

# Experiences of People Seen in an Acute Hospital Setting by a Liaison Mental Health Service: Responses from an Online Survey

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## Background

- The UK has recently expanded the provision of liaison mental health services in the NHS
- **Little work has been undertaken to explore first-hand experiences** of these services in the UK, particularly since this recent expansion
- The existing literature shows mixed results and poor response rates and is limited to single sites

## Aim

- The aim of this study was to **gain insights into UK service users' experiences of LMHS** in both emergency departments and acute inpatient wards

## Methods

- **Cross-sectional internet survey** via the social media platform Facebook
- The survey was initially advertised from May-July 2017 and re-run from November 2017-February 2018 specifically focussing on male respondents due to a poor response rate
- The survey featured a structured questionnaire divided into three categories: the profile of the respondent, perceived professionalism of LMHS and overall opinion of the service
- Structured responses were analysed using descriptive statistics and latent class analysis
- Free-text responses were transcribed verbatim and interpreted using framework analysis
- This work formed part of the first phase of LP-MAESTRO, a programme aiming to evaluate the cost-effectiveness and efficiency of different configurations of liaison psychiatry services in England (National Institute for Health Research HS&DR programme 13/58/08)

## Discussion

- Our findings are **generally more negative than those of previous studies** [1,2] and feedback from the Royal College of Psychiatrists' Psychiatric Liaison Accreditation Network [3]
- It is possible that the **governmental drive** to assess, treat and discharge 95% of patients seen in emergency departments within four hours of attendance has had a detrimental effect on the quality of care received
- Our findings are in keeping with wider issues surrounding healthcare delivery in acute settings
- **Negative attitudes** towards those who self-harm sadly still exist, possibly accounting for some experiences captured here
- It is possible that those who were dissatisfied with liaison services were more likely to complete the survey
- The use of recruitment via the Internet precludes commentary on the representativeness of the study population
- Our results should be regarded as **signals rather than definitive findings**

