

Research report

# Measuring the satisfaction of partners and stakeholders on behalf of the Pension, Disability and Carers Service

by Caroline Lawes, Jonathan Rider and Nick Barratt

Department for Work and Pensions

Research Report No 692

# **Measuring the satisfaction of partners and stakeholders on behalf of the Pension, Disability and Carers Service**

Caroline Lawes, Jonathan Rider and Nick Barratt

A report of research carried out by ComRes on behalf of the Department for Work and Pensions

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## Respondents

Pension, Disability and Carers Service local and national partners and stakeholders who took part in this research.

## Implementation

In addition to the author of the report, several other ComRes staff contributed to the research – Sophie Bolsover and Jonathan Rider were responsible for the qualitative research and Nick Barratt worked on the quantitative part of the study.

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# Summary

Following the creation of the Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) from The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service, a decision was made to undertake a more comprehensive survey of how successfully the business works with partners and stakeholders. The PDCS Partner and Satisfaction Tracker was developed by ComRes to build on the previous research on the effectiveness of PDCS consultation and partnerships with both local and national partners and stakeholders. This project has developed an ongoing tracking mechanism to capture stakeholder and partner opinion. It addresses key areas including awareness, favourability, consultation, partnerships, areas for improvement and value of communications.

To meet these aims, ComRes conducted a quantitative survey of stakeholders (members of the PDCS Advisory Forum) and partners on PDCS's list of partner organisations. Following this research, ComRes interviewed 20 stakeholders and partners in depth by telephone. These interviews were part of the Satisfaction Tracker and will be the baseline for future consultation. Recommendations for this further consultation and action have been provided, and this work will also feed into further waves of the Satisfaction Tracker.

Overall, the outputs from this first PDCS Partner and Stakeholder Satisfaction Tracker are an encouragement to PDCS to continue its positive relationship development work and maintain the currently favourable relationship that it has with its stakeholders, and the large majority of partners. Almost 85 per cent of respondents agree that PDCS works well with their organisation to provide good services to their customers. This research does also identify several areas for improvement and opportunities for increased support.

Stakeholders and partners were happy to offer their views both in the quantitative and qualitative elements of the audit and their comments and recommendations provide clear and helpful themes to consider when moving forward. We believe that there are four key themes to draw out from the detailed report:

- 1 **Respondents would like to be kept better informed** – Stakeholders and partners would like to receive more information from PDCS, particularly about proposed changes; whether this relates to new policy initiatives or simple advice on individual client cases.
- 2 **There is value in targeting different levels of seniority across organisations** – There was quite a difference in feedback from people of different seniority in organisations, those higher up and more distanced being often more critical, potentially because they are less well informed.
- 3 **Local visibility and personal contact work best** – For the most part, participants ask for a more localised approach to partner relationships. There is an understanding of the need to centralise certain functions, but partners are keen to maintain personal contact with PDCS personnel wherever possible.
- 4 **Partners would like more active engagement** – There was a strong theme from partners, in particular that they would like to have greater engagement with them by PDCS.

Stakeholders and partners are all fairly familiar with PDCS, although there is little awareness of the rebranding of PDCS. At least four out of five stakeholders and partners report a degree of familiarity with The Pension Service, the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) and the Disabilities and Carers Service. Similarly, awareness of PDCS's services is high – although the products and services provided by The Pension Service are more widely acknowledged.

Partners and stakeholders are positive towards PDCS. However, there is a discernable difference in perceptions of PDCS between stakeholders and partners who have had face-to-face contact with PDCS and those who have not – those who have had face-to-face contact are more likely to give positive responses about PDCS. **The importance of face-to-face contact is reiterated throughout the qualitative interviews.**

Encouragingly, 22 per cent of stakeholders and partners say they would speak highly of PDCS without being asked. Indeed there is a strong impression that partners value their relationship with PDCS and hold them in high regard. **A positive recommendation is likely to be directly related to stakeholders' and partners' experiences of working with PDCS in the past.**

Most stakeholders and partners report a fairly active level of contact with PDCS through PDCS staff, the DWP website, Directgov, information from colleagues and internet search engines. This suggests that stakeholders and participants are actively looking for ways to get information about DWP and PDCS. PDCS partners are very communications friendly and this is the base of much of the positive sentiment towards PDCS. With the shift to the Directgov website, this is seen as useful but email and website contact is second to personal contact. Fifteen per cent of stakeholders and partners say that they would like *'more communication or direct contact'*. **Moreover, there is a thirst for information which has yet to be fully satisfied.**

During the qualitative interviews, a number of participants expressed a degree of frustration at having their requests for information thwarted and the need for more communications. Twenty-two per cent of partners and 14 per cent of stakeholders say that lack of communication or information provision is the worst thing about their relationship with PDCS. Indeed, 32 per cent of partners comment that increased joint working and sharing of information would be beneficial to their organisation. Moreover, there is a degree of exasperation among some participants that they do not have a direct channel of communication with a relevant expert in their field, resulting in considerable time spent *'holding the line'* whilst being transferred from one person to another.

Looking ahead, **60 per cent of partners and 43 per cent of stakeholders would like to have more regular consultations** with PDCS. Consultation is not a key part of the work of PDCS with partners, but it is important to note this desire for more consultation by some stakeholders. The report offers recommendations on next steps for future consultations and how to move forward on regular audits.

## Specific recommendations and improvements

Stakeholders and partners were happy to offer advice on the best way to deliver a more effective service to their partners, the most salient of which are summarised below:

### Partners

For partners, maintaining a strong local relationship is key behind their recommendations which are summarised below:

- For the most part, participants ask for a more localised approach to partner relationships. Although many partners understand the need to centralise certain functions, particularly in the current economic climate, they are anxious to maintain personal contact with PDCS personnel wherever possible.
- If loss of local contact is unavoidable, it is important for partners and stakeholders alike that they have a designated contact at PDCS or DWP who is familiar with the participant's organisation and role.

- Thought should be given to targeting different levels in national partner organisations with different types of briefing material to ensure that familiarity is also built up at key higher levels.
- The feedback indicates changing communication preferences. For example, the internet is a favoured way of communication which fits in with the introduction of the Directgov website and there is a thirst for communications. Face-to-face communication is seen positively and the increased use of the internet is an opportunity.

## Stakeholders

Stakeholders need to be addressed in a slightly different way. There is an overlap with partners in the broad areas for recommendations and improvements, but these unique relationships also identify some more detailed recommendations to be addressed.

- Stakeholders value their role in the consultation process, but a significant proportion are interested in building on this. More regular consultations and more time allocated is something that stakeholders have expressed could help improve their consultations with PDCS.
- Stakeholders and partners would like to receive more information from PDCS, whether this relates to new policy initiatives or simple advice on individual client cases.
- Stakeholders are also particularly keen to play a greater role in contributing to proposed changes to policy or processes when they are at the planning stage and this may be a valuable way to involve these key decision makers.

This research initiative by PDCS was welcomed by participants and the research outputs are clear. The **PDCS Partner and Satisfaction Tracker** is now positioned with partners and stakeholders to be a useful regular feedback mechanism to regularly seek to improve on the lines of communication between PDCS and its stakeholders.

## Methodology

The PDCS Satisfaction Tracker was in two stages: Firstly, a large scale quantitative study of partners and stakeholders; and secondly a qualitative study of feedback on the quantitative Satisfaction Tracker.

### Part A

The first part of the study was to quantify levels of satisfaction and performance of PDCS, from the opinions of stakeholders and partners. ComRes and PDCS therefore designed a questionnaire which included closed quantitative questions and open ended questions for telephone interviews among named contacts provided by PDCS.

ComRes surveyed 272 stakeholders and partners on PDCS's list of partner organisations. Interviews were conducted by telephone between 3 and 16 February 2010. Before this a pilot study of 30 interviews was conducted between 11 and 18 December 2009.

The sample was made up of 265 partners who were selected from the PDCS Local Partnerships database. Respondents were those named individuals whose details are on the PDCS database, and therefore have an existing partnership relationship. Views towards service provision and joint working are particularly relevant to partner organisations

Seven stakeholders were interviewed and they are all members of the PDCS Advisory Forum. Due to the role of stakeholders, their views towards consultation and feeding into policy are particularly relevant to their roles.

Throughout the research, respondents were prompted that when using the name 'PDCS', this refers to both **The Pension Service** and the **Disability and Carers Service**.

