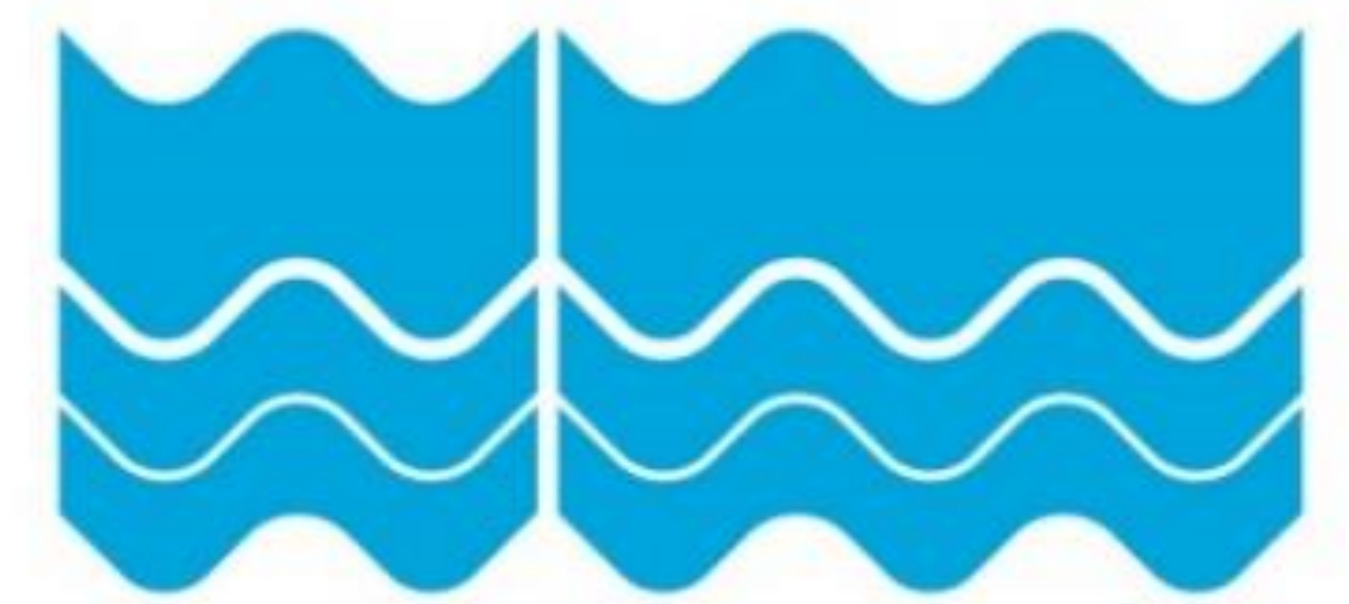


# THE PERSONAL ASSISTANT INFECTION CONTROL ADVISORY PROJECT: Improving infection control knowledge and practice, boosting resilience amongst the unregulated social care workforce during the COVID-19 pandemic



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## 1. Introduction

The COVID-19 pandemic highlighted how the unregulated social care sector working alone in the community, including the Personal Assistant (PA) workforce, experienced difficulties accessing practical and financial support. This poses challenges for PAs to adhere to the Health and Social Care Act (2008)<sup>1</sup>. To address this locally, the PA Infection Control Advisory Project (PA IPC Project) was established in January 2021 as a joint initiative between East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Adult Social Care (ASC) and Public Health (PH). The project's primary aim is to upskill PA infection prevention and control (IPC) knowledge to ensure best practice within the PA workforce throughout the pandemic.

