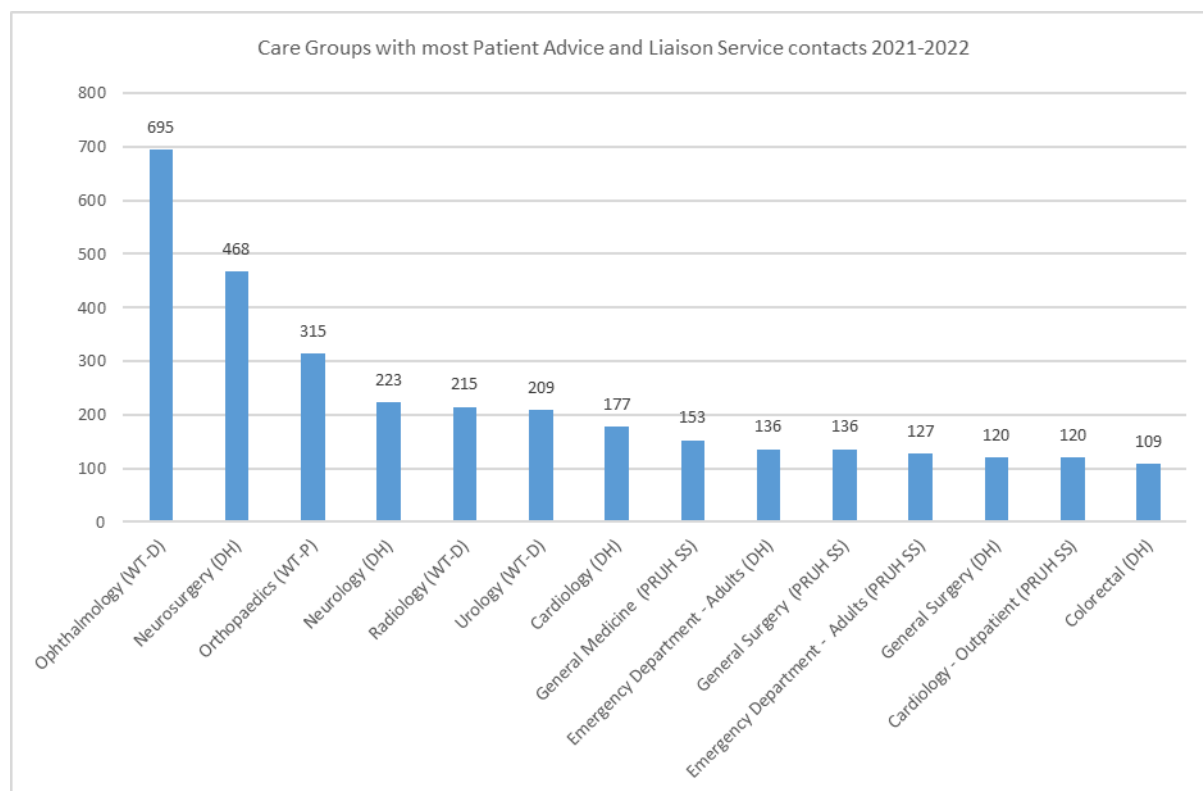
Our patients and their families are predominantly seeking help in relation to Communication pathways with the clinical teams and information about outpatient appointments, including all radiological investigations. The graph below shows these and other top causes of contact as a proportion of overall casework.



Notable themes supported by Patient Advice and Liaison Service are listed below:

- delay (including length of wait) for an outpatient appointment
- inability to contact staff/department/wards on advertised telephone numbers
- rescheduling of appointments
- length of wait for elective surgery and cancelled procedures
- quality and timeliness of appointment notifications
- delay in providing follow up appointments or other discharge plan recommendations
- communication with relatives/carers in regard to inpatient care, treatment and discharge decisions
- delay in reporting back to patients/ GP Practices on test results.

The following graph demonstrates Care Groups with the most Patient Advice and Liaison Service contacts recorded in 2021-2022.



#### 4. Learning from feedback

Patient feedback generates opportunities for learning and service improvements and King's College Hospital is fully committed to utilising complaints and Patient Advice and Liaison Service data to transform services to meet the needs of our diverse communities. To facilitate information sharing and to drive improvements, King's College Hospital:

- regularly reports themes and trends to:
  - care groups
  - King's Executive Team

- Patient Experience Committee
  - develops and implements action plans where processes or quality of care delivered were below the high expectations that we set for ourselves
  - designs and delivers bespoke training for staff or staff groups where concerns about the quality of care delivered have been raised

Of 1,166 complaints received in 2021/2022, 521 (44.7%) were upheld or partially upheld with key learning points including:

- review of patient pathways in Orthopaedics, Urgent and Emergency Care to reduce the number of cancelled procedures
- development of a new process to follow-up patients who 'Did Not Attend' their appointments to ensure that these patients are supported and aware of escalation routes
- improvements in communication skills through deployment of customer service training
- development of new communication tools for patients
- 200+ learning sessions facilitated with staff and teams to reflect on feedback and conduct to improve quality of care provided in the future

In addition, as a direct result of feedback we set up a new dedicated friends and family line for the Emergency Department at Denmark Hill. The line, manned 24/7, enables relatives and friends to directly speak with their loved one. This has helped to free up clinical time to care in addition to improving patient experience.

## 5. Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman

The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman investigates complaints where an organisation has not been able to resolve the complaint to the complainant's satisfaction at a local level. Where a complaint spans health and social care, it is investigated by the Joint Working Team between the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and the Local Government Ombudsman. In 2021/2022, the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman or the Local Government Ombudsman requested records or started initial enquiries for 14 cases.

4 PHSO cases concluded in 2021/22. In one of these cases, the Trust was required to make a payment for distress, in two cases the Trust was asked to issue a letter of apology for poor experience. There was no action required of the Trust in the fourth case.

## 6. Plans for 2022/ 2023

The introduction of the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Complaints Standard scheduled for 2022/2023 will create further opportunities for King's College Hospital to transform its approach to managing complaints where the focus will shift from written responses to working alongside the complaints to secure desired outcomes. This closely aligns with the co-production work outlined in the Trust's [strategy](#), 'Strong roots, global reach'.

For complaints and Patient Advice and Liaison Service the focus throughout 2022/2023 will also be on:

- deploying co-designed complaints information and ward welcome packs to make the services more accessible to our diverse communities
- ensuring that feedback received from patients and relatives at King's College Hospital reflects the diverse communities that we serve
- achieving Key Performance Indicators for the services that include:
  - all Patient Advice and Liaison Service queries being addressed within 5 working days
  - 100% of complaints being resolved within 6 months' period
  - recording 100% compliance with the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman complaints standards
- launching printed and digital patient experience newsletter with editions available across various staff areas with features on volunteering and spiritual care to promote uptake of other services