For some questions a scale is used. Sometimes this is a numerical scale and sometimes this is done on a scale, for example, like familiarity. Therefore on some questions respondents are asked to rate their responses on a scale of 1 to 5 – for example from poor to excellent. While other questions offer answers like: *very familiar; fairly familiar; fairly unfamiliar; very unfamiliar*. In these cases a four-point scale is used as there is no 'neutral' or middle position.

### **Part B**

The second part of the study aimed to gather feedback and input from respondents on their perceptions of the quantitative study. This included their views on the questions; style of interview; length of interview; relevance; and any improvements that could be made.

ComRes interviewed 20 stakeholders and partners in depth by telephone between 26 February and 15 March 2010.

ComRes designed a qualitative discussion guide which covered the Satisfaction Tracker in general; the questions asked; and any comparable consultations from other similar organisations and bodies. The information gathered and comments made are used to feed into planning future Satisfaction Monitors.

# **An initial view of potential future benchmarking tools**





# 1 Benchmarking – a summary of potential future tools

This Partner and Stakeholder Satisfaction Tracker is the first benchmark of opinion among PDCS partners and stakeholders. In order for the results to be both actionable and trackable over time, ComRes has identified some of the key measures that could be usefully tracked.

In doing this, opinion from local partner organisations, which were selected from the PDCS Local Partnerships database, is compared with those from national stakeholder organisations – who make up the PDCS Advisory Forum. Throughout the survey respondents were prompted that when ‘PDCS’ was used this refers to both The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service.

Of the stakeholders from the PDCS Advisory Forum, seven members participated in the survey. Since the sample size is small the results for stakeholders are better treated as indicative rather than definitive when analysed on their own. However, while this is a small number, it does represent more than a quarter of all stakeholders.

When partners are referred to, this represents both national and local partners. National partners are those from the following organisations: (i) Age UK (Previously Age Concern and Help the Aged); (ii) Citizens Advice; (iii) Local Government Association; (iv) RNIB; (v) RNID; and (vi) Carers UK.

Since there are more partners in the sample than stakeholders the totals are heavily weighted by their views.

## 1.1 Awareness

The first important benchmark to identify is **Awareness of PDCS**. Participants were asked to give their overall awareness of PDCS in their role. These responses were given a score of 1 to 5 where 1 indicates that the respondent has not heard of PDCS and 5 indicates that the respondent knows a great deal about PDCS.

Encouragingly for PDCS, stakeholders give a very high score of 4.86 – which is not surprising given their roles on the PDCS Advisory Forum. Six out of seven stakeholders say that they know ‘a great deal’ about PDCS. This compares to a score of 3.86 for partner organisations.

As identified throughout the report, it is worth noting at this stage that partner organisations with particular specialisations have awareness of their own areas, but not of others. Table 1.1 indicates familiarity on a scale of 4 = very familiar and 1 = very unfamiliar. As the table indicates, partner awareness of The Pension Service is greater than that of the Disability and Carers Service. However, the opposite is true of stakeholders who participated.

**Table 1.1 Familiarity**

Overall level of familiarity	Total	Partners	Stakeholders
Pension Service	3.53	3.52	3.57
Disability and Carers Service	3.15	3.13	3.86
DWP	3.45	3.44	3.71

Over time this benchmark will be tracked with scores from further Satisfaction Tracker waves to monitor how level of awareness change. This benchmark measured overall familiarity with DWP and the two branches of PDCS but also in addition it measures the amount of knowledge of PDCS as well and these will be followed over time. When addressing overall **familiarity**, respondents were asked how familiar they are with each of The Pension Service, The Disability and Carers Service and the DWP. In terms of awareness, this is based on **knowledge** of PDCS.

### 1.2 Satisfaction

The second key benchmark that is identified is **Satisfaction**. Due to the working nature of PDCS with its partners, the key performance indicator for this measure is an overall rating of the partnership relationship in providing joint services to customers.

The score range is between 1 (PDCS performing poorly) and 4 (PDCS performing very well). The average score given by partners on how well PDCS work with their organisation to provide this joint service was 3.18, indicating that partners are generally very satisfied with this aspect of their relationship.

The key measure of satisfaction for stakeholders is the effectiveness of PDCS consultation with them through the PDCS Advisory Forum. With this in mind, the measure of satisfaction is based on the following criteria for stakeholders: the effectiveness of communications; responding to feedback; and keeping stakeholders up to date on new initiatives. The average score for these measures is 3.14, indicating that stakeholders are generally very satisfied with these aspects of the relationship.

By tracking these scores we will be able to monitor how levels of satisfaction change over time.

### 1.3 Improvement

While the general opinion of partners and stakeholders is very positive, areas for improvement and increased service provision were identified.

Table 1.2 summarises the verbatim comments by looking at the service areas that were rated as poor or not very good (1 or 2 out of five on a scale).

As is evident below, the **minority** of partners and stakeholders rate each of these service areas as poor. ‘Openness’ and ‘accessibility’ are seen as the top areas for improvement among partners and stakeholders, but it is worth noting that the verbatim comments back up the need for greater provision of information – particularly on proposed changes.

**Table 1.2 Key areas for improvement**

<b>Areas for improvement (1 or 2 out of 5)</b>	<b>Total %</b>	<b>Partners %</b>	<b>Stakeholders %</b>
Accessibility of PDCS staff	14	14	14
Openness of PDCS	14	15	14
Information provided by PDCS	12	14	0

Table 1.2 gives an idea of areas which are scored poorly, but in order to identify the key measures for improvement the answers to the following questions are taken into account in order to give the scores below. Questions (i) and (ii) were unprompted and answers were coded out. Question

(iii) prompted some common areas for possible improvement but also allowed other unprompted suggestions to be made.

(i) ‘In which areas, if any, would your organisation value additional support or services from PDCS?’

(ii) ‘What would you say is the worst thing about your partnership with PDCS?’

(iii) ‘How if at all do you think that PDCS could improve its consultation with you?’

The three key areas participants identified as requiring some improvement are: information provision; consultation and feedback; and direct personal communications. These have each been given a score which can be tracked over time. The scores and methods used to identify them are given below.

### 1.3.1 Information provision

The overall tracking score takes into account the views of partners and stakeholders towards the quality of information provision. This is rated on a scale of 1 to 5 where 1 equals poor and 5 equals excellent.

The results show that both partners and stakeholders identified a need for some improvement in both the accessibility and quality of information provided.

**Table 1.3 Benchmark C1: information provision**

	Total	Partners	Stakeholder
Information provision	3.71	3.70	3.71

### 1.3.2 Feedback and consultation

The overall tracking score takes into account the information gathered about improvement to consultation in Q24 and quality of feedback in Q15.

In terms of PDCS providing feedback to partners and stakeholders following enquiries on a scale of 1 to 4 where 4 is the best, partners and stakeholders give a score of 2.04.

In terms of consultation and feedback to PDCS from organisations, partners and stakeholders give a score of 2.78. This is on a scale of 1 to 4 where 4 is the best.

PDCS only consults with stakeholders, however, to reflect the findings of the survey and the unprompted responses from partners in terms of identifying desired improvements, we have also shown scores given by partners to reflect their desire to be involved more in consultation.

The benchmark of communications is measured separately below.

## 1.4 Communications

Finally, the fourth key measure of performance addresses **communications** and the impact of this on the relationship with PDCS.

Overall, the scores for communications are positive, although there is room for improvement in terms of addressing the needs of partners. A score of 4 is the greatest score and a score of 1 is the lowest. The majority of partners and stakeholders agree that PDCS is an effective communicator. Partners give PDCS a score of 2.84 out of 4 for effective communications and stakeholders give PDCS a score of 3.57 out of 4 for effective communications.

