

The Sarcoma UK support line team work in new ways to support patients during the referral process

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Introduction

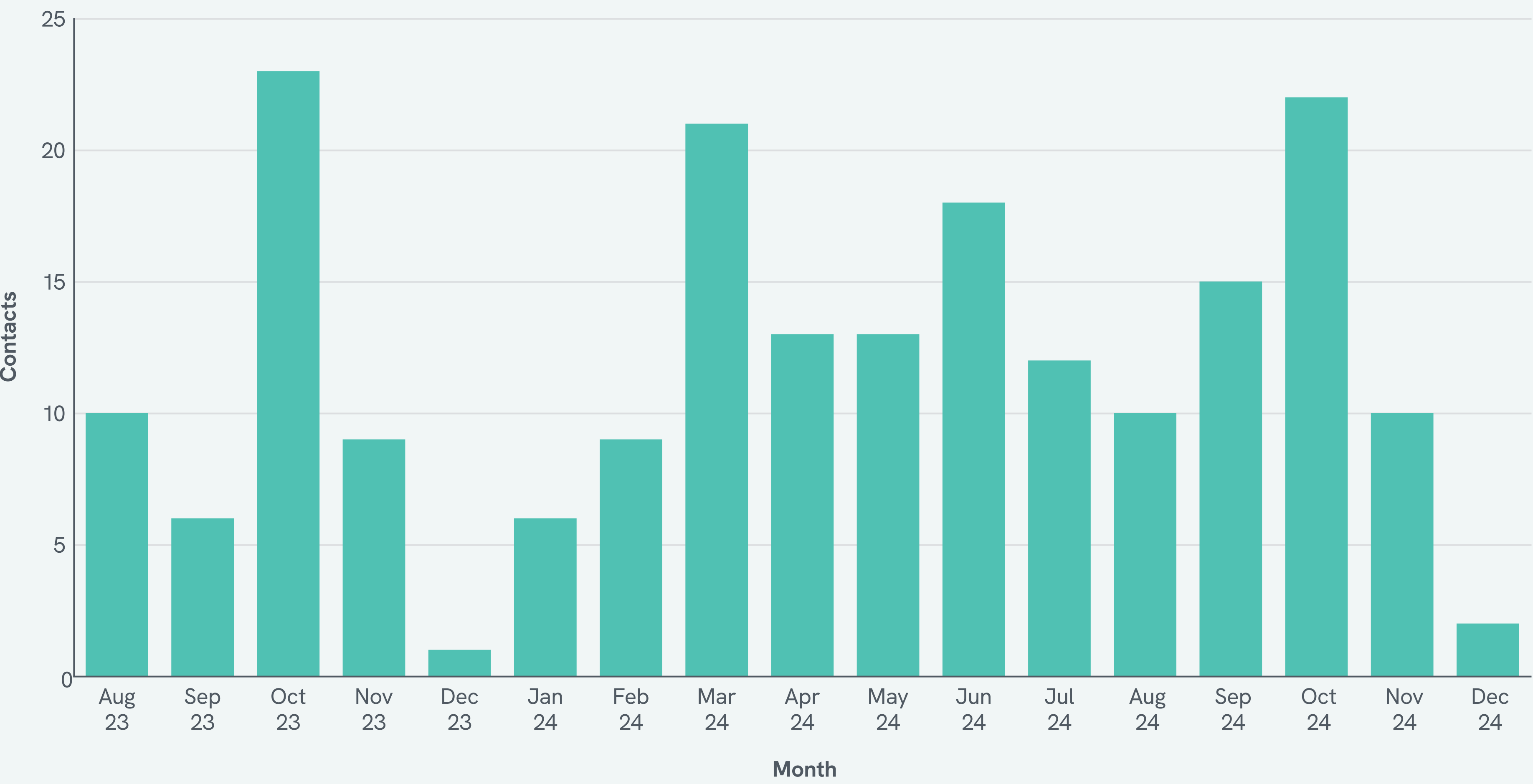
Since February 2016, the Sarcoma UK support line team have been supporting people affected by sarcoma. Over the last 18 months, the team have changed the way they work when supporting people who make contact pre-diagnosis. Previously, the team encouraged individuals to contact their clinical teams to ascertain the progress of their referral. However, the SL team now contact specialist teams directly to ensure referrals are following the correct path and have been received.

Method

When providing individuals with the tools to advocate for themselves, the SL team found that people were being directed to different departments and unable to obtain any answers, causing heightened anxiety. With the support line team contacting specialist teams directly, it not only helps the person with a suspected sarcoma to know that their referral is being processed appropriately, but it also reduces the number of telephone calls to the clinical teams from worried individuals waiting for information.



Number of clinical team contacts



Results

Between August 2023 – November 2024, the support line team had 196 direct contacts with clinical teams regarding referrals. One team member made 9 telephone calls on behalf of one person to obtain the information required. This change in process has saved time and reduced anxiety levels for those people potentially affected by sarcoma.



9 contacts made to clinical teams to gain the information needed for just one person.

Reduction in pre-diagnosis anxiety.

Encouraging people affected by sarcoma to advocate for themselves, is no longer enough.

Conclusion

As NHS staffing and services are increasingly stretched, it is becoming more important for the charity sector to provide support. The change made by the support line team has had a positive impact on those individuals with suspected sarcoma. Encouraging people affected by sarcoma to advocate for themselves, is no longer enough.