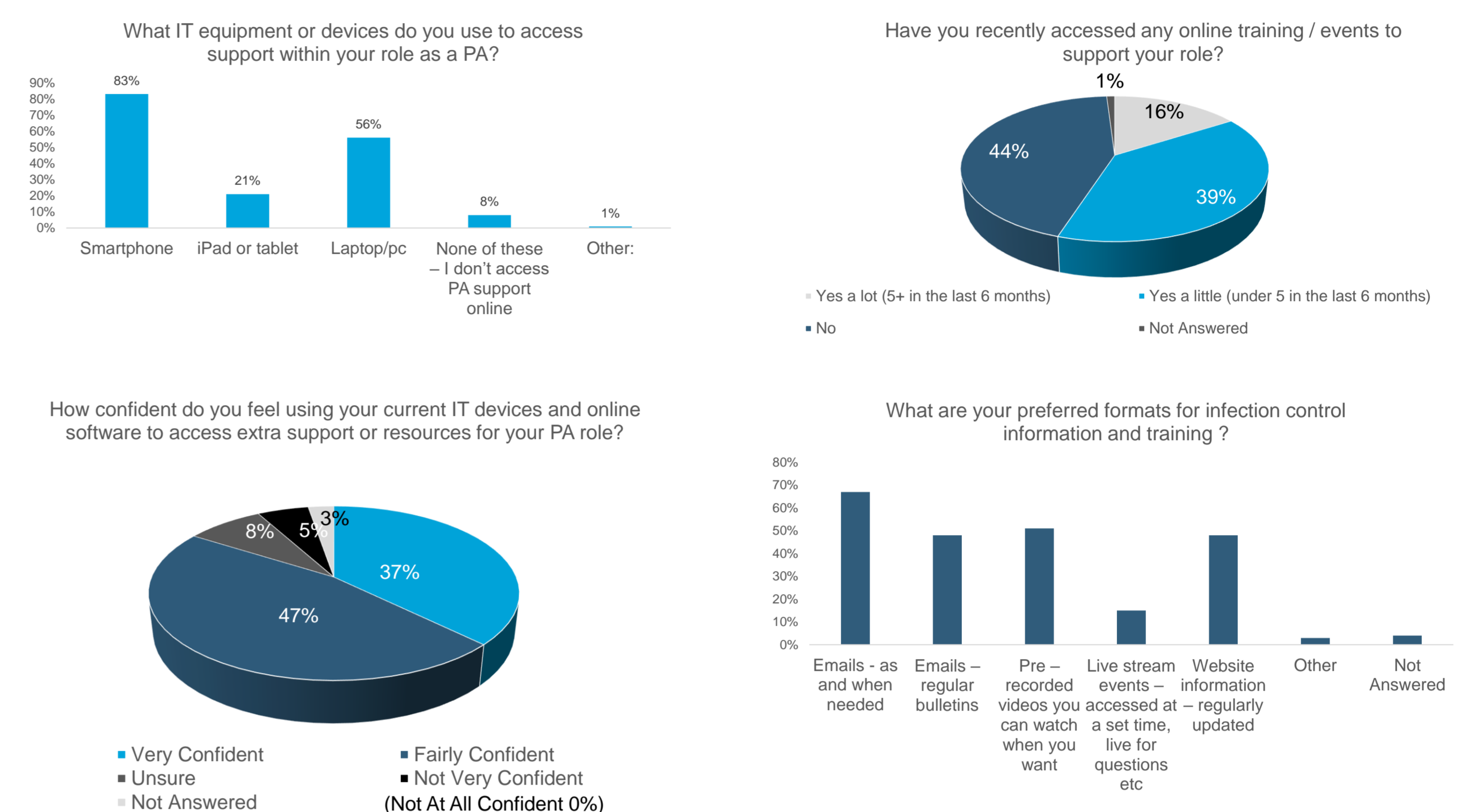
## 2. Methods

The project appointed two 12-month fixed term posts; an Infection Control Advisor and Project Support Officer. The project started in January 2021 and key responsibilities have included:

- Collaborating with colleagues in ASC and health and care organisations
- Signposting PAs to national and international guidance
- Engaging with PAs via a survey to establish information technology (IT) usage and accessibility issues
- Hosting webinars and online events to clarify changes to guidance
- Providing access to bespoke advice from the Infection Control Advisor
- Developing an accessible IPC training programme
- Advocating for PAs to have priority status for vaccination and supporting the verification of PAs to enable access to vaccination appointments
- Holding regular Q&A sessions to reduce vaccine hesitancy and helping resolve any access issues