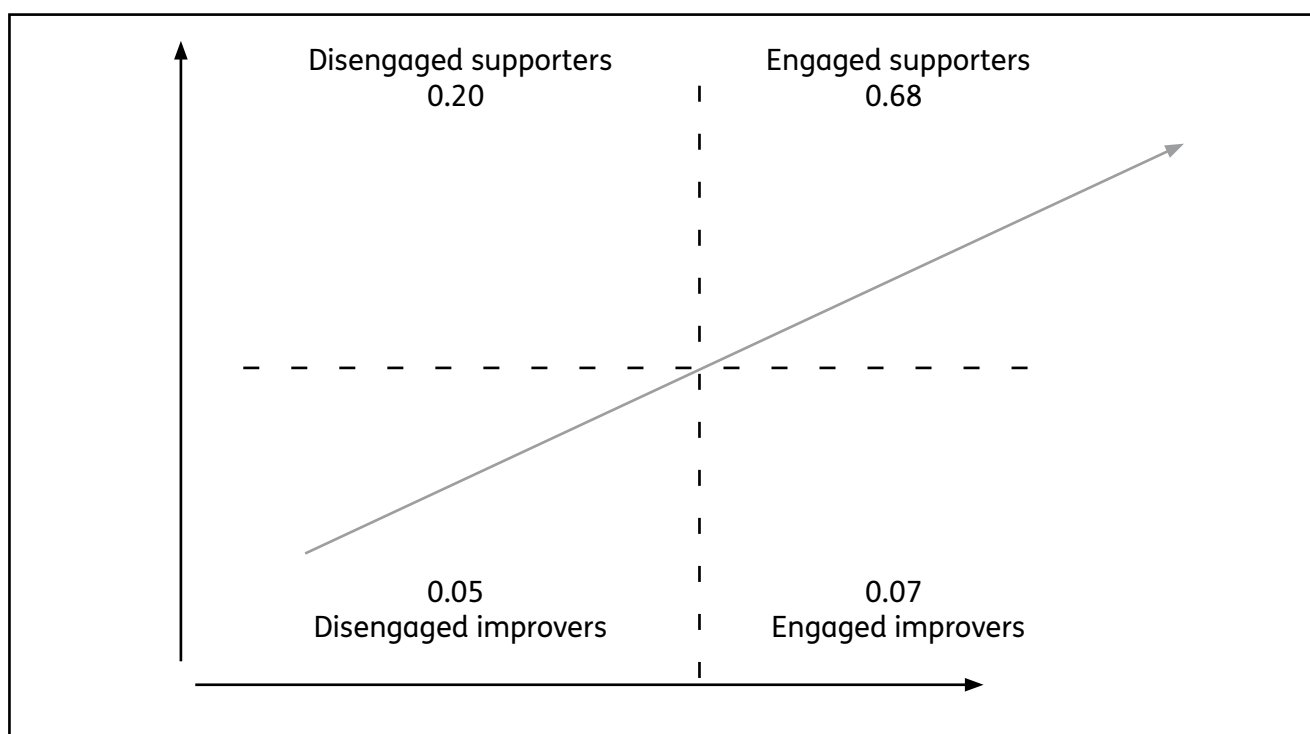
It is not surprising that stakeholders give PDCS a higher score given that the personal contact through membership of the PDCS Advisory Forum is likely to be greater than contact with all partners. In addition, partners identify the need for additional information provision and their desire to be involved in consultation.

### 1.5 Relationship mapping – tracking the changes

To ensure that PDCS can measure its progress in increasing engagement and performance, ComRes has mapped the views of partners and stakeholders into a Relationship Attitude Index (RAI).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the current RAI scores for each of the four groups of partners and stakeholders we have identified.

**Figure 1.1 Relationship Attitude Index**



This shows that the greatest proportion of partners and stakeholders are ‘engaged supporters’ and that there is just a small proportion of people who need to be moved to the upper right quartile.

To determine these figures, we took a cross-break of those partners and stakeholders who are informed about PDCS and how they perceive the quality of service provided.

Each figure that appears in the RAI is based upon the percentage of partners and stakeholders who fall into each of the four categories listed (disengaged improvers, disengaged supporters, engaged improvers and unengaged supporters). These groups are defined as follows:

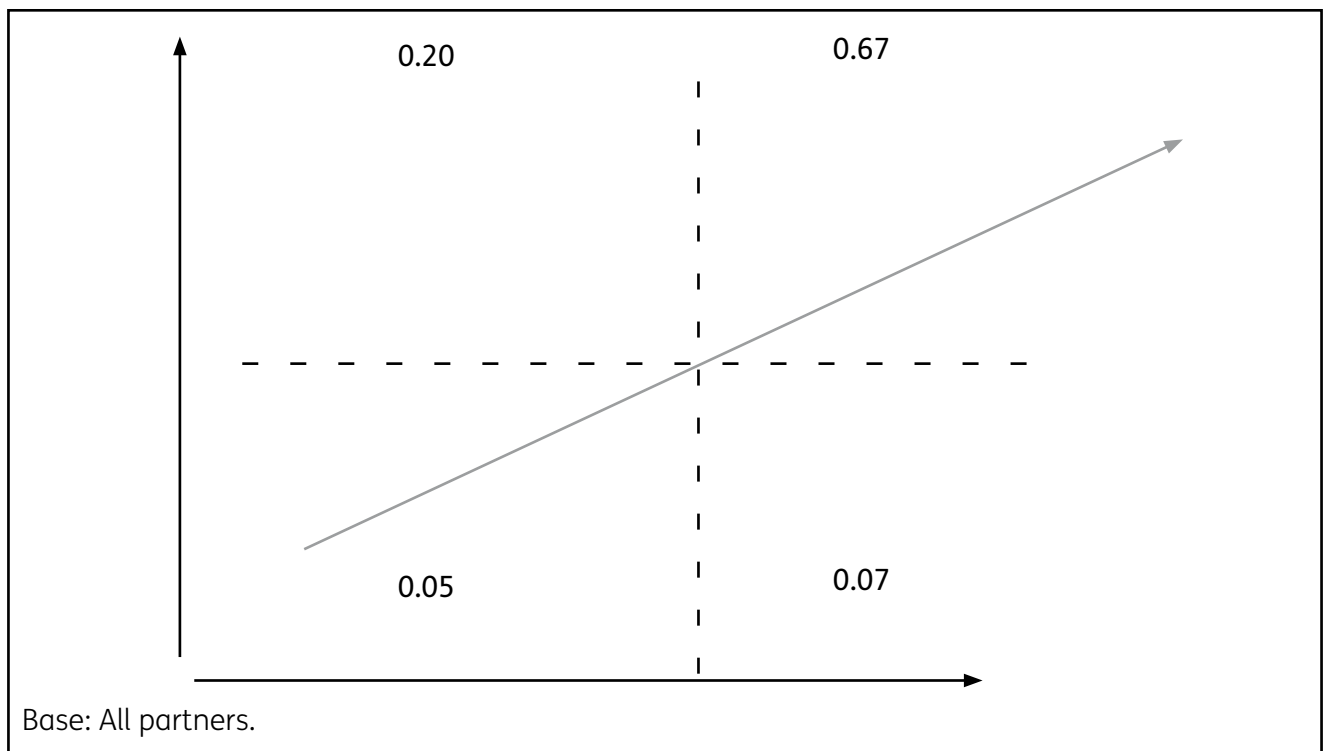
- **engaged supporters (0.68):** This group knows a great deal or a reasonable amount about PDCS and would say that PDCS works well with their organisation;
- **engaged improvers (0.07):** This group knows a great deal or a reasonable amount about PDCS and would say that PDCS does not work well with their organisation;

- **disengaged supporters (0.20):** This group knows just a little or not much about PDCS and would say that PDCS works well with their organisation;
- **disengaged improvers (0.05):** This group knows just a little or not much about PDCS and would say that PDCS does not work well with their organisation.

