

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

A review of PALS services available to City of London residents

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Introduction

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) is a service that is mandated within the National Health Service (NHS). Each trust is required to have PALS that provides the following services based on the NHS website:

- Help with health-related questions
- Help to resolve concerns or problems when using the NHS
- Provide information on how to get more involved in one's own healthcare
- Provide information on:
 - The NHS
 - The NHS complaints procedure
 - Support groups outside the NHS

This report investigates the functionality and accessibility of the PALS of ten NHS trusts that provide healthcare services to residents of the City of London as listed below:

- Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust
- Barts Health NHS Trust
- East London NHS Foundation Trust
- Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust
- Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust
- Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust
- Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust
- University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Whittington Health NHS Trust

This piece of research was conducted as a result of a number of queries about access to PALS and visibility of the service. HWCOL set out to better understand how PALS can be located, contacted, and accessed and to give residents more confidence in the service. HWCOL therefore set about trying to understand the issues faced and endeavor to provide information to potential users and give providers some insight into the user's experience. We hope that this report will enable more residents to be able to contact PALS should they need to in the future. We did not assess the performance or patient satisfaction in relation to PALS and researched purely what was on offer and whether this information was easily accessible both online and in person.

Methodology

Online desktop research was conducted to establish what PALS were available at each trust and how patients can contact them. We established how to reach each PALS page on the trust's website, methods of contact and what accessibility features were available. This was conducted by visiting each trust's website, as well as contacting the PALS directly to ask what services they offered via email/phone.

In-person research was then undertaken through visiting a selection of hospitals and completing a short checklist of the available PALS at each. We established whether there was a physical PALS office, opening times and accessibility as well as further questions detailed at the end of the report. These visits were greatly beneficial and enabled us to identify any potential gaps in patients being able to access the PALS at their local hospital.

Summary of local PALS services

Figure 1 is a summary of the PALS services and what they offer. The local hospitals were assessed online to find out the opening hours, contact details and what methods of contact they offer.

* Those who offer an answering machine service. Services that don't offer an answering machine service are only contactable via phone during opening hours.

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust	
PALS office location and hours	King George Hospital: Barley Lane, Goodmayes, Greater London IG3 8YB Queen's Hospital: Rom Valley Way, Romford, Greater London RM7 0AG No specific opening times mentioned
Email	bhrut.pals@nhs.net
Phone	01708 435454 Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
Online form	https://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/askpals
Post	King George Hospital: Barley Lane, Goodmayes, Greater London IG3 8YB Queen's Hospital: Rom Valley Way, Romford, Greater London RM7 0AG
Barts Health NHS Trust	
PALS office location and hours	Newham Hospital: Zone 1, St Andrews Wing, Newham Hospital, Glen Road Plaistow, London E13 8SL. Monday-Friday 9:30am-4:30pm St Bartholomew's Hospital: Next to Imaging Reception, KGV Building, Ground Floor, St Bartholomew's Hospital, West Smithfield, City of London, EC1A 7BE. Monday-Friday 9:30am-4:30pm The Royal London and Mile End Hospital: Patient and Family Contact Centre, 2nd Floor, Central Tower, Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, Whitechapel, London, E1 1FR. Monday-Friday 10am-4:30pm Whipps Cross Hospital: Junction 4, Main Building, Whipps Cross Hospital, Whipps Cross Road, London, E11 1NR. Monday-Friday 9:30am-4:30pm
Email	Newham Hospital: nuhpals.bartshealth@nhs.net St Bartholomew's Hospital: SBHpals@bartshealth.nhs.uk The Royal London and Mile End Hospital: RLHpals@bartshealth.nhs.uk Whipps Cross Hospital: WXPals@bartshealth.nhs.uk
Phone	Newham Hospital: 0207 363 9292 Monday-Friday 9:30am-4:30pm St Bartholomew's Hospital: 0203 465 5919 Monday-Friday 9:30am-4:30pm The Royal London and Mile End Hospital: 0203 594 2040 Monday-Friday 10am-4:30pm Whipps Cross Hospital: 0208 535 6438 Monday-Friday 9:30am-4:30pm
Online form	No online form
Post	No postal address

East London NHS Foundation Trust

PALS office location and hours	East London NHS Foundation Trust, 1st Floor, Health E19 – 11 Brick Lane, London E1 6PU. Monday–Friday 9am–5pm
Email	elft.pals@nhs.net
Phone	0800 783 4839 Monday–Friday 9pm–5pm
Online form	No online form
Post	FREEPOST RTXT–HJLG–XEBE, The Complaints Manager, Complaints Department, Governance and Risk Management, East London NHS Foundation Trust, 1st Floor, Health E19–11 Brick Lane, London, E1 6PU

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust

PALS office location and hours	Guy's Hospital: Ground floor, Guy's Hospital, Great Maze Pond, London SE1 9RT St Thomas' Hospital: Main entrance, St Thomas' Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7EH. Monday–Tuesday, Thursday–Friday 9am–5pm, Wednesday 10am–5pm Harefield Hospital: Main reception, Hill End Road, Harefield, Middlesex UB9 6JH Royal Brompton Hospital: Near reception, Royal Brompton Hospital, Sydney Street, London SW3 6NP. Monday–Friday 9am–4pm
Email	Guy's and St Thomas Hospitals: pals@gstt.nhs.uk Harefield and Royal Brompton Hospitals: pals@rbht.nhs.uk
Phone	Guy's and St Thomas Hospitals: 020 7188 8801. Monday–Friday 9am–5pm Harefield Hospital: 01895 826 572.* Monday–Friday 9am–4pm Royal Brompton Hospital: 020 7349 7715*. Monday–Friday 9am–4pm
Online form	Guy's and St Thomas Hospitals: https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/pals-feedback Harefield and Royal Brompton Hospitals: https://www.rbht.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/for-patients/patient-support-services/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals/contact-pals
Post	Guy's and St Thomas Hospitals: PALS, St Thomas' Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7EH Harefield and Royal Brompton Hospitals: No postal address

Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

PALS office location and hours	Main entrance, Homerton University Hospital, Homerton Row, London, Greater London, E9 6SR. Monday–Friday 9:30am–4pm
Email	huh-tr.pals.service@nhs.net
Phone	020 8510 7315* Monday–Friday 9:30am–4pm
Online form	https://www.homerton.nhs.uk/patient-advice-liaison-service-pals
Post	Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, Homerton Row, London E9 6SR

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust

PALS office location and hours	<p>Charing Cross Hospital: Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8RF</p> <p>Hammersmith Hospital: Hammersmith Hospital, Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS</p> <p>Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital: Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital, Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS</p> <p>St Mary's Hospital: St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY</p> <p>Western Eye Hospital: Western Eye Hospital, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5QH</p> <p>Monday–Friday 10am–4pm</p>
Email	imperial.PALS@nhs.net
Phone	020 3312 7777 Monday–Friday, 10am–4pm
Online form	https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/help-support-and-feedback/feedback/pals/pals-form
Post	PALS Manager, Ground floor, Clarence building, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY

Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust

PALS office location and hours	Ground floor, Moorfields Eye Hospital, 162 City Road, London EC1V 2PD Monday–Friday 9am–5pm. Clinic/Ward appointments can be arranged
Email	moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Phone	020 7566 2324 Monday–Friday 9am–5pm
Online form	No online form
Post	No postal address

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

PALS office location and hours	<p>Barnet Hospital: Ground floor near the main entrance, Barnet Hospital, Wellhouse Lane, Barnet EN5 3DJ. Monday–Friday, 10am–4pm</p> <p>Chase Farm Hospital: Chase Farm Hospital, The Ridgeway, Enfield, Middlesex EN2 8JL. Monday–Friday 10am–4pm. Clinic/Ward appointments can be arranged</p> <p>Royal Free Hospital: Ground floor, opposite the main reception, Royal Free Hospital, Pond Street, London NW3 2QG. Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm</p>
Email	<p>Barnet Hospital: bcfpals@nhs.net</p> <p>Chase Farm Hospital: rf.cfhp@nhs.net</p> <p>Royal Free Hospital: rf.pals@nhs.net</p>
Phone	<p>Barnet Hospital: 020 8216 4924 Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm</p> <p>Chase Farm Hospital: 020 8375 1328 Monday–Friday, 10am–4pm</p> <p>Royal Free Hospital: 020 7472 6446 Monday–Friday, 9am–5pm</p>
Online form	<p>https://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals/compliments-suggestions-and-complaints/make-suggestion-or-raise-concern</p>
Post	<p>Barnet Hospital: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), Barnet Hospital, Wellhouse Lane, Barnet EN5 3DJ</p> <p>Chase Farm Hospital: No postal address.</p> <p>Royal Free Hospital: Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), Royal Free Hospital, Pond Street, London NW3 2QG</p>

University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

PALS office location and hours	<p>University College Hospital, 235 Euston Road, London NW1 2BU</p> <p>Monday–Friday, 9am–4pm</p>
Email	<p>uclh.pals@nhs.net</p>
Phone	<p>0203 447 3042 Monday–Friday, 9am–4pm</p>
Online form	<p>No online form</p>
Post	<p>No postal address</p>

Whittington Health NHS Trust

PALS office location and hours	<p>On the left in the main entrance, Whittington Hospital, Magdala Avenue, London N19 5NF. Monday–Friday, 9.30am–4.30pm</p>
Email	<p>whh-tr.pals@nhs.net</p>
Phone	<p>020 7288 5551* Monday–Friday, 9.30am–4.30pm</p>
Online form	<p>No online form</p>
Post	<p>PALS & Complaints, Whittington Health NHS Trust, Magdala Avenue, London N19 5NF</p>

PALS web page accessibility

Direction to the PALS webpage

Starting from the homepage, each of hospital has several ways to navigate towards their PALS webpage. These can be grouped into five:

- through the website's search bar
- through navigating to the 'patient and visitors' section
- through the site map
- through the 'contact us' section
- through a link on the homepage

Figure 1.1 shows the different methods to reach the PALS webpage and how many NHS trusts use them. All of them have a search function in their site that users could utilise to find the PALS webpage.