## 3. Results

### Key Results from IT Survey



### Overall Project Outcomes

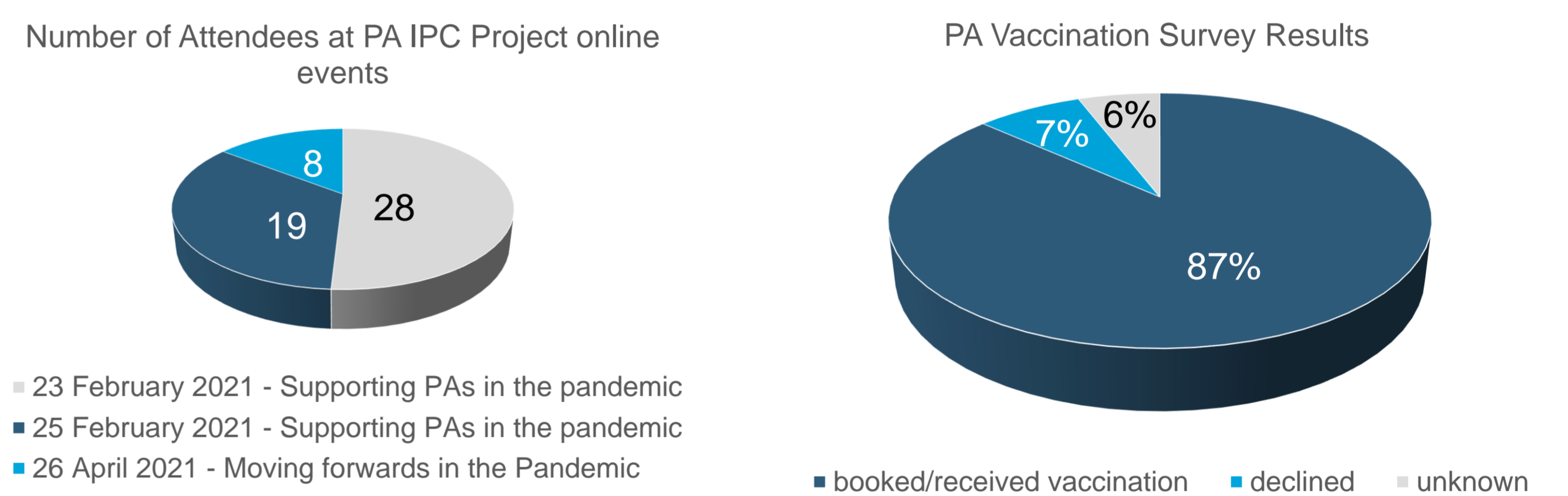
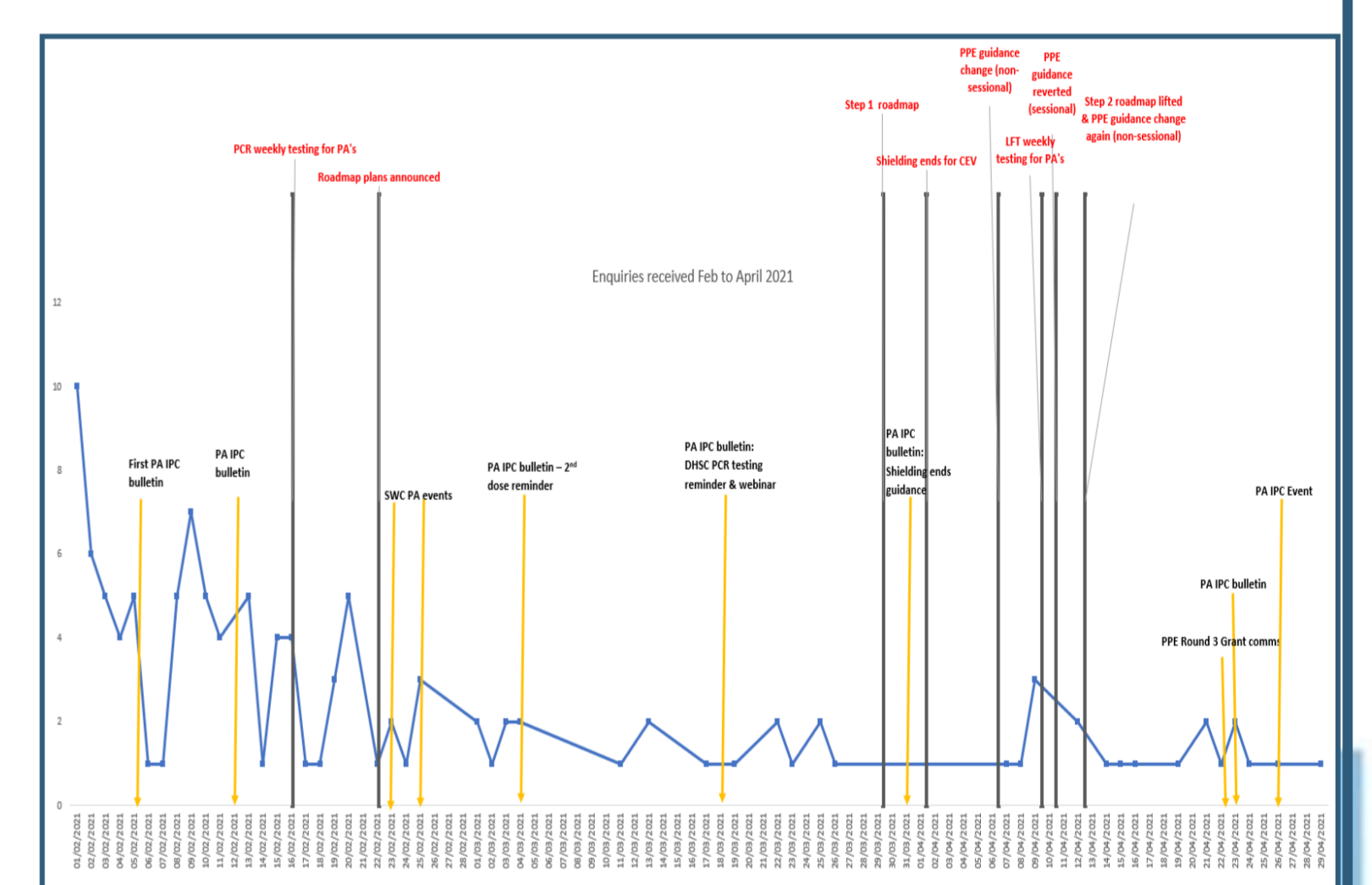