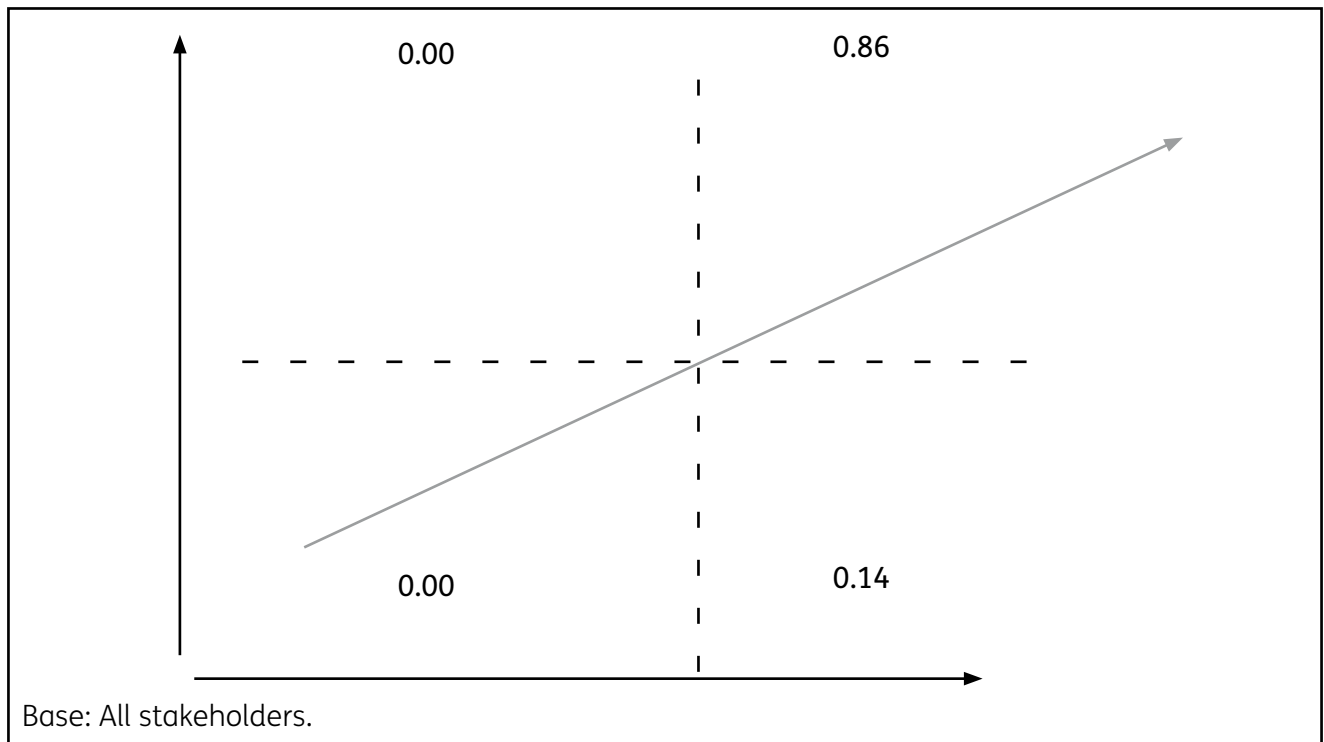
The nature of PDCS’s relationship with partners and stakeholders are fundamentally different. Partners work with PDCS to provide joined-up services to shared customers at a local level, while national stakeholders make up the PDCS Advisory Forum. Furthermore, different teams within PDCS manage PDCS’s relationships with partners and stakeholders.

Due to the different approaches at PDCS for partners and stakeholders it is worth breaking down the mapping of the two groups. Figures 1.2 and 1.3 indicate that stakeholders are distinctly set apart from partners in the fact that they are all well engaged. However, due to the small sample only one stakeholder fell into the ‘engaged improvers’ category.

**Figure 1.2 Relationship Attitude Index – partners**



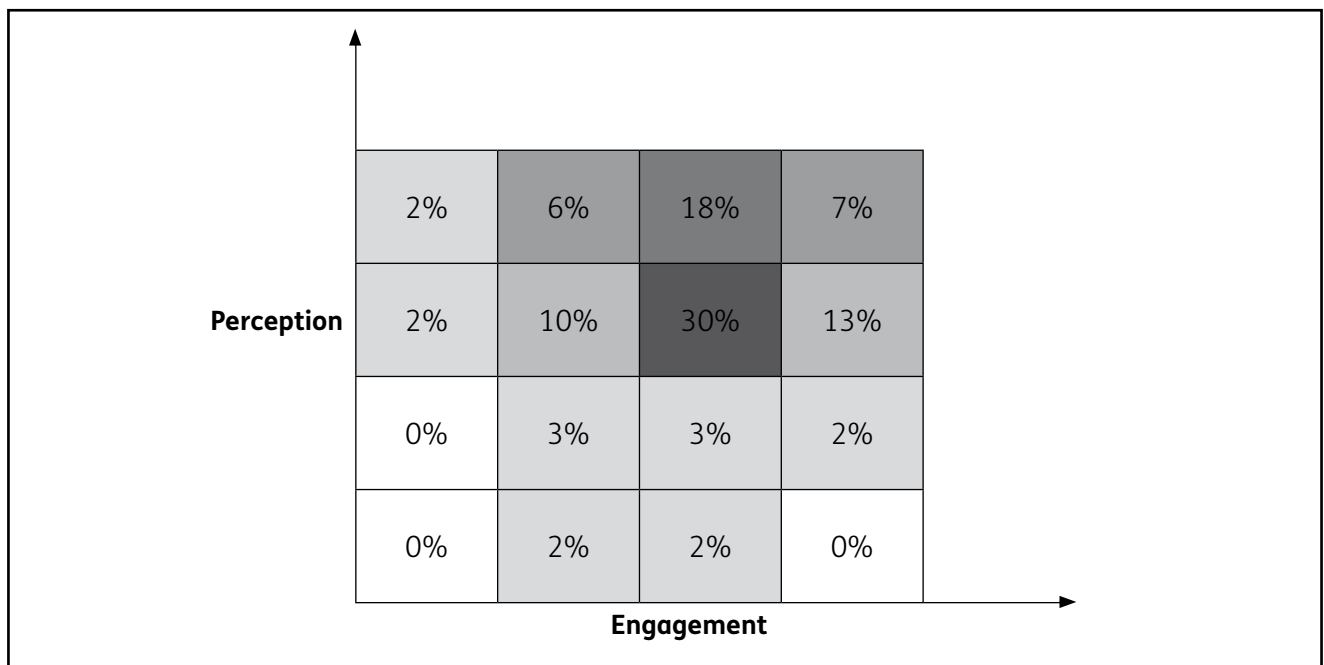
**Figure 1.3 Relationship Attitude Index – stakeholders**



While Figure 1.3 gives an overview, it is valuable to address in greater depth the density of where partners and stakeholders are positioned in terms of their engagement and perception of PDCS. Thirty per cent of partners and stakeholders are both fairly well engaged and fairly satisfied but there is room for improvement. Encouragingly, it is evident that satisfaction levels increased in line with increased exposure and contact with PDCS – familiarity breeds content. Therefore, a campaign for increased awareness of PDCS and the services that are provided will hopefully lead to a more positive perception of PDCS.

While PDCS is in a positive position at the moment, it is vital to ensure that this is at least maintained in order to retain this encouraging position. As Figure 1.4 indicates a small change in perception could lose people from the upper quartile.

**Figure 1.4 Relationship Attitude Index – overview**



# **Part A**

## **Detailed responses to the Quantitative Satisfaction Tracker**





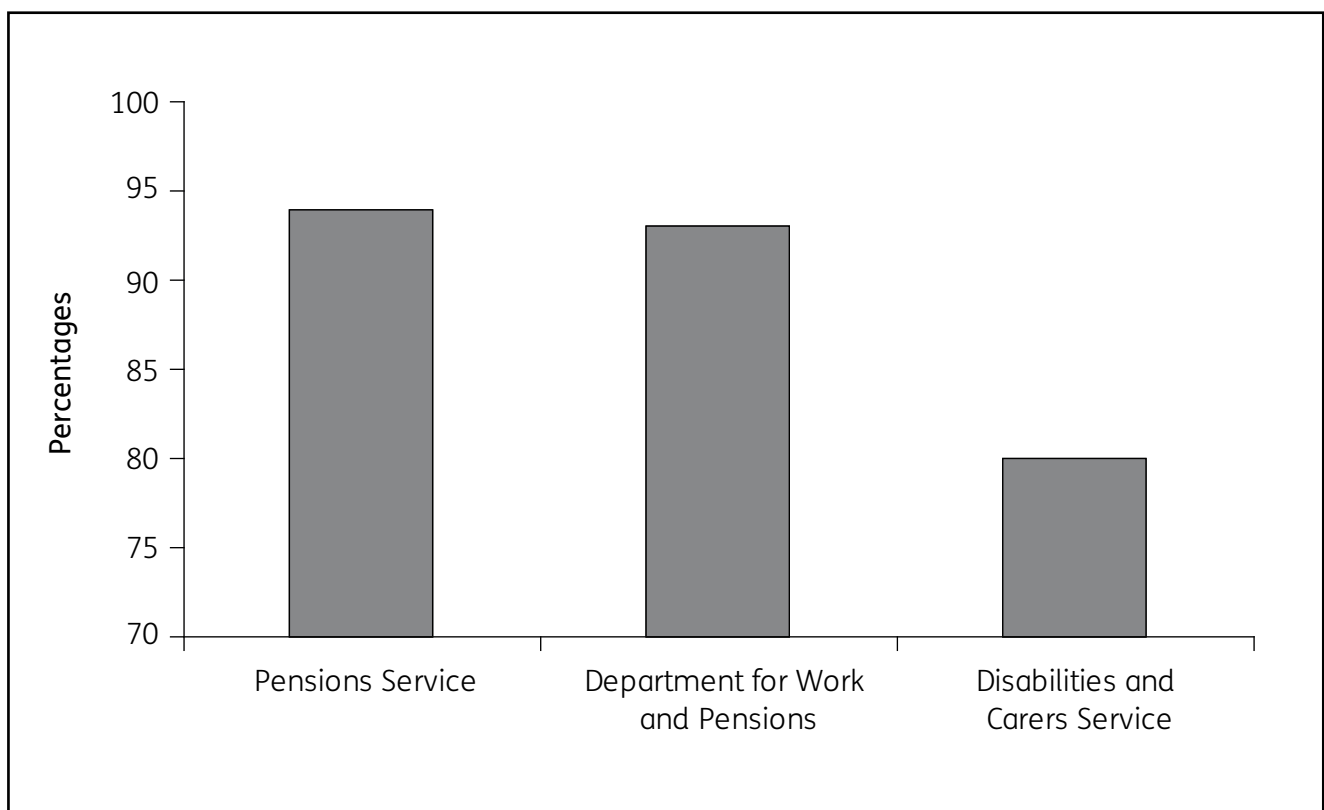
## 2 General impressions of PDCS

### 2.1 Overall, how familiar or otherwise are you with each of the following organisations?

- The Pension Service.
- The Disabilities and Carers Service.
- The DWP.