The following sections show the different methods and complexity for patients to access PALS information online.

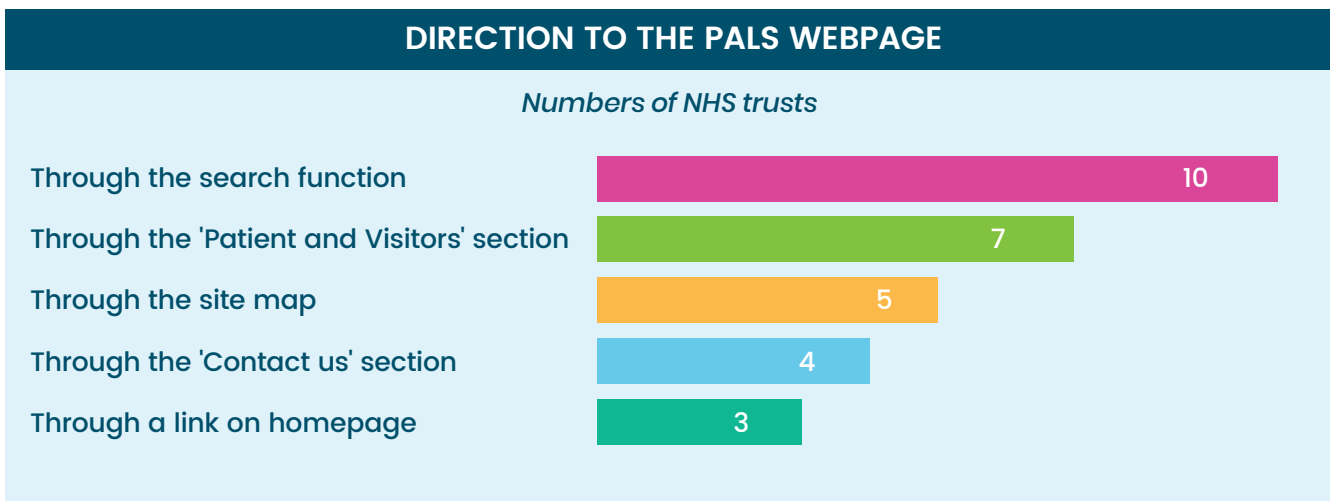


Figure 1.1 Navigation methods to PALS webpage from the homepage of NHS Trusts

Search bar

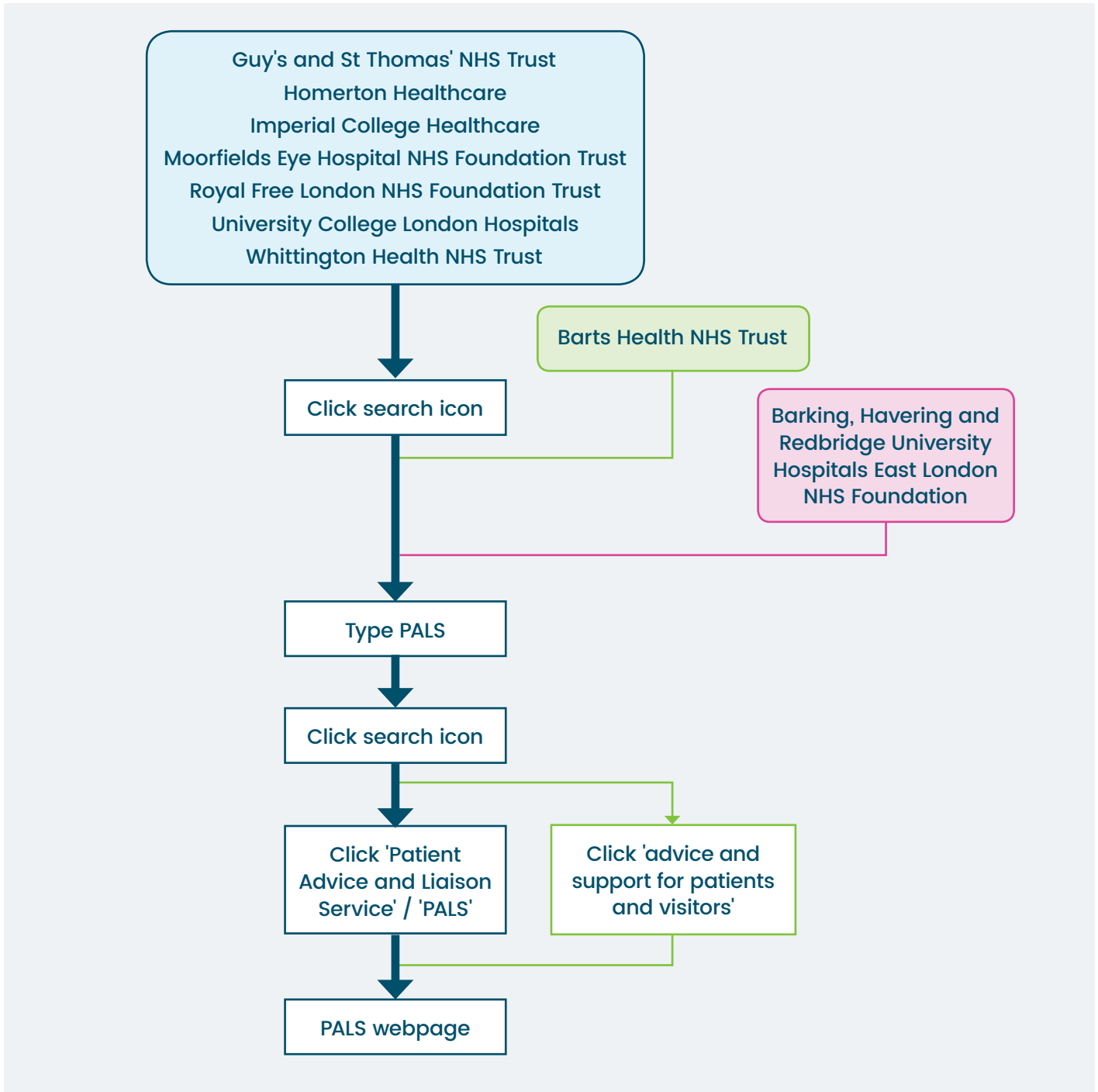


Figure 2. Navigational flowchart to Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) webpages via search function

Using the search bar in the ten NHS trusts is straightforward, just typing PALS in the search bar of the site and clicking the necessary link. For most of the sites, the link to the PALS webpage is easily seen as they are titled as “Patient Advice and Liaison Service” or “PALS”. The one exception is that for Barts Health NHS trust it is titled as “Advice and support for patients and visitors”.

This might confuse some patients if they have used PALS on previous websites, although Barts in the description of the link had mentioned the Patient Advice and Liaison Service.