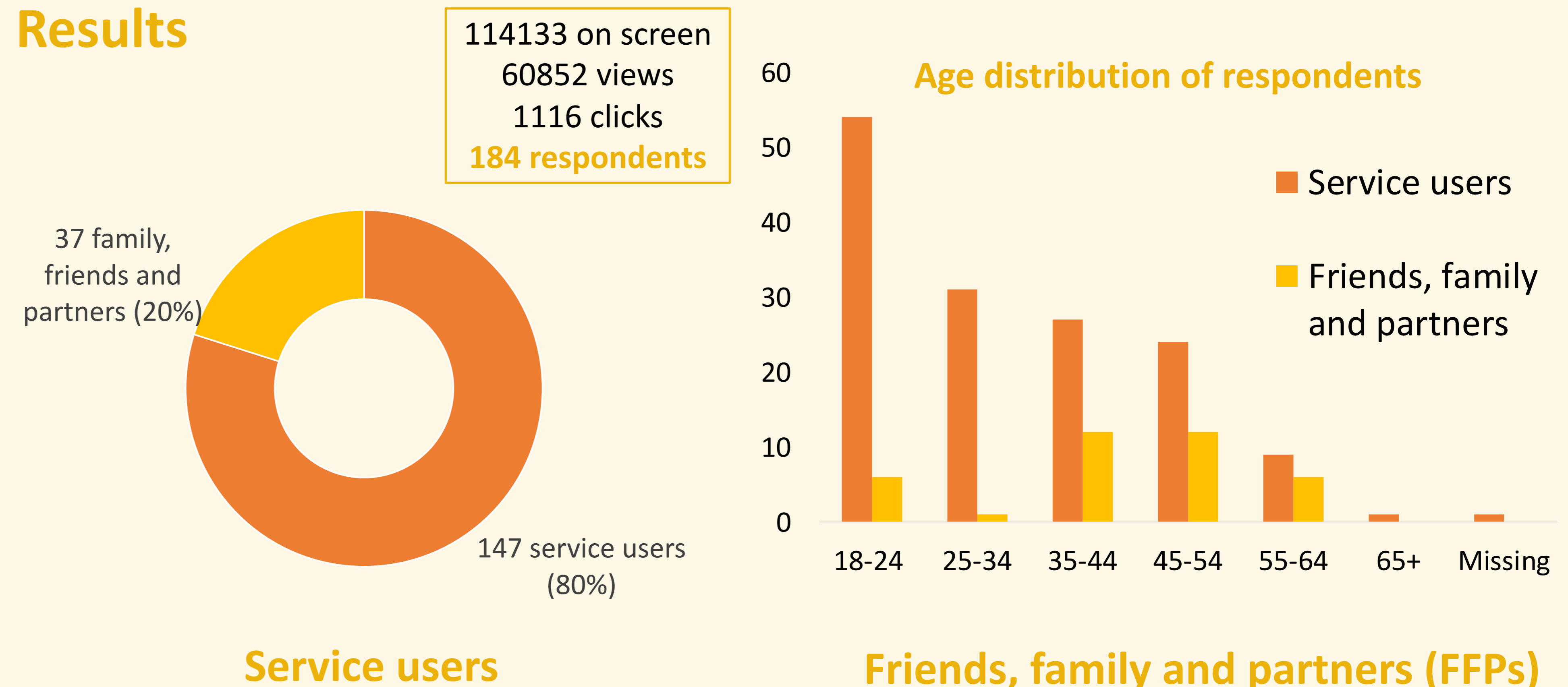
## Conclusions

- Respondents perceived liaison services more frequently as negative than positive, representing a **cause for concern**
- Experiences with liaison services can be **inherently therapeutic and influence engagement** with treatment and future psychiatric care
- Close attention must be given to evaluating and improving liaison mental health services from both organisation and interpersonal perspectives

## References

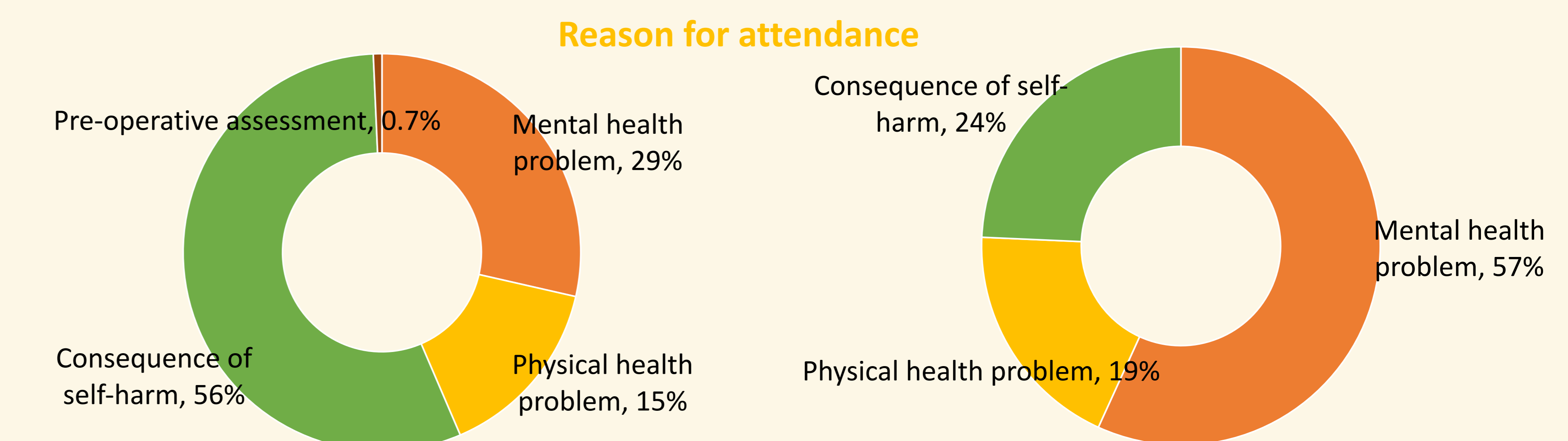
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## Results



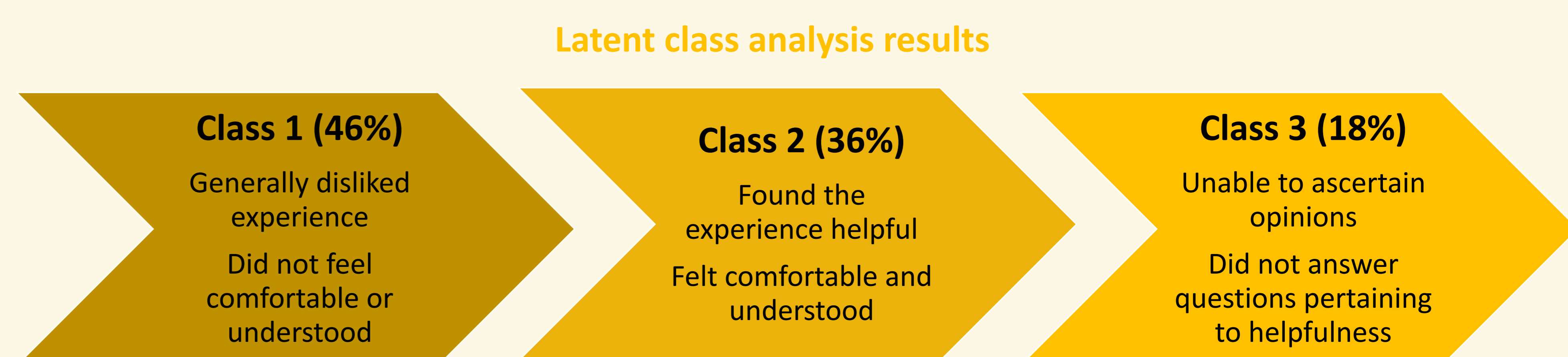
**86% female**  
40% had contact with LMHS in previous 6 months  
54% were worried about their mental health