Respondents appear to be the most familiar with The Pension Service, with 94 per cent stating they are ‘very familiar’ or ‘fairly familiar’. This is closely followed by the DWP (93 per cent), with partners and stakeholders being least familiar with the Disabilities and Carers Service (80 per cent). It is noteworthy that at least four in five stakeholders (80 per cent) are familiar with each of the three organisations, highlighting that familiarity is generally high for PDCS. Having said this, the pilot identified lower awareness of the rebranding to PDCS.

**Figure 2.1 Percentage of respondents who are ‘very’ or ‘fairly’ familiar**



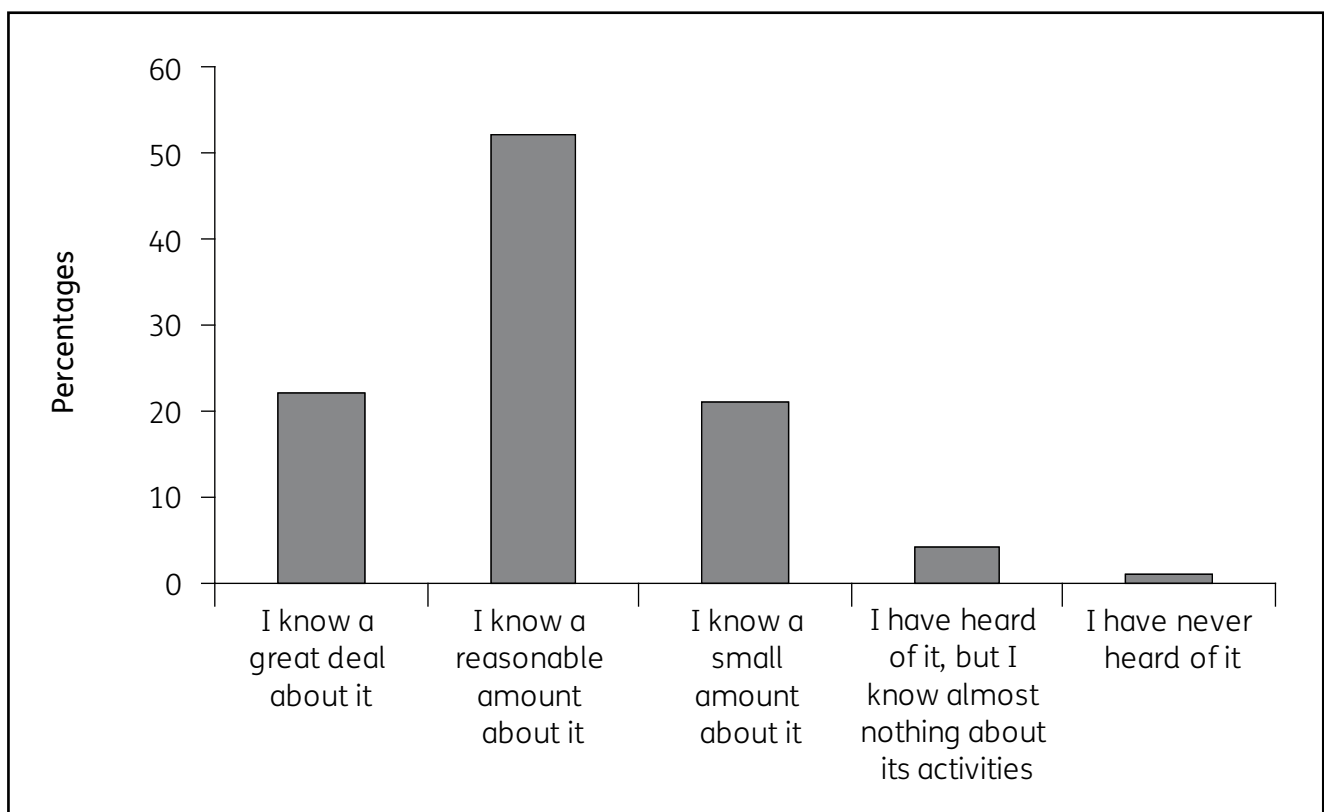
Looking at the difference between stakeholders and partners, it is evident that stakeholders are more likely to be familiar with the DWP and the Disability and Carers Service, with all stakeholders being ‘fairly familiar’ or ‘very familiar’. This compares to 92 per cent and 79 per cent of local partners who are familiar with the DWP and the Disability and Carers Service respectively. Having said this, almost all local partners (95 per cent) are familiar with The Pension Service, slightly higher than stakeholders (six out of seven).

## 2.2 In your role, how much would you say you know about the Pension, Disability and Carers Service and its activities?

- I know a reasonable amount about it.
- I know a great deal about it.
- I know a small amount about it.
- I have heard of it, but I know almost nothing about its activities.
- I have never heard of it.

Levels of knowledge about PDCS and its activities are very high, with 95 per cent of partners and stakeholders knowing at least a small amount about the organisation. Three-quarters of all respondents (74 per cent) know at least a reasonable amount about PDCS, and more than one in five partners and stakeholders (22 per cent) know a great deal about it.

**Figure 2.2 Knowledge of PDCS**



### 2.2.1 Additional analysis

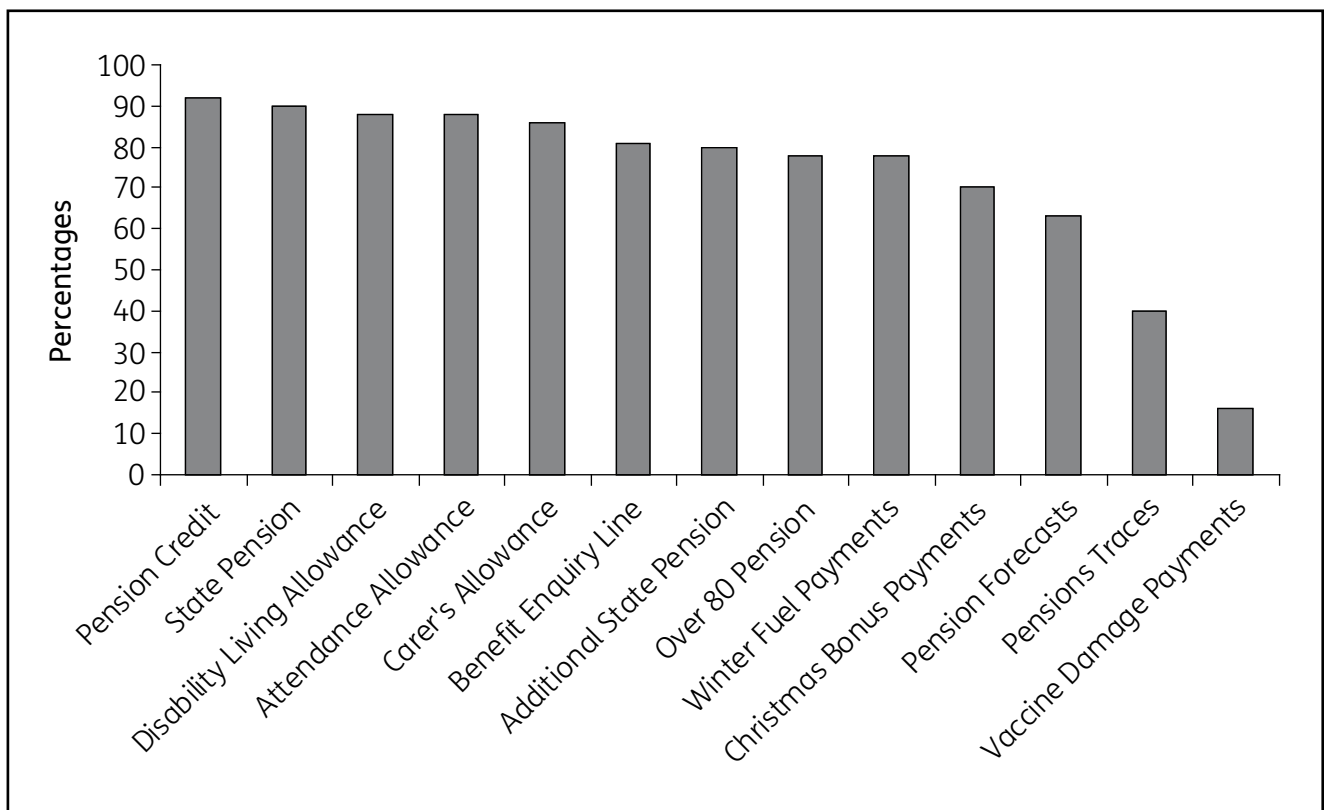
Partners and stakeholders whose organisation focuses on both the products or services of The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service are likely to know more about PDCS than those whose organisations focus specifically on either one of these areas. Seventy-nine per cent of partners and stakeholders from organisations whose focus covers all areas know either a reasonable amount or a great deal about PDCS. This is compared to 57 per cent of those whose organisation focuses on pensions, 60 per cent who focus on disability and 59 per cent who focus on carers.