Patient and visitor section

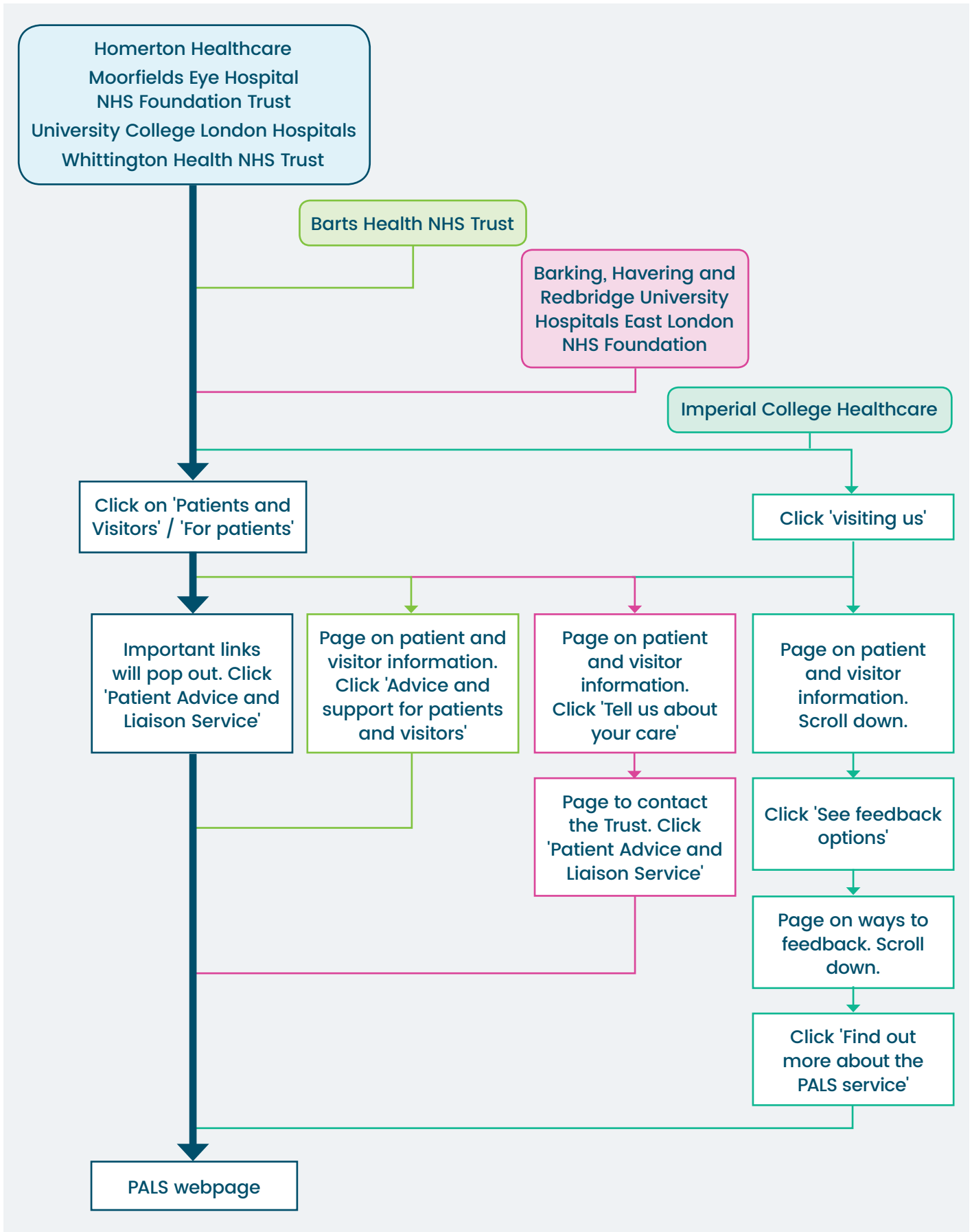


Figure 3. Navigational flowchart to Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) webpages via the patient and visitor section on National Health Service (NHS) Trusts website

Seven of NHS trusts have their PALS webpage in their “Patient and Visitor” section and more than half of these have a straightforward path where you just need to click on the “Patients and Visitors” or “For patients” and important links would pop up which would include a link for PALS. For the other three NHS trusts, the way to reach the PALS webpage is varied and with various levels of complexity.

Barts Health NHS Trust differs slightly in that patients are opening another webpage including a pop-up; “Advice and support for patients and visitors” instead of “Patient Advice and Liaison Service” which could be confusing for patients. The Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals and Imperial College Healthcare trusts are like each other as both require users to pass through two web pages to reach PALS, but Imperial is more complex as it means scrolling down the page to reach the required link.

Contact us section

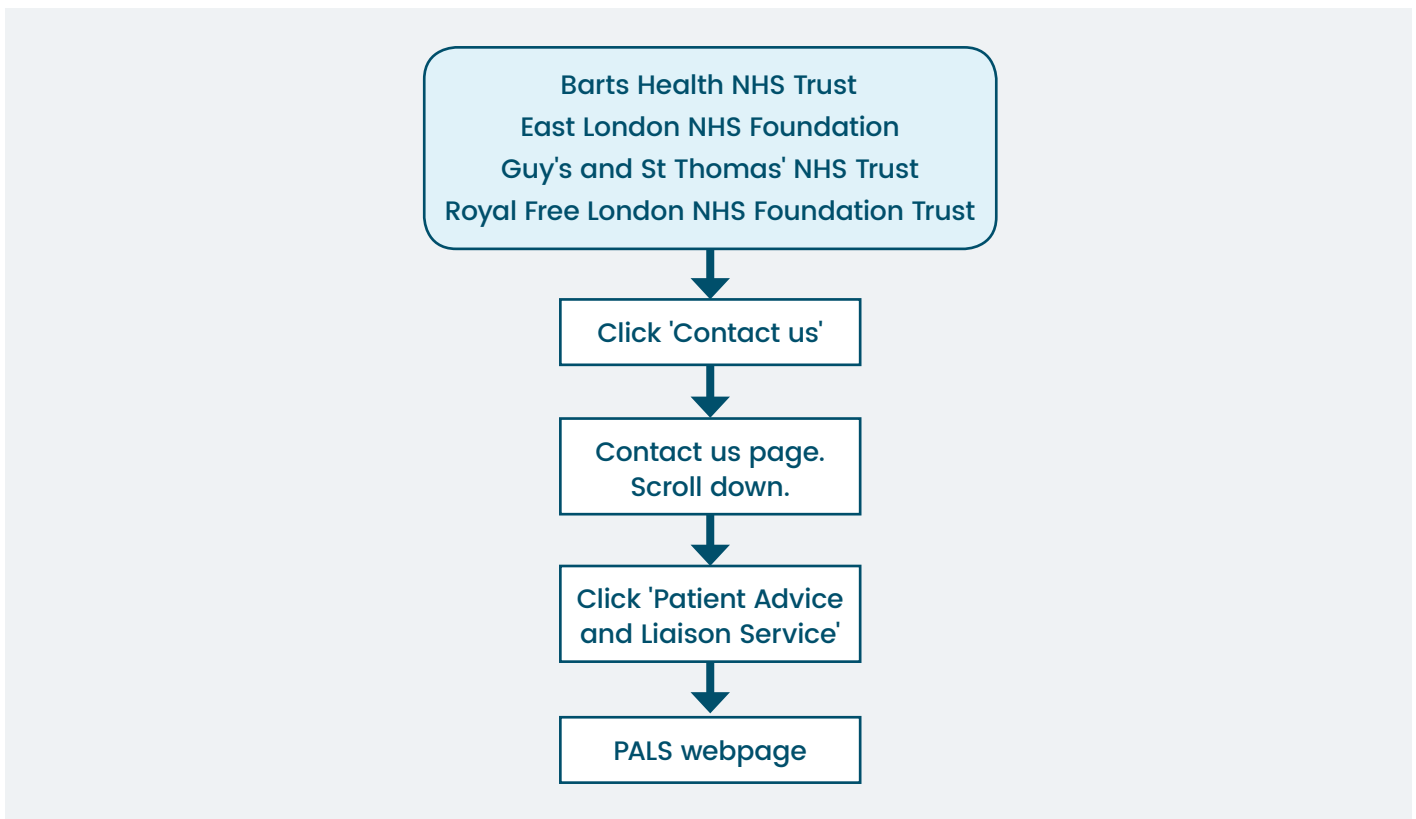


Figure 4. Navigational flowchart to Patient and Liaison Service (PALS) webpages via the contact us section on National Health Service (NHS) Trusts websites

Figure four shows the navigation process to the PALS webpage on various NHS Trusts’ websites through the ‘Contact Us’ section. Users typically click on ‘Contact Us,’ scroll down the contact page, and then click on ‘Patient Advice and Liaison Service’ to reach the PALS webpage. This standardised

approach is used by multiple trusts, including Barts Health NHS Trust, East London NHS Foundation Trust and Guy’s and St Thomas’ NHS Foundation Trust. Barts Health NHS Trust is unique in that its PALS webpage can be navigated to by both its ‘Contact us’ and ‘Patient and visitor’ section.

