

Analysis of 724 approaches to a national charity for help with burns and scars – are there implications for the charity and burn services?

Rospigliosi, E., Fanstone, R., Hughes, B.

Our vision is a world where scars do not limit a person's function, social inclusion or sense of well-being

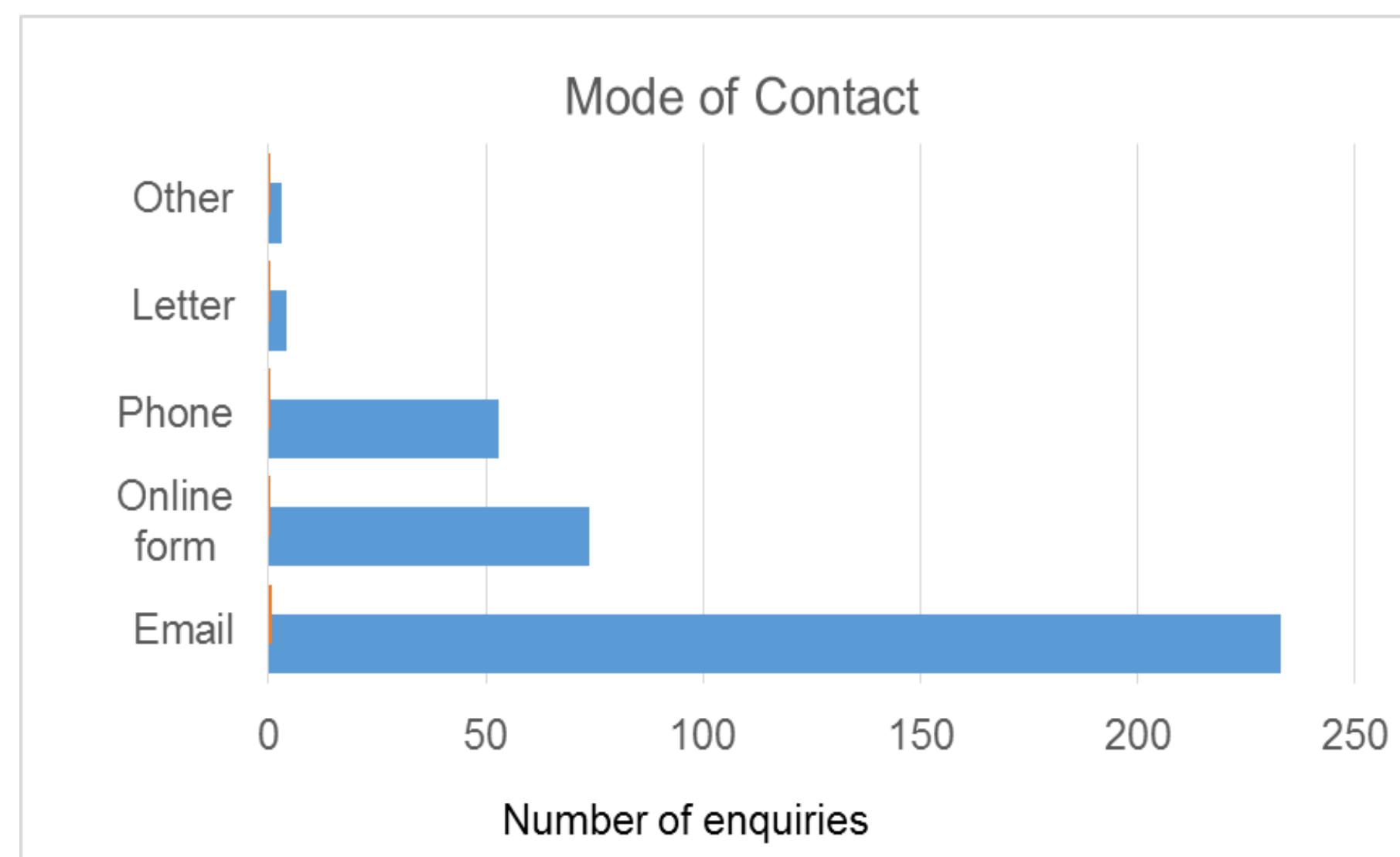
INTRODUCTION

The Katie Piper Foundation (KPF) works with people with burns & scars. A previous paper presented 357 initial email scar enquiries over 18 months in 2012/2013.

This study covers the subsequent two years, asking what has changed & whether there are implications for burns services & for the charity.