All the stakeholders who participated know ‘a great deal’ or ‘a reasonable amount’ about PDCS and therefore the levels of knowledge among partners are lower than that of stakeholders.

### 2.3 Which of the following benefits or services, if any, do you think are provided by PDCS?

Knowledge of the majority of the products and services provided by PDCS are high amongst both partners and stakeholders (92 per cent are aware PDCS provides Pension Credit, 90 per cent State Pension and 85 per cent DLA/AA). Less than half of all respondents think that PDCS provides pensions traces (40 per cent), while vaccine damage payments is the service that people are least likely to think is provided by PDCS (16 per cent).

**Figure 2.3 Perceived services provided by PDCS**



#### 2.3.1 Additional analysis

Unsurprisingly, respondents whose organisation focuses on pensions services are most likely to associate PDCS with services in this area; 97 per cent associating ‘pension credit’ as a service provided by PDCS. Similarly, 94 per cent and 91 per cent respectively think that ‘state pensions’ and ‘additional state pensions’ are provided by PDCS.

Interestingly, people whose organisation focuses on disability services alone (74 per cent) are less likely than those who focus on pensions services (85 per cent) or carers services (83 per cent) to think that Disability Living Allowance is a service provided by PDCS.

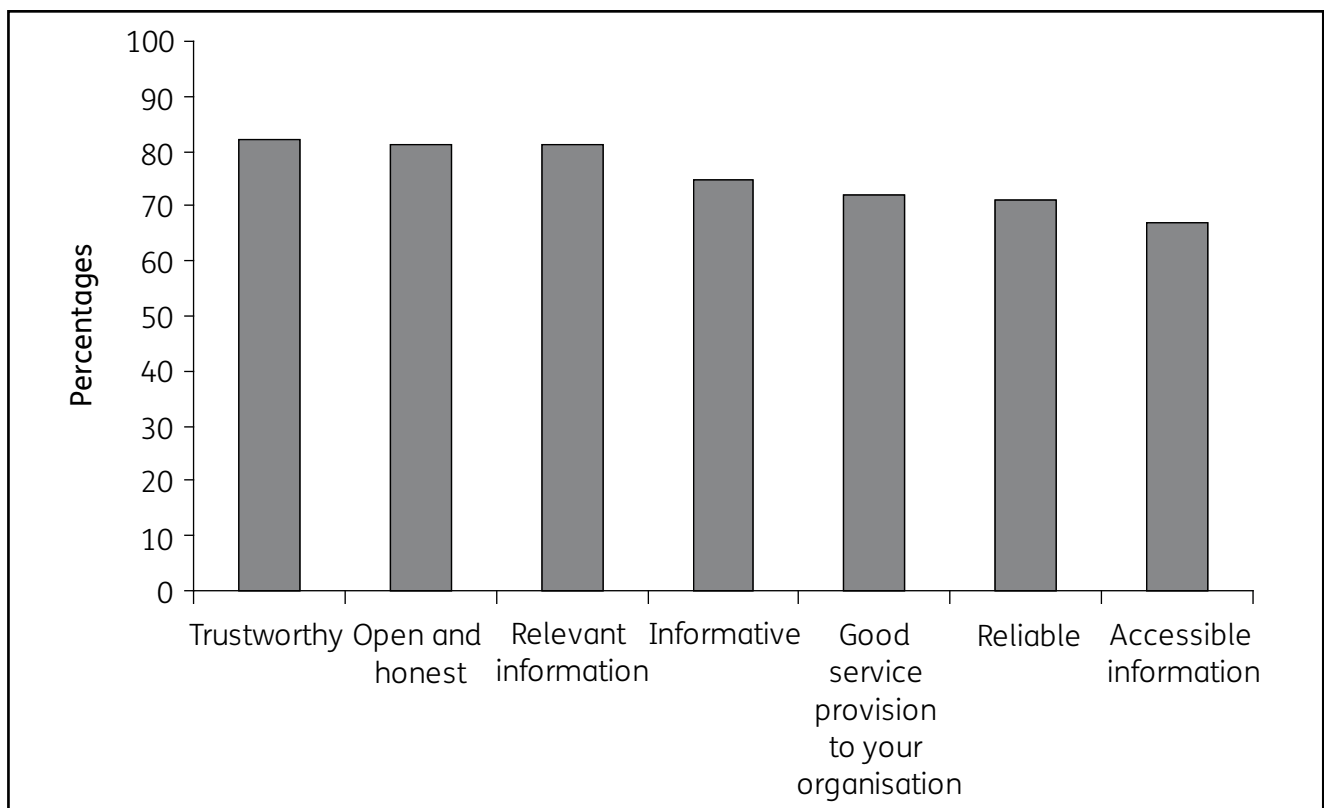
In general, partners are more likely than stakeholders to be aware of the services that PDCS provides – this could be explained due to the daily provision of many of these services by local partners. However, there are three exceptions: pensions traces; pension forecasts; and vaccine damage payments, all of which stakeholders are more likely to be aware of than partners.

## 2.4 Which of the following words or phrases do you think accurately describe PDCS?

- Trustworthy.
- Reliable.
- Informative.
- Good service provision to your organisation (not the customer).
- Open and honest.
- Relevant information.
- Accessible information.

Respondents were asked whether each of these phrases apply or not. Overall, partners and stakeholders appear to hold a positive view of PDCS. Four in five participants describe PDCS as ‘trustworthy’ (82 per cent) and ‘open and honest’ (81 per cent). Furthermore, an overwhelming majority of top level directors, Chief Executives or Managing Directors (94 per cent) think that PDCS is ‘trustworthy’ and ‘open and honest’. Therefore, PDCS appears to have a generally positive reputation as being a dependable and honest organisation, particularly among partners and stakeholders in more senior positions. All of the stakeholders who responded agree that PDCS is ‘open and honest’.

**Figure 2.4 Words/phrases associated with PDCS**



### 2.4.1 Additional analysis

Interestingly, those who have had face-to-face contact with PDCS are more likely to think that each of the seven phrases mentioned are an accurate description of PDCS. The most significant difference is over the phrase ‘open and honest’; with nine in ten partners or stakeholders (89 per cent) who

have had face-to-face contact with PDCS thinking it is an accurate description, compared to 69 per cent of those who have not had face-to-face contact. This suggests that meetings and contact conducted face-to-face, rather than through emails or by telephone, reinforce positive perceptions of PDCS, particularly in terms of honesty and reliability.

Stakeholders are more likely than partners to think that PDCS provides a good service to their organisation, 86 per cent (six out of seven) compared to 71 per cent, and is open and honest (100 per cent compared to 80 per cent). Conversely, while the sample is small, two out of seven stakeholders (29 per cent) feel PDCS to be a reliable organisation, which contrasts sharply with 72 per cent of partners who felt this.

## 2.5 How effective or ineffective do you believe PDCS is at achieving each of the following?

- To alleviate poverty and promote independence and well being later in life.
- To promote equality of opportunity for disabled people.
- To pay their customers the right benefits at the right time.
- To provide a high quality service to customers at all times.

Figure 2.5 illustrates the percentage of partners and stakeholders who answered ‘fairly effective’ or ‘very effective’ for each of the four statements.