Site map

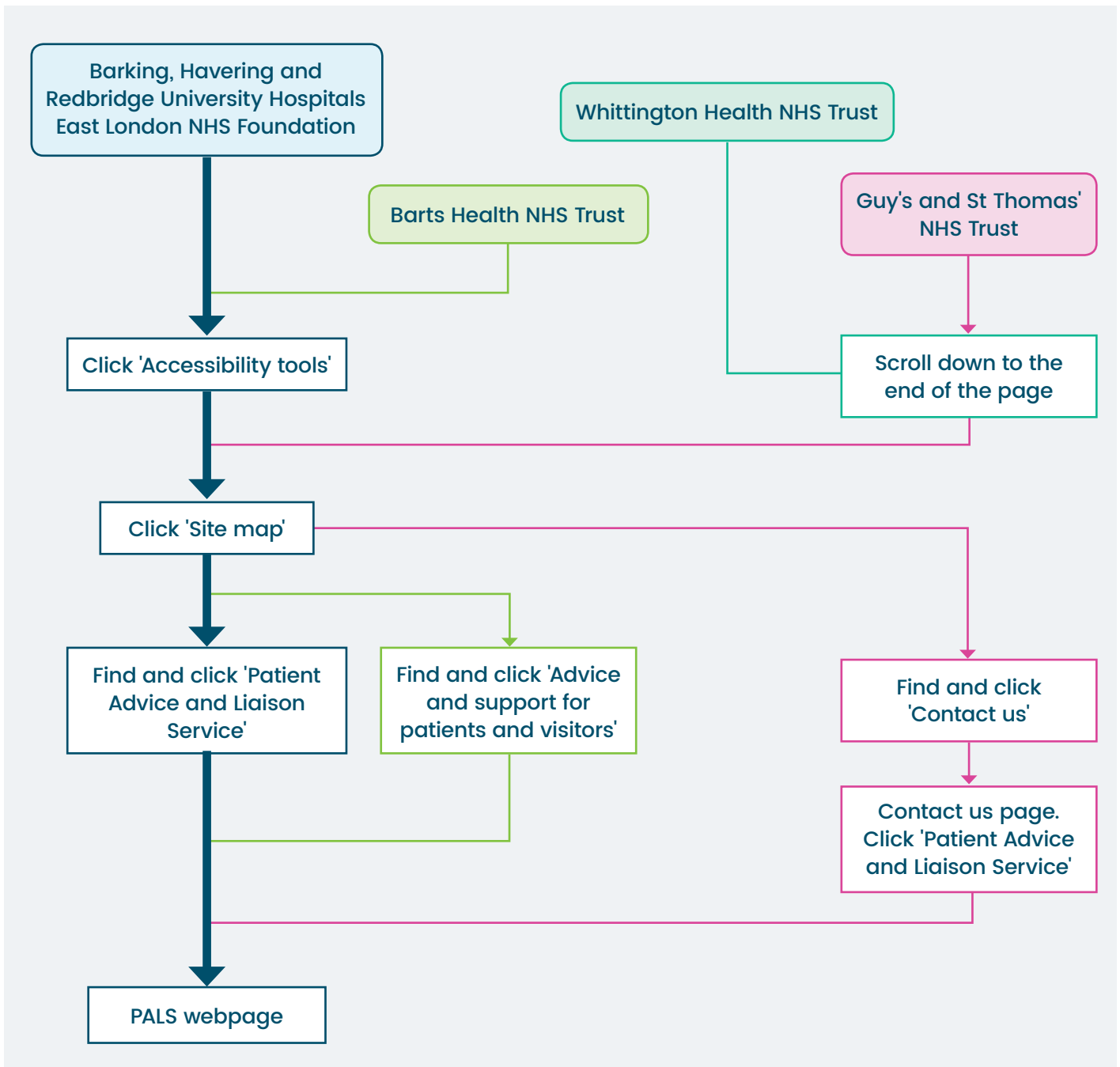


Figure 5. Navigational flowchart to Patient and Liaison Service (PALS) web pages via site map on National Health Service (NHS) Trusts websites

Five of the NHS trusts have sitemaps to help with navigation. Three of them, namely Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals, Homerton University Hospital and Barts Health NHS Trust have sitemaps as part of their site's accessibility tools. Meanwhile, for Whittington Health and Guy's and St Thomas' NHS trust's sites,

the site map could be accessed at the end of the webpage. In the site map, you just need to click "Patient Advice and Liaison Services". For Barts, this is replaced by "Advice and Support for Patients and Visitors" while for Guy's and St Thomas' you must first pass through their "contact us" page.

Homepage link

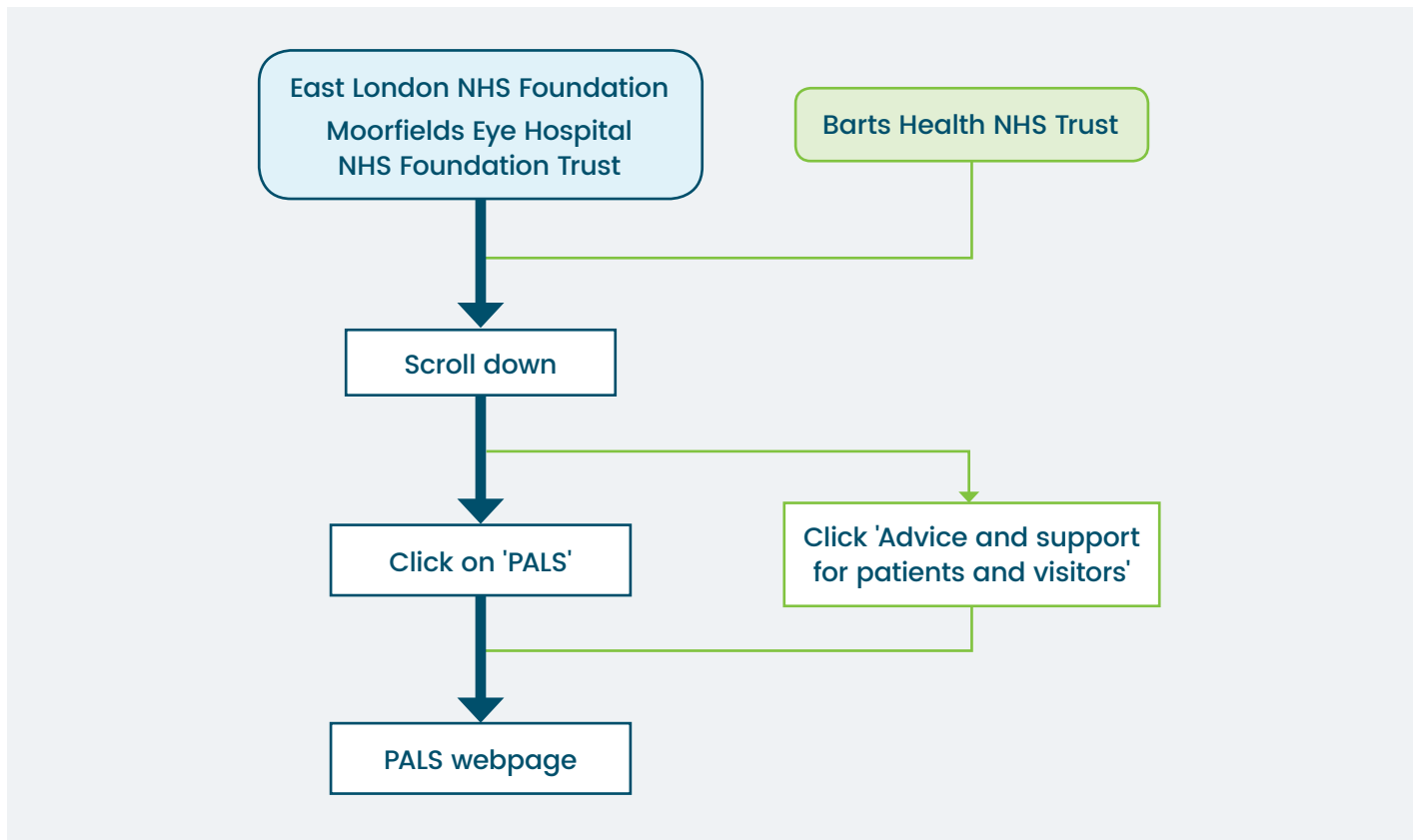


Figure 6. Navigational flowchart to Patient and Liaison Service (PALS) web pages via homepage link on National Health Service (NHS) Trusts websites.

Lastly, one of the methods to reach the PALS web page is a direct link from the site's home page. Three trusts use this: East London, Moorfield's Eye Hospital and Barts Health NHS Trust. With these, you just need to scroll down the home page to find the direct link. Again, for Barts the link is titled 'Advice and support for patients and visitors.'

Accessibility tools

Accessibility tools are designed to help individuals interact with digital content more effectively e.g. zoom features, colour contrast, screen reading. The website of Moorfield's Eye Hospital and Guy's and St Thomas' have no accessibility tools available. Below is a summary of the accessibility tools available on those websites that had them.

Languages

Focusing on the page translator tool, we can see a significant difference in language support among these trusts. The majority provide services in over 200 different languages, demonstrating extensive multilingual capabilities. In contrast, some only support over 100 languages, and another supports over 50 languages.

Conclusions

- The method of accessing the PALS page used most by the hospitals we researched is the search bar on the homepage of each website.
- There are many different methods of reaching the PALS page on each website such as through the search bar, site map or via a direct link.
- There is a lack of consistency between hospitals in regard to the language used when talking about PALS.
- The language translation options are limited at some hospitals in comparison to others.
- There are accessibility tools being used at some hospitals but not consistently.

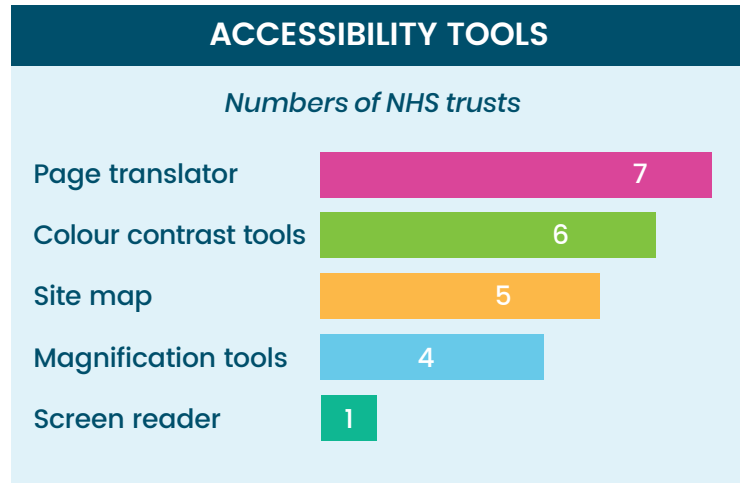


Figure 7. Availability of accessibility tools in NHS Trusts

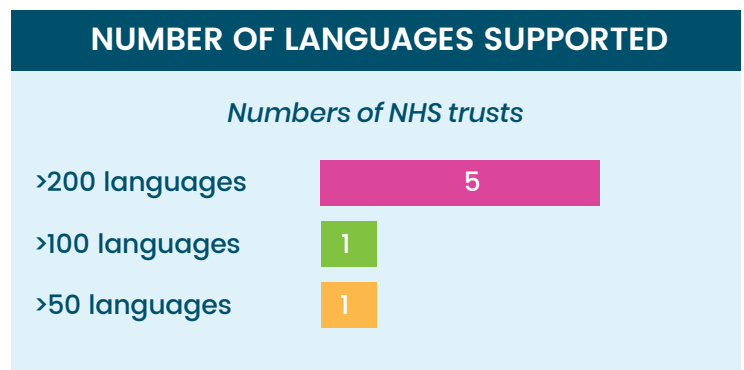


Figure 8. Range of supported languages by different NHS Trust

Ways to contact PALS

This information found as a result of this research has been summarised in the table of contact details at the start of this report.