Table showing number and type of enquiry received

Query type/subject	Dec-20	Jan-21	Feb-21	Mar-21	Apr-21	May-21	Total
Covid Parking Permit	0	0	0	0	1	1	2
Covid Positive Test result	2	0	0	1	0	0	3
Covid Testing & Vaccine eligibility	3	3	0	0	0	0	6
Covid Testing (after covid vaccination)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Covid Testing (antibodies)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Covid Testing (asymptomatic weekly)	3	14	3	6	1	1	28
Covid Testing (PCR interim method)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Covid Testing (requested by client)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Covid Testing (symptomatic)	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Covid Testing (day centre)	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Covid Vaccine (info)	3	73	11	2	2	0	91
Covid Vaccine Letter	0	229	44	5	2	1	281
Covid Vaccine Letter & PA Database	0	56	8	0	0	0	64
ESPA	0	1	0	0	0	0	1
Financial Support (not PPE Grant)	0	0	0	3	0	0	3
National Lockdown Guidance	0	1	0	0	2	0	3
PA Database	0	57	11	0	4	0	72
PA IPC Event	0	0	0	0	2	0	2
PPE	0	1	2	0	3	0	6
PPE Grant	0	2	0	0	2	1	5
PPE & Covid Vaccine Letter	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
Self-isolation	0	1	1	0	0	0	2
Talking client out in the community	0	0	1	1	0	0	2
Totals	11	442	84	18	19	4	578

Timeline of enquiries with key events during the pandemic



## 4. Discussion

- The IT survey provided important considerations for the project design as during the pandemic most of the communication and training was conducted virtually
- Continuation of this project until December 2022, will ensure PAs can continue their professional development, use best practice IPC measures when supporting clients and additionally build a positive relationship with the local authority ASC/PH
- Building resilience amongst the PA workforce will assist with reducing transmission of COVID-19 through enhancing IPC practice and by reducing requirements for contingency cover<sup>2</sup>
- Development of the IPC training programme will take a blended learning approach based on the results of the IT survey to ensure accessibility requirements are met
- Future expansion of the project may include other carers who experience similar challenges such as unpaid carers

## 5. References and Acknowledgments

<sup>1</sup> Health and Social Care Act 2008: code of practice on the prevention and control of infections. Department of Health (2008)

<sup>2</sup> Kiss et al., (2020). How can risk of COVID-19 transmission be minimised in domiciliary care for older people: development, parameterisation and initial results of a simple mathematical model.

**Acknowledgements and thanks to the ESCC Vaccination Team for the Vaccination Survey results, Charlotte Bayliss-Goonan and Danielle Plowman for their support in creating this Poster.**