Looking at each of the four statements, they all appear to score similar levels of effectiveness, with a difference of only 12 per cent between the highest and the lowest scoring statements. At least 30 per cent of people answered ‘neither effective nor ineffective’ for each of the four statements. However, this may be due to lack of familiarity or engagement.

Nevertheless, partners and stakeholders do feel that PDCS is most effective in providing a ‘high quality service to customers at all times,’ with 50 per cent stating they are fairly or very effective.

The statements ‘to alleviate poverty and promote independence and well being later in life’ and ‘to promote equality of opportunity for disabled people’ with 38 per cent and 39 per cent respectively stating PDCS is fairly or very effective. Half of partners and stakeholders (47 per cent) say PDCS is ‘fairly’ or ‘very’ effective at paying their customers the right benefits at the right time. However, of the four statements, this statement secures the highest level of ineffectiveness, with one in five (19 per cent) feeling that PDCS is ineffective at achieving this.

**Figure 2.5 Effectiveness of PDCS, percentage of respondents who answered 'fairly effective' or 'very effective'**

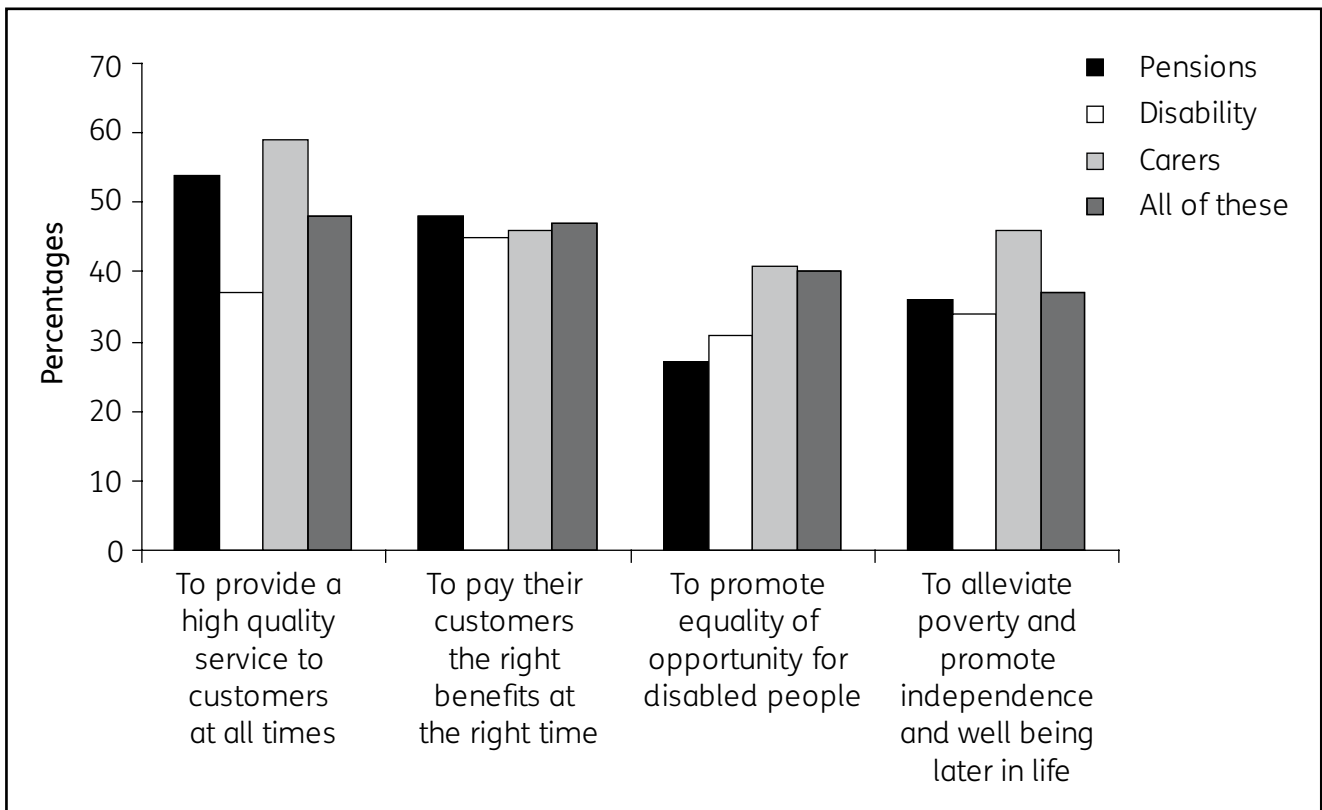


### 2.5.1 Additional analysis

Respondents whose organisation focuses on carers services are most likely to feel that PDCS is effective in 'alleviating poverty and promoting independence and well being later in life', with 46 per cent saying that PDCS is either 'fairly effective' or 'very effective'.

However, those whose organisation focuses on pensions services are least likely to think PDCS is effective in promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people, with 27 per cent answering 'fairly effective' or 'very effective'. This is lower than those whose organisation focuses on disability services (31 per cent), carers services (41 per cent) and those who focus on all three service areas (40 per cent). This should be an area of concern for PDCS considering that partners and stakeholders whose organisation focuses on disability services are likely to be in the best position to assess whether PDCS is effective in promoting equality of opportunity for disabled people.

**Figure 2.6 Effectiveness of PDCS, percentage of respondents who answered ‘fairly effective’ or ‘very effective’, by focus of organisation**



Consistently, stakeholders give lower levels of effectiveness for each of these aims than partners. This may be worth addressing as, while it is positive that partners who deal with the service provision daily give higher scores, it may be important to ensure that the PDCS Advisory Forum are assured that PDCS is meeting its aims effectively.





# 3 Partnership working with PDCS

## 3.1 Thinking about your partnership with PDCS, which of the following, if any, describe your relationship?

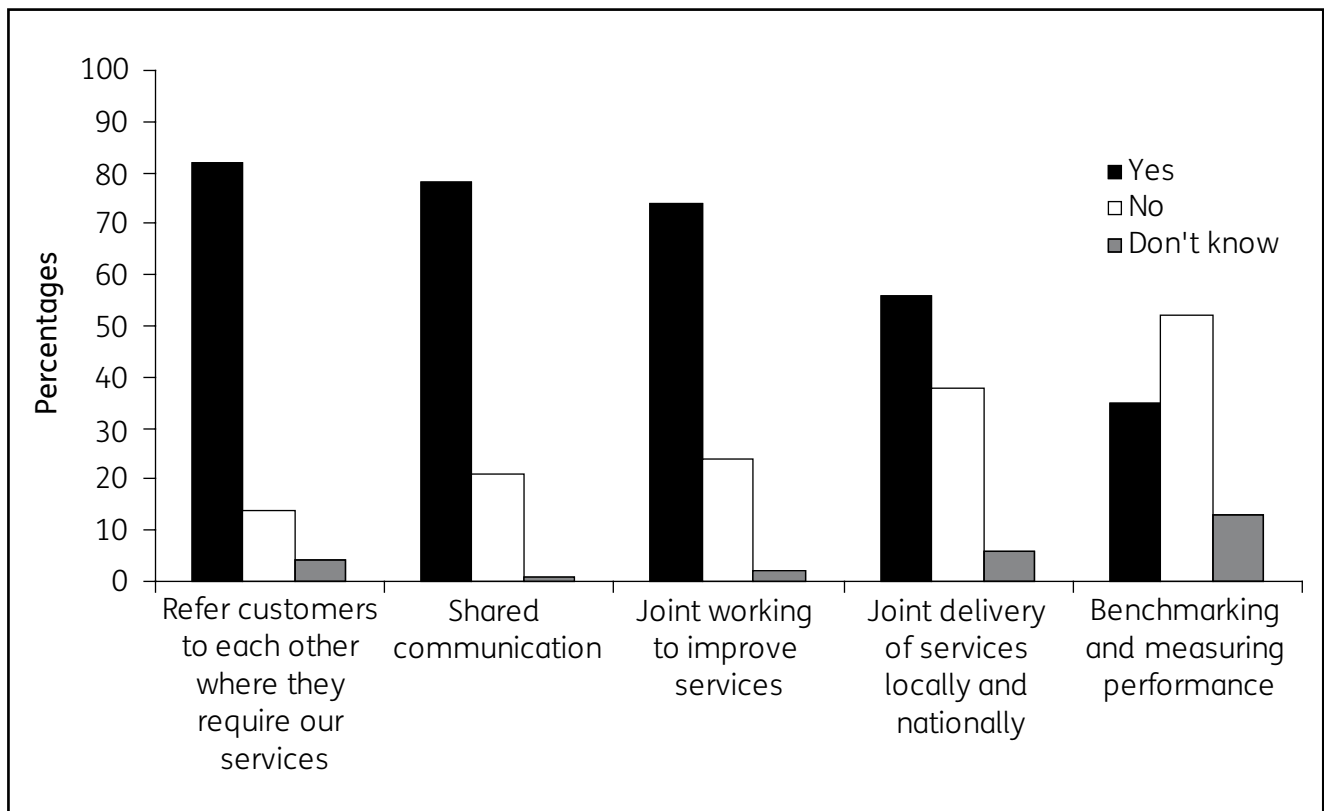
- Refer customers to each other where they require our services.
- Shared communication.
- Joint working to improve services.
- Benchmarking and measuring performance.
- Joint delivery of services locally and nationally.