Each of the NHS trusts has at least one hospital under their management and the ten NHS trusts oversee a total of 23 hospitals altogether. Each trust has several methods to contact their PALS. Based on the webpages, all hospitals' PALS could be reached through telephone and email.

Walk-ins are the next most common way to contact PALS with 91% saying on their websites that they offer walk-ins. On further inquiry, this value is at 100% as the remaining 9% confirmed that they have walk-in services. However, they don't advertise them. At the other end of the spectrum, the methods that are least used are the video and clinic/ward appointments.

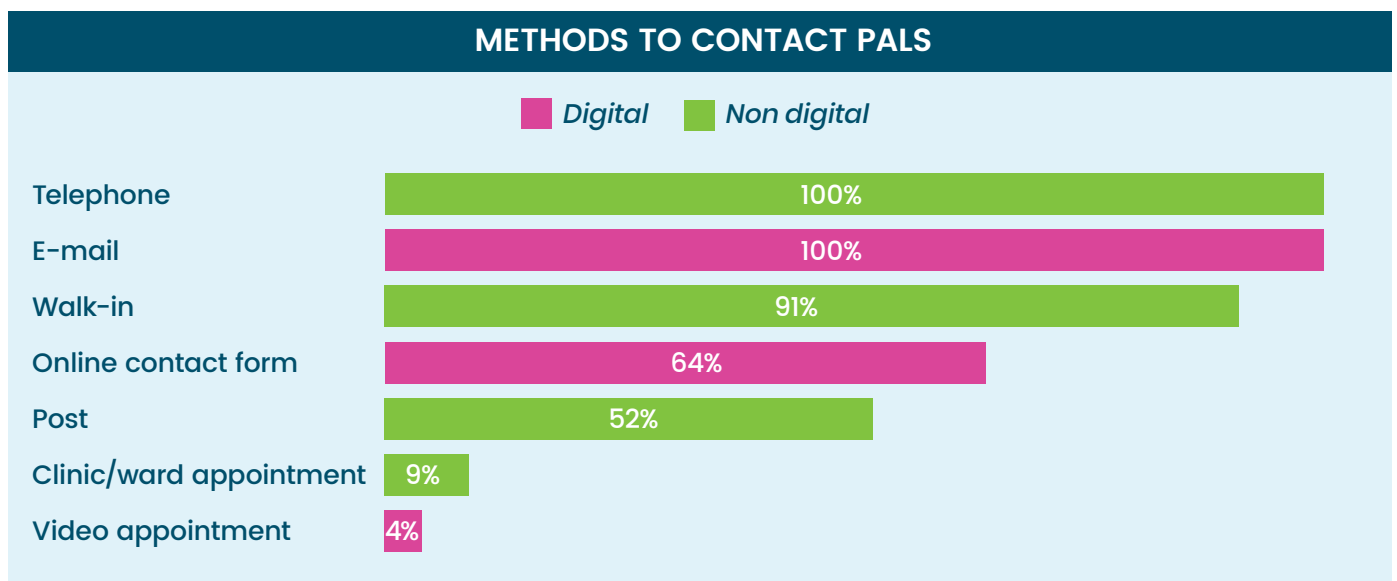


Figure 9. Percentage of hospitals by methods to contact PALS based on their PALS' webpage

Telephone

PALS of the 23 hospitals can be contacted by telephone but there are only 17 unique numbers. Some hospitals share one PALS telephone number among them, these are all detailed in the table at the beginning of the report. There are also variations with regards to the use of answering machines by the different hospitals with some using it so that clients could leave a message, while others prefer to be called during the PALS office hours. This is also detailed in the table at the start of this report.

E-mail

There are also 17 unique email addresses for the PALS of the different hospitals across the ten NHS trusts. Among the 17, nine utilised an automatic

response system on an email requesting additional information. Eventually only four provided answers to the query but one of the four only replied with links back to their PALS webpage.

Walk-in

All PALS in the ten NHS trusts, when inquired, had said that they cater to walk-in clients but not all had specifically indicated this on their website. There are also differences in how they state the location of their office so that clients could drop in, with some providing specific instructions on how to find it while others just gave the general location of the hospital.

Online contact form

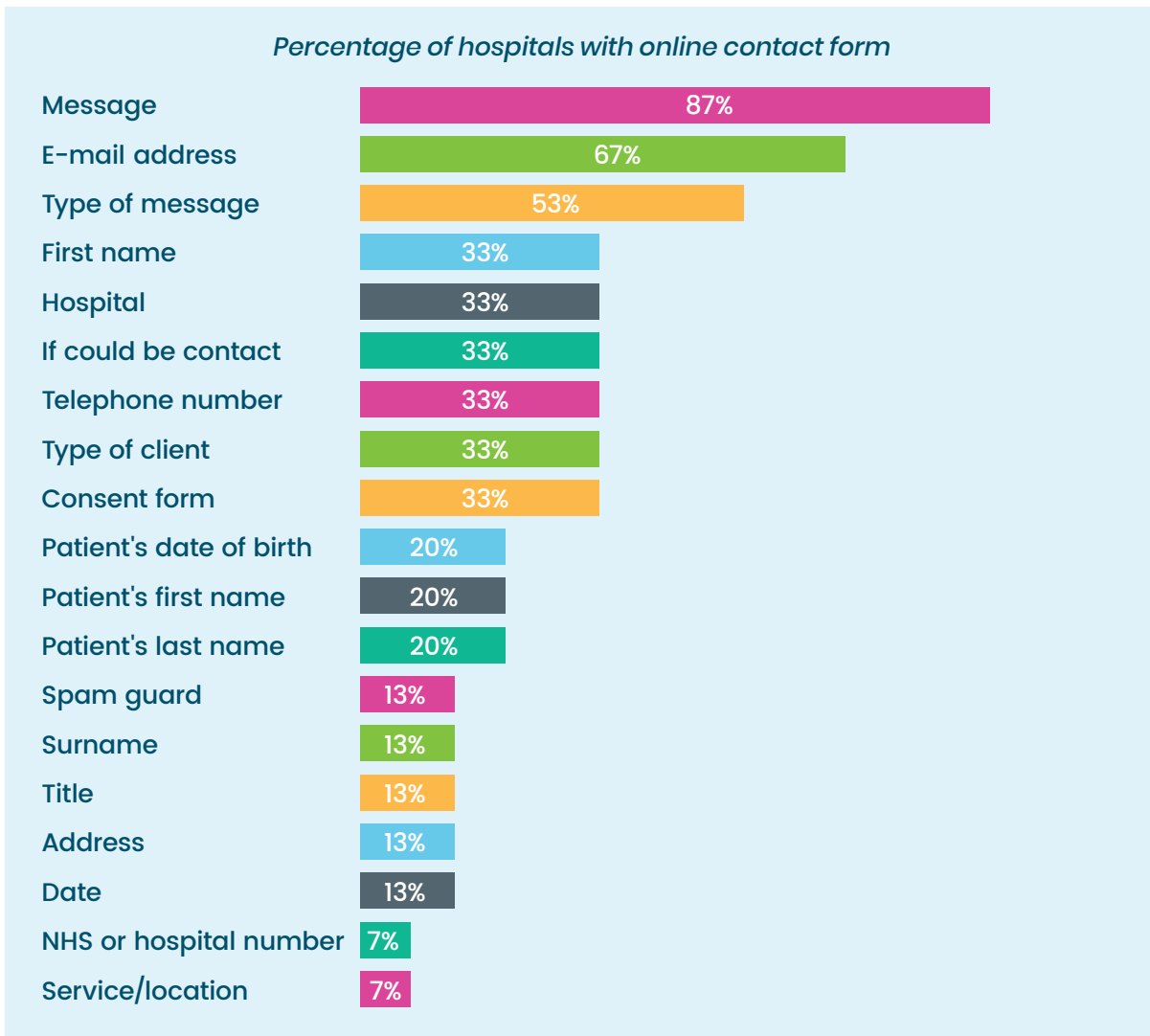


Figure 10. Percentage of hospitals with online contact form and the required fields in it

There is quite a variation to the required data to be given among the forms available. An email address is required by 67%, while 53% ask the type of message and 33% require a first name, the hospital to which the message is addressed, telephone number, type of client, if one could be contacted and if one would agree to the consent form.