METHODS

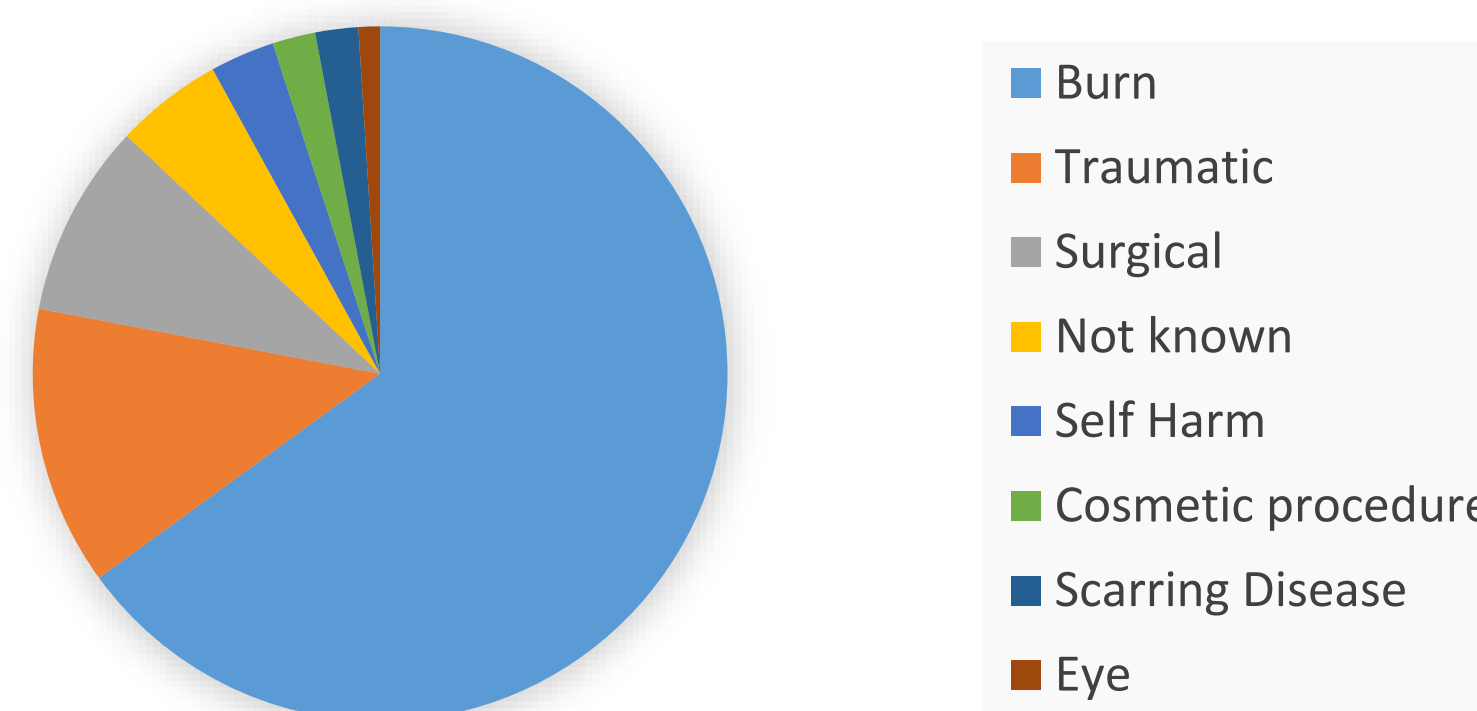
An audit was conducted of approaches from individuals with burns & scars in 2014/2015. Approaches were made via a secure unstructured online form on the charity's website, email, phone or letter. Enquiries from outside the UK & relating to eczema, acne, & birthmarks were excluded.



RESULTS

A total of 367 eligible approaches were received. 84% of contacts were made online. 14% were made by phone; of these 40% were self-referrals.

The chart below shows approaches divided by type of scarring:

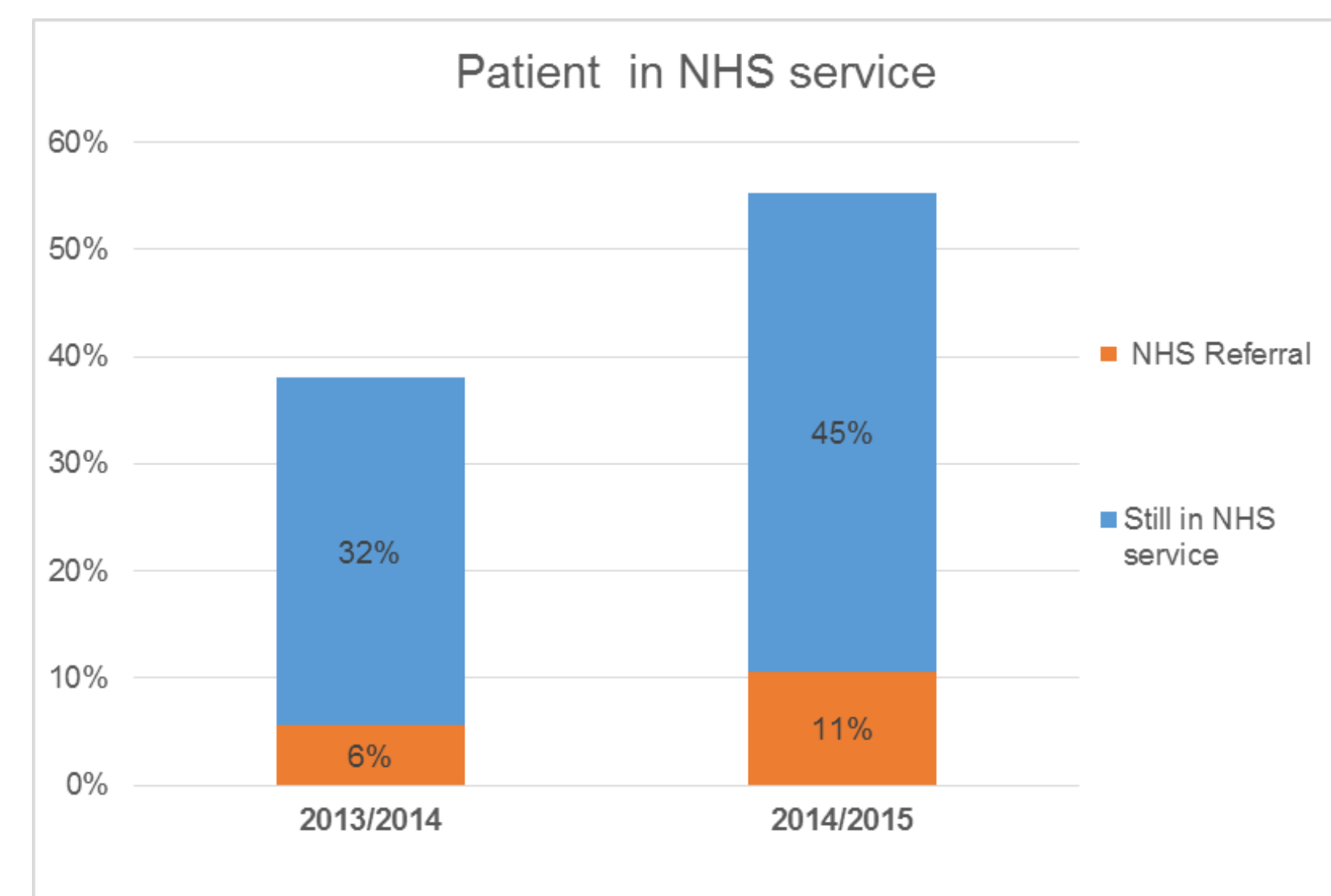


81% of enquirers were female. 89% enquiries related to an adult & 11% to a child. 49% of injuries occurred more than 2 years ago, 35% within the last 2 years. **All these percentages are similar to the previous audit.**

31% showed interest in scar advice, 22% in peer support, 13% in camouflage/make-up, 7% in hair restoration & 4% in brow restoration.

As well as general scar advice & signposting, the charity offered: peer support (25%), camouflage/make-up (11%), hair restoration (8%), medical tattooing (6%) as well as facilitating three individuals to attend residential rehabilitation in France.

33% of those who were offered hair restoration & 43% of those who were offered medical tattooing were referred/signposted by a burn service. The table below shows the increase in NHS referrals & in approaches from people who were still in an NHS burns & plastics service.



DISCUSSION

KPF continues to receive regular requests for scar advice; this could indicate unmet need or difficulty with accessing services, which may be of interest to NHS burns services. These approaches highlight challenges such as: GP referrals, patient expectations, vulnerability of patients with scars & access to newer modalities of treatment such as laser.

In terms of KPF, it is necessary to review how these approaches are dealt with & consider the most effective options for providing access to patient information.

Peer support remains a priority for those approaching the charity. Only 6% of approaches were self-referrals by telephone, despite the inclusion of landline & mobile numbers on KPF's website, suggesting that individuals are more likely to make contact online. These findings support plans for an online peer support forum which could also provide access to professional general scar advice in the future.

Referrals by burn services for medical tattooing & hair restoration raise questions around establishing referral pathways & whether partnership working to provide these treatments within burns services, with NHS funding, could be explored.

CONCLUSION

The frequency of approaches may interest burn services.

The consistency of approaches, & methods of contact, support the charity's plans to develop online access to both peer support & general scar advice & information.

NHS referrals to the charity for medical tattooing & hair restoration have implications for how these treatments could be provided & funded in the future.

Making it easier to live with
burns & scars

"I just wanted to say thank you so much for all of your help. It's been great to finally get some support and information with regards to my scars. Thank you very much, you are making a really big difference to people's lives."