**78% female**  
43% had contact in previous 6 months  
57% worried about their loved one's mental health

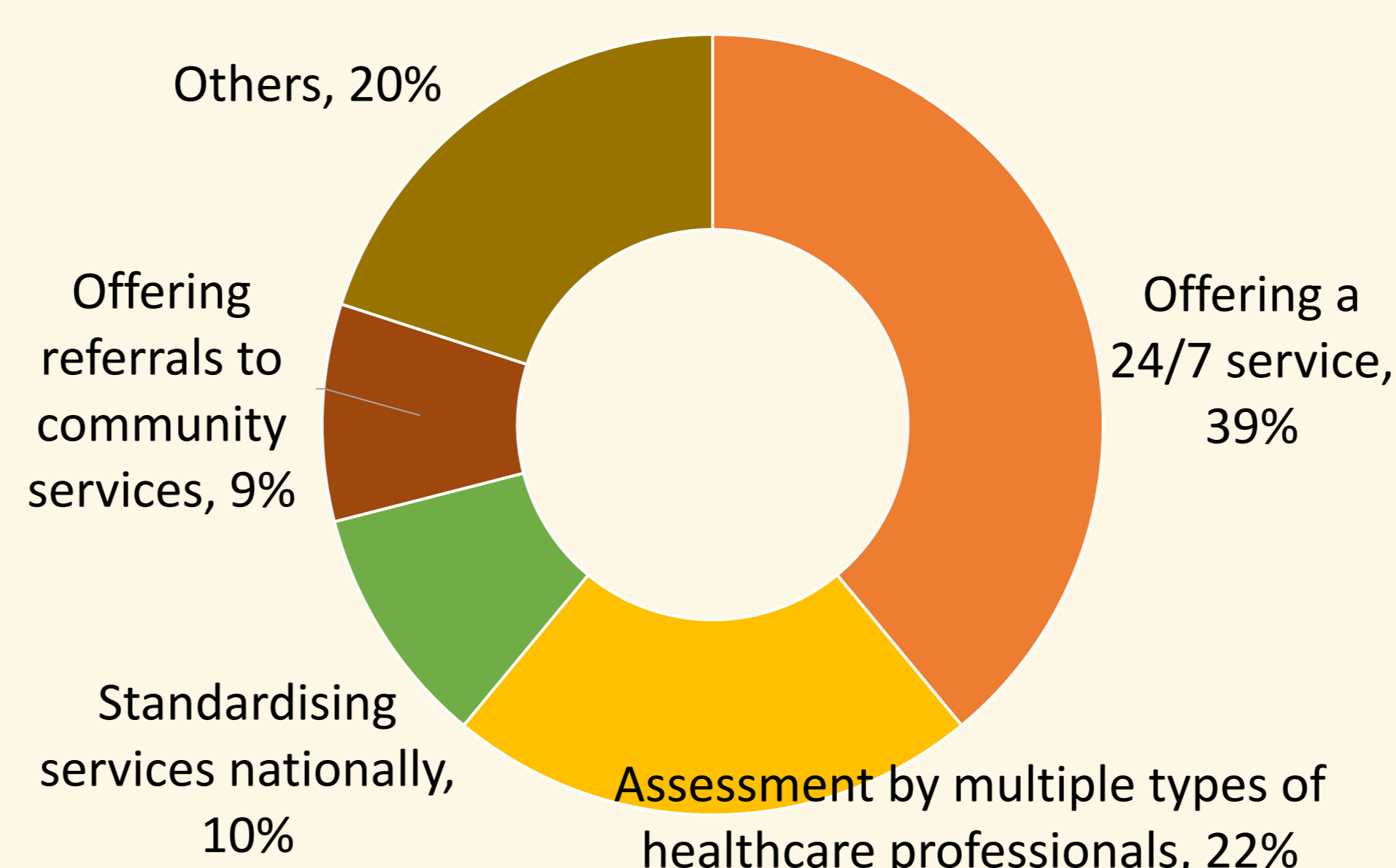


Assessment came at a **good time** for **57% service users** and **22% FFPs**  
Assessment was done in a **private place** for **66% service users** and **19% FFPs**  
**16% service users** and **35% FFPs** were offered **advocacy** during contact  
**27% service users** and **32% FFPs** were **signposted** to other services

**24% service users** and **24% FFPs** felt **understood** by LMHS  
**29% service users** and **38% FFPs** felt **comfortable** during contact with LMHS  
**21% service users** and **22% FFPs** found **initial** contact with LMHS **helpful**  
**31% service users** and **27% FFPs** found **overall** contact with LMHS **helpful**



## Most important features of liaison psychiatry services according to all respondents



- See patients more quickly following referral
- Assessment by a psychiatrist and mental health nurse
- Treatment with respect and compassion
- Listen to the friends, family and partners who accompany the service user
- Improved knowledge of local services and third sector organisations
- Clearer communication about next steps
- 24/7 emergency mental health service for vulnerable people