By post

Only half of the hospitals had indicated in their PALS websites that they accept messages via post. In practice this could be higher but only twelve explained how to address the post to their respective PALS.

Clinic/ward appointment and video appointment

Clinic/ward and video appointments are the more niche methods to contact PALS. Only Chase Farm and Royal Free Hospitals state on their websites that they offer clinic/ward appointments and only University College London Hospital for video appointments.

Conclusions

- There are various different ways to contact each PALS services such as phone, email and walk in.
- Not all hospitals utilise the contact methods they could, such as video or ward appointments.
- The information required by those who offer online forms varies drastically.

Walk in service summary

Staff and volunteers conducted some in-person observations of PALS services at the following hospitals and below is a summary of the observations made.

St Bartholomew's Hospital

There were no signs for PALS at this hospital and it was unclear how to find PALS from the main entrance. Reception staff were able to advise where to find the PALS office when asked, it's located on the ground floor, next to the imaging reception. The opening times were available on the door, but they were handwritten, small and unclear. There were no PALS leaflets or resources available. When asked, two staff members were unaware of where to find PALS and one wasn't sure if there was a walk-in service available at all.

Mile End Hospital

Walking into reception, there were no signage for PALS. A receptionist asked if we needed help, and despite knowing what PALS was, he was unsure of where it was located – also asking two other receptionists. He directed us to the other side of the hospital, however, there was still no signage available. A staff member asked if we needed help, and he said that there was no PALS on site, but reception have an email which we can use to contact the PALS reception. Upon going back

to reception, there was a small A4 poster on the inside of reception (not accessible for patients to see) which had information of PALS on site at the Royal London Hospital. The receptionists were unsure if the information on the poster was correct.



The Royal London Hospital

There are no signs for PALS in the main entrance to the hospital, or on any hospital maps. We asked at reception where the PALS office was and was directed to the second floor via lift one. On exiting the lift, there again, was no signage for the service. We asked a consultant who was waiting by a lift, who didn't know where it was located but assumed it would be near the 'Bereavement Centre' to which he directed us.

Near the Bereavement Centre we found the PALS office which is called the 'Patient and Family Contact Centre'. On the door there was a sign advertising the drop-in service available between 10am - 4.30pm and an email address. We were unable to access the room as we visited outside of these hours. There were no leaflets available. The only directional sign for the service was on the 'Cashiers and Fares' office window.



Guy's Hospital

No signposts outside the hospital. Reception knew where it was and what it was and directed us to a large hospital plan on the wall, which wasn't helpful, but we caught sight of a small notice sticking out off the wall which is grey and uninformative. PALS is squashed in a corner of a busy area. Signposting on doors is misleading as we thought it was an information place as did many people asking for directions. It was not welcoming as it is small with no room for a confidential discussion, and we had to ask for leaflets as these were behind the door. The door was split in two like a stable door and the member of staff had the bottom half closed. We asked for a leaflet and was asked what we wanted to know, we were handed two leaflets on making a complaint and that was the end of the interaction.

We asked three staff where PALS was, two nurses and a porter, two didn't know what PALS was. The second nurse said there wasn't one on site and we would need to go to St Thomas' Hospital. Limited opening notices are cold and impersonal regarding opening hours.

St Thomas' Hospital

The PALS office was easy to find, located right by the main entrance and reception area, although signs were not available from other entrances. Good opening hours but limited for visitors out of hours but a notice was helpful on how to make contact when closed. Staff were very welcoming and there is room to have a confidential private discussion that also has a good display of excellent leaflets.

Upon arrival three members of staff were asked about PALS, one knew what and where it was, but two others didn't know what it was although one did try and help us find it. There were a variety of leaflets available detailing what PALS is, what they can offer and how to contact them.

Homerton Hospital

The PALS Service at the Homerton Hospital is advertised on the hospital site map. Upon entering the main entrance of the hospital, the PALS office is clearly visible on the left-hand side. When we visited the hospital the PALS office was not open. However, there was a very useful sign displayed which gave both a telephone number and an email address to allow patients to contact them. It also displays their opening hours.



University College London Hospital

There were no signs directing patients to the PALS office and it was unclear how to find this out. Upon talking to reception staff, they were able to provide a leaflet detailing what PALS is, what they can help with and how to contact them. We were advised that there are no PALS staff on site and to contact them via phone/email to gain more information. We have attempted to contact PALS but have not yet received a response.

Turnaround time for PALS inquiry

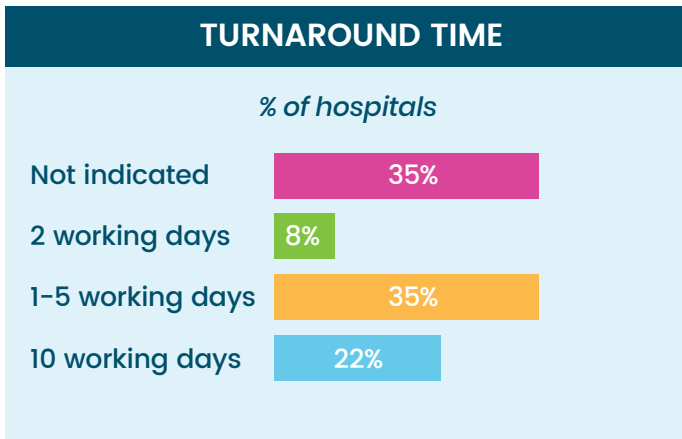


Figure 11. Percentage of hospitals and the turnaround time of their PALS

We examined the turnaround time for PALS to respond to messages, inquiries, or complaints and 35% of hospitals say they will respond within one to five working days, 22% say up to 10 working days and the minority is 8% which say two working days. A large portion at 35% had not indicated in their website what their turnaround time was.

Information about PALS

PALS webpage

The PALS web page provides an overview to those that use the website about the Patient Advice and Liaison Services of the Trust. The content of each web page is different from one Trust to another, but this section will look into the general themes that could be seen on the pages.

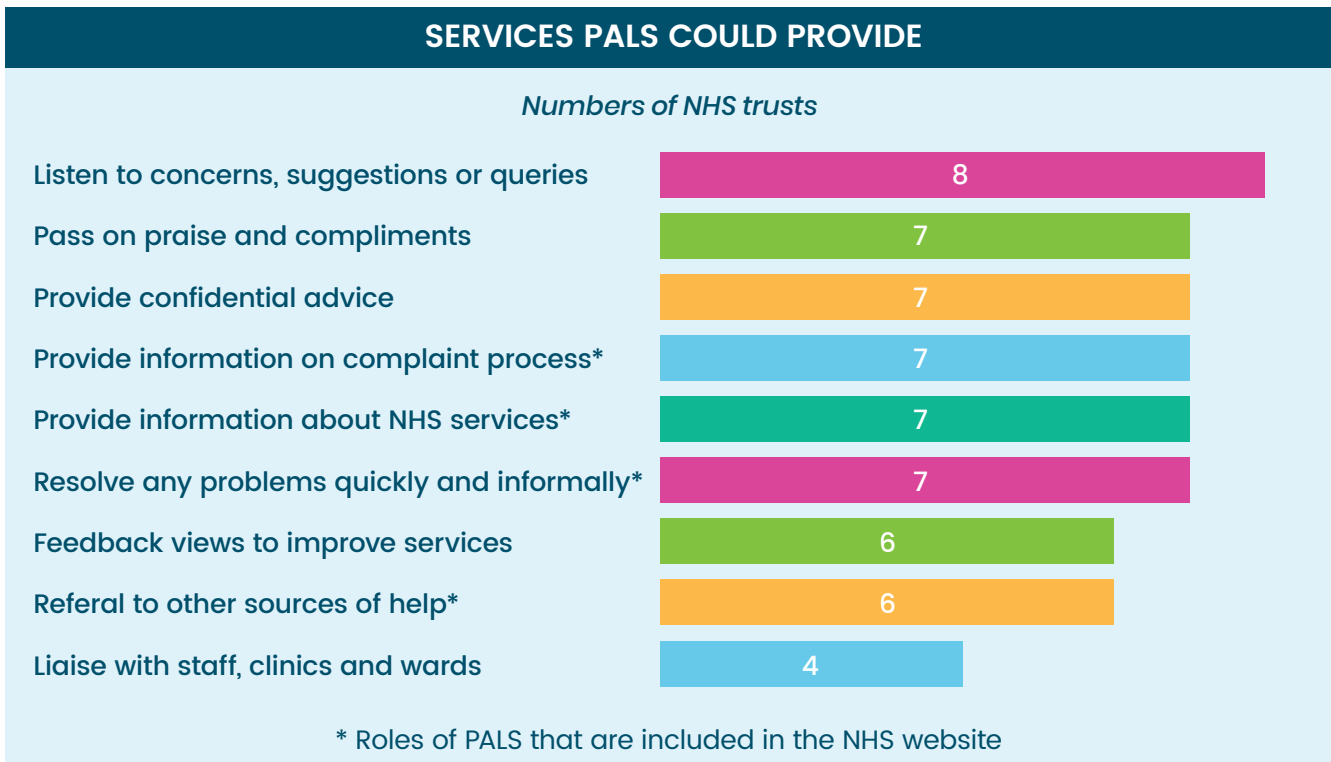


Figure 12. Distribution of services provided by PALS according to the Trust's webpage

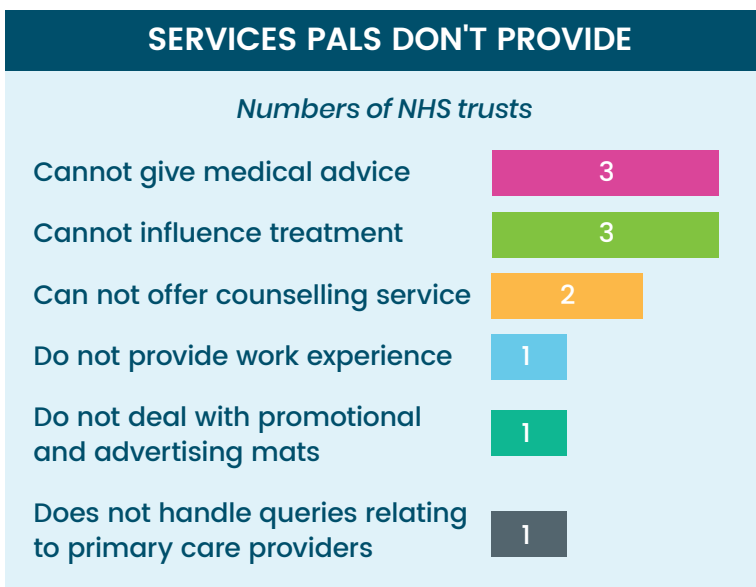


Figure 13. Distribution of services not provided by PALS according to the Trust's webpage

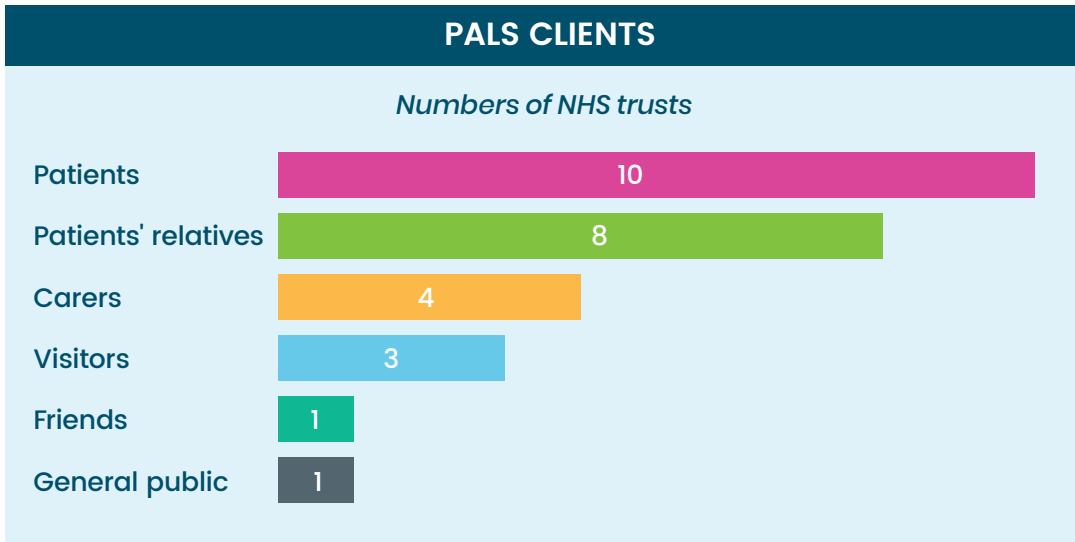


Figure 14. Who PALS class as their clients according to the Trust's webpage

Additional information

Apart from the PALS website, three of the NHS trusts have downloadable leaflets that talk more about PALS. These leaflets detail more about the services that the PALS of the trusts provide. The following trusts have such leaflets:

- East London NHS Foundation Trust
- Homerton University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
 - Apart from English, the leaflet is translated to Vietnamese, Polish, Bengali and Turkish
 - Also has an easy-to-read version
- Whittington Health NHS Trust
 - Has easy-to-read version

Conclusion

This report has provided a comprehensive overview of the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) across ten NHS trusts. The analysis revealed that while PALS offers a valuable resource for patients, there are areas where consistency and accessibility could be improved.

Overall, the most consistently used method to reach PALS was via the search bar on the homepage of each website. This is a well-known and accessible method of being able to find the information needed on the PALS services. However, methods such as through a direct link on the homepage or via a site map, should still be available. People accessing this information may have various levels of both digital and health literacy, so we should be providing as many options as possible to be able to find and access the information that is required.

There is a lack of consistency between hospitals with regard to the language used when talking about PALS, but also in terms of where the information about PALS is located. This could be confusing for some, particularly if they are not familiar with PALS or what technical language means.

There are a number of accessibility tools that services could be utilising - however, most are not. Tools such as screen readers and magnification are used the least, which makes the PALS information on a website inaccessible to a large number of people. This is also the case with translation tools as there is a vast difference in the number of languages offered as well as the functionality.

There are many ways to contact PALS - however this is another area of inconsistency as there are differing options of contact depending on which hospital you are visiting. All hospitals offer phone, email, and walk-in options for contacting their PALS service, but online, postal and other methods aren't always used and vary in availability. Hospitals should be offering a range of diverse ways to contact their PALS and utilise alternative methods in order to be more accessible. There is an opportunity to expand with the ever-growing digital world and make use of video appointments if appropriate for the patient as this could reduce the turnaround time as well.

Of hospitals researched, 35% didn't specify a turnaround time for PALS enquiries. This should be listed on every PALS website to ensure the service is transparent and patients are aware of the time frame they should expect. This would enable patients to be in control of their PALS experience and means they know what to expect from their enquiry.

From our in-person visits, we were able to establish that PALS services within each hospital are not always well signposted and not all staff are aware of the services on offer/how to access them. There was a variety of responses when we asked staff where to find PALS at each hospital, some were able to tell us where it was and were helpful in their directions on how to find the office however some were not aware there was a PALS office on site or didn't know how to find it. We will be addressing these issues with the hospitals in the aim to rectify these issues and ensure PALS is accessible for all.

Recommendations

- Standardising the navigation process to get to the PALS webpage, eg, having all PALS pages in the same place or having a link on the home page.
- All websites should utilise a site map for ease of navigation and accessibility.
- Language should be user-friendly and consistent across the websites to ensure PALS advice is as accessible as possible.
- Implement screen readers and other assistive technologies to accommodate users with accessibility requirements.
- Ensure all methods to reach PALS are up-to-date and on their website.
- Turnaround time should be clearly indicated so that patients and other clients are aware of the time frame and are able to follow up if needed.
- Include a section addressing frequently asked questions or misunderstanding about PALS as many patients and staff aren't aware of the services provided.
- Developing downloadable leaflets that provide detailed information about PALS services, including translations and easy-to-read versions.
- Staff to be refreshed regarding the PALS services their hospital offers so they are able to advise patients correctly.
- Signposting within hospitals should be assessed to ensure that patients are able to access PALS services easily.
- Leaflets about PALS should be accessible near the PALS office at each hospital so that patients can still find information even when they are not open.

APPENDIX:

PALS of different hospitals

Barking, Havering and Redbridge University Hospitals NHS Trust	
Homepage	https://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section ▪ Through the Site map
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change contrast ▪ Site map ▪ Language translation (104 languages supported)
PALS web page link	https://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/patient-advice-and-liaison-services
PALS location	King George Hospital: Barley Lane, Goodmayes, Greater London IG3 8YB Queen's Hospital: Rom Valley Way, Romford, Greater London RM7 0AG
E-mail	bhrut.pals@nhs.net
Telephone	01708 435 454 Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm
Online form	https://www.bhrhospitals.nhs.uk/askpals
Turnaround time for PALS enquiry	10 days

Barts Health NHS Trust		
Homepage	https://www.bartshealth.nhs.uk	
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section ▪ Through the Contact us section ▪ Through the Site map ▪ Through the link on the front page 	
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change contrast ▪ Site map ▪ Language translation (243 languages supported) 	
PALS web page link	https://www.bartshealth.nhs.uk/pals	
	Newham Hospital	St Bartholomew's Hospital
PALS location and walk-in schedule	Zone 1, St Andrews Wing, Newham Hospital, Glen Road Plaistow, London E13 8SL Monday–Friday 9:30am–4:30pm	Next to Imaging Reception, KGV Building, Ground Floor, St Bartholomew's Hospital, West Smithfield, City of London, EC1A 7BE Monday–Friday 9:30am–4:30pm
Telephone	0207 363 9292 Monday–Friday 9:30am–4:30pm	0203 465 5919 Monday–Friday 9:30am–4:30pm
E-mail	nuhpals.bartshealth@nhs.net	SBHpals@bartshealth.nhs.uk
Turnaround time for PALS enquiry		1–5 working days
	The Royal London and Mile End Hospital	Whipps Cross Hospital
PALS location and walk-in schedule	Patient and Family Contact Centre, 2nd Floor, Central Tower, Royal London Hospital, Whitechapel Road, Whitechapel, London E1 1FR Monday–Friday 10am–4:30pm	Junction 4, Main Building, Whipps Cross Hospital, Whipps Cross Road, London E11 1NR Monday–Friday 9:30am–4:30pm
Telephone	0203 594 2040 Monday–Friday 10am–4:30pm	0208 535 6438 Monday–Friday 9:30am–4:30pm
E-mail	RLHpals@bartshealth.nhs.uk	WXpals@bartshealth.nhs.uk

East London NHS Foundation Trust

Homepage	https://www.elft.nhs.uk
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Through the search bar▪ Through the Contact us section▪ Through the link on the front page
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Language translation (82 languages supported)
PALS web page link	https://www.elft.nhs.uk/contact-us/pals-here-help
PALS leaflet download link	https://www.elft.nhs.uk/sites/default/files/2023-03/PALS-Leaflet-A5-ELFT%20updated.pdf
PALS location and walk-in schedule	East London NHS Foundation Trust, 1st Floor, Health E19 - 11 Brick Lane, London E1 6PU Monday-Friday 9am-5pm
Postal address	FREEPOST RTXT-HJLG-XEBE, The Complaints Manager, Complaints Department, Governance and Risk Management, East London NHS Foundation Trust, 1st Floor, Health E19-11 Brick Lane, London, E1 6PU
E-mail	elft.pals@nhs.net
Telephone	0800 783 4839 Monday-Friday 9pm-5pm

Guy's and St Thomas' NHS Foundation Trust		
Homepage	https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk	
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section ▪ Through the Site map 	
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Site map 	
PALS web page link	https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/contact-us/your-feedback/contact-pals	
	Guy's and St Thomas Hospitals	Harefield and Royal Brompton Hospitals
PALS location and walk-in schedule	<p><i>Guy's Hospital:</i> Ground floor, Guy's Hospital, Great Maze Pond, London SE1 9RT</p> <p><i>St Thomas' Hospital:</i> Main entrance, St Thomas' Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road, London SE1 7EH. Monday–Tuesday, Thursday–Friday 9am–5pm, Wednesday 10am–5pm Closed 1–1.30pm</p>	<p><i>Harefield Hospital:</i> Main reception, Hill End Road, Harefield, Middlesex UB9 6JH</p> <p><i>Royal Brompton Hospital:</i> Near reception, Royal Brompton Hospital, Sydney Street, London SW3 6NP. Monday–Friday 9am–4pm</p>
Postal address	PALS, St Thomas' Hospital, Westminster Bridge Road London SE1 7EH	
Telephone	020 7188 8801 Monday–Friday 9am–5pm	<p><i>Harefield Hospital:</i> 01895 826 572 Monday–Friday 9am–4pm (have answering machine)</p> <p><i>Royal Brompton Hospital:</i> 020 7349 7715 Monday–Friday 9am–4pm (have answering machine)</p>
E-mail	pals@gstt.nhs.uk	pals@rbht.nhs.uk
Online form	https://www.guysandstthomas.nhs.uk/pals-feedback	https://www.rbht.nhs.uk/patients-visitors/for-patients/patient-support-services/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals/contact-pals
Turnaround time for PALS enquiry	Urgent: 1–2 working days Non-urgent: 4–5 working days	

Homerton Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

Homepage	https://www.homerton.nhs.uk
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section ▪ Through the Site map
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change contrast ▪ Site map ▪ Change font size
PALS web page link	https://www.homerton.nhs.uk/patient-advice-liaison-service-pals
PALS leaflet download link	<p>https://www.homerton.nhs.uk/download/doc/docm93jjjm4n12894.pdf?amp;ver=29206 (Bengali, Polish, Turkish and Vietnamese translation)</p> <p>https://www.homerton.nhs.uk/download/doc/docm93jjjm4n1161.pdf?amp;ver=1748 (easy read version)</p>
PALS location and walk-in schedule	Main entrance, Homerton University Hospital, Homerton Row, London, Greater London, E9 6SR. Monday–Friday 9:30am–4pm
E-mail	huh-tr.pals.service@nhs.net
Telephone	020 8510 7315 Monday–Friday 9:30am–4pm (have answering machine)
Online form	https://www.homerton.nhs.uk/patient-advice-liaison-service-pals
Turnaround time for PALS enquiry	2 working days

Imperial College Healthcare NHS Trust	
Homepage	https://www.imperial.nhs.uk
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change contrast ▪ Change font size ▪ Language translation (242 languages supported)
PALS web page link	https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/help-support-and-feedback/feedback/pals
Online form	https://www.imperial.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/help-support-and-feedback/feedback/pals/pals-form
PALS location and walk-in schedule	<p>Charing Cross Hospital, Fulham Palace Road, London W6 8RF</p> <p>Hammersmith Hospital, Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS</p> <p>Queen Charlotte's & Chelsea Hospital, Du Cane Road, London W12 0HS</p> <p>St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY</p> <p>Western Eye Hospital, Marylebone Road, London NW1 5QH</p> <p>Monday–Friday 10am–4pm</p>
E-mail	imperial.PALS@nhs.net
Telephone	020 3312 7777 Monday–Friday, 10am–4pm (Must call within these hours)
Postal address	PALS Manager, Ground floor, Clarence building, St Mary's Hospital, Praed Street, London W2 1NY
Turnaround time for PALS enquiry	E-mail, online contact form: 2–5 working days; Telephone, walk-in: 1 working day

Moorfields Eye Hospital NHS Foundation Trust	
Homepage	https://www.moorfields.nhs.uk
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section ▪ Through the link on the front page
PALS web page link	https://www.moorfields.nhs.uk/about-us/our-support-network/pals
PALS location and walk-in schedule	<p>Ground floor, Moorfields Eye Hospital, 162 City Road, London EC1V 2PD</p> <p>Monday–Friday 9am–5pm. Clinic/Ward appointments can be arranged</p>
E-mail	moorfields.pals@nhs.net
Telephone	020 7566 2324 Monday–Friday 9am–5pm

Royal Free London NHS Foundation Trust

Homepage	https://www.royalfree.nhs.uk		
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Contact us section 		
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change contrast ▪ Change font size ▪ Language translation (281 languages supported) 		
PALS web page link	https://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals		
Online form	https://www.royalfree.nhs.uk/contact-us/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals/compliments-suggestions-and-complaints/make-suggestion-or-raise-concern		
Turnaround time for PALS enquiry	10 working days		
	Barnet Hospital	Chase Farm Hospital	Royal Free Hospital
PALS location and walk-in schedule	Ground floor near the main entrance, Barnet Hospital, Wellhouse Lane, Barnet EN5 3DJ Monday–Friday 10am–4pm (closed 1–2pm)	Chase Farm Hospital, The Ridgeway, Enfield, Middlesex EN2 8JL Monday–Friday 10am–4pm Clinic/Ward appointments can be arranged	Ground floor, opposite the main reception, Royal Free Hospital, Pond Street, London NW3 2QG Monday–Friday 9am–5pm
Postal address	Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), Barnet Hospital, Wellhouse Lane, Barnet EN5 3DJ	No postal address	Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), Royal Free Hospital, Pond Street, London NW3 2QG
Telephone	020 8216 4924 Monday–Friday 9am–5pm	020 8375 1328 Monday–Friday 10am–4pm	020 7472 6446 Monday–Friday 9am–5pm
E-mail	bcfpals@nhs.net	rf.cfhpeg@nhs.net	rf.pals@nhs.net

University College London Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust

Homepage	https://www.uclh.nhs.uk
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Change contrast ▪ Change font size ▪ Language translation (243 languages supported)
PALS web page link	https://www.uclh.nhs.uk/patients-and-visitors/help-and-support/patient-advice-and-liaison-service-pals
PALS location and walk-in schedule	<p>University College Hospital, 235 Euston Road, London NW1 2BU</p> <p>Monday–Friday, 9am–4pm</p> <p>Video appointment can be arranged.</p>
E-mail	uclh.pals@nhs.net
Telephone	0203 447 3042 Monday–Friday, 9am–4pm

Whittington Health NHS Trust

Homepage	https://www.whittington.nhs.uk
Direction to web page from homepage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Through the search bar ▪ Through the Patients and Visitors Section ▪ Through the Site map
Accessibility tools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Site map ▪ Read aloud ▪ Language translation (242 languages supported)
PALS web page link	https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/default.asp?c=1341
PALS leaflet download link	<p>https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/document.ashx?id=6222</p> <p>PALS easy read leaflet download link:</p> <p>https://www.whittington.nhs.uk/document.ashx?id=15428</p>
PALS location and walk-in schedule	<p>On the left in the main entrance, Whittington Hospital, Magdala Avenue, London N19 5NF</p> <p>Monday–Friday, 9.30am–4.30pm (closed 1–2pm)</p>
E-mail	whh-tr.pals@nhs.net
Telephone	020 7288 5551 Monday–Friday, 9.30am–4.30pm (closed 1–2pm) (have answering machine)
Postal address	PALS & Complaints, Whittington Health NHS Trust, Magdala Avenue, London N19 5NF
Turnaround time for PALS enquiry	2 working days



healthwatch

City of London

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