More than four in five partners (83 per cent) say they would ‘refer customers to each other where they require our services.’ Three-quarters describe their relationship as ‘shared communication’ and ‘joint working to improve services’ (77 per cent and 73 per cent respectively). This is encouraging as PDCS works with many partners to achieve these aims and the majority agree that this is true of their relationship.

However, opinion is more divided about whether partners would describe their partnership as a joint delivery of services locally and nationally – with 56 per cent agreeing and 38 per cent disagreeing. Moreover, the majority of partners would not describe their partnership with PDCS as ‘benchmarking and measuring performance’ (52 per cent). Given the aims of this research project, this is valuable to identify, and presents an opportunity for PDCS to improve in this area. However, currently, consultation and feedback is focused on stakeholders and PDCS could discuss how, if at all, to measure performance among partners.

PDCS needs to decide whether working on ‘benchmarking and measuring performance’ is a priority or not for the relationship with partners. While this scores the lowest it may not be the most important part of the partnerships.

**Figure 3.1 Relationships with PDCS**



**3.1.1 Additional analysis**

Partners who have had face-to-face contact with PDCS are more likely to agree that each of the five statements accurately describes their partnership, than those who have had no face-to-face contact. Face-to-face contact appears to have the most significant impact on respondents who would describe their relationship with PDCS as a ‘joint delivery of services locally and nationally’. Two-thirds of partners (64 per cent) who have had face-to-face contact with PDCS would describe their relationship this way, compared to less than half of all partners (46 per cent) who have not had face-to-face contact. This highlights the fact that face-to-face meetings may be an opportunity for PDCS and their partners to clarify the nature of their relationship.

Unsurprisingly, partners are more likely to associate the statements related to service provision with their relationship with PDCS.

Although this question was aimed at local and national partners it was also answered by stakeholders. Due to the difference in relationships with stakeholders it is worth noting their responses regarding joint working to improve services where all seven stakeholders felt this was an accurate description of the stakeholder relationship.

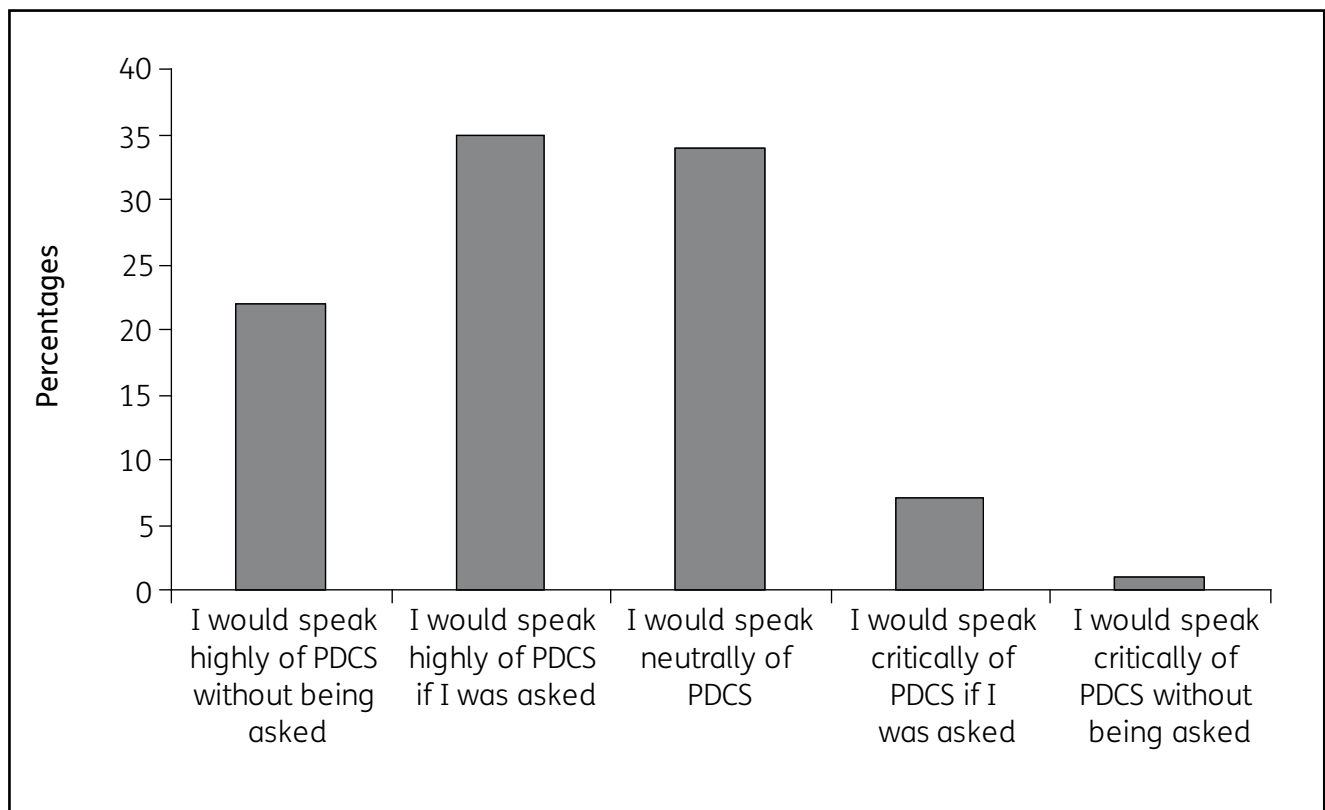
**3.2 Which of the following, would you say best describes the way you would speak about PDCS to your colleagues?**

When considering how people would talk about PDCS, the results appear to be positive. The majority of partners and stakeholders would speak highly of PDCS to their colleagues (57 per cent), and 22 per cent would speak highly without being asked. Only eight per cent of respondents would speak critically of PDCS to their colleagues, and only one per cent would do so without being asked. A third of all partners and stakeholders (34 per cent) would speak neutrally of PDCS.

Those individuals who hold more senior positions within an organisation are less likely to speak highly of PDCS. Fifty-three per cent of top level directors and Chief Executives, and 41 per cent of directors within an organisation would speak highly of PDCS, compared to 65 per cent of team heads or managers and 64 per cent of junior managers. This is probably because managers and team heads are more likely to have regular contact with PDCS than senior colleagues.

Considering those partners who would speak critically of PDCS, there does not appear to be any significant variance by region, with a maximum of one in ten stating they would speak negatively of PDCS. Partners from the Midlands and the East (ten per cent), and Scotland and the North are the most likely to speak critically of PDCS (nine per cent). Eight per cent of partners from Wales and the West would speak critically of PDCS, with respondents from London and the South the least likely to (six per cent).

**Figure 3.2 How people would speak about PDCS**



### 3.2.1 Additional analysis

Respondents are most likely to speak highly of PDCS if they have had a positive experience or have developed a good relationship with them. Forty per cent of all partners or stakeholders who speak highly about PDCS to colleagues said the reason for this was due to a good working relationship that developed over time, while 37 per cent of them would speak highly to a colleague because of a positive experience they have had with PDCS. A third (36 per cent) would speak highly because they found PDCS very helpful.

The most likely reason for partners to speak negatively to a colleague about PDCS is because they felt they were being passed around different contacts (seven per cent). However, it should be noted that the sample size for partners who felt like this is very small (just 19 respondents).

Understandably, more than a quarter of all respondents (26 per cent) who would speak neutrally of PDCS would do so because of inconsistency, recording some good and some not so good experiences with them. Similarly, 16 per cent would speak neutrally if they did not have enough experience or contact with PDCS to comment.

It is important to recognise, as the qualitative interviews testify, that some respondents did not feel able to answer fully due to a lack of personal experience.

### 3.3 On a scale of 1 to 5 where one equals poor and 5 equals excellent, how would you rate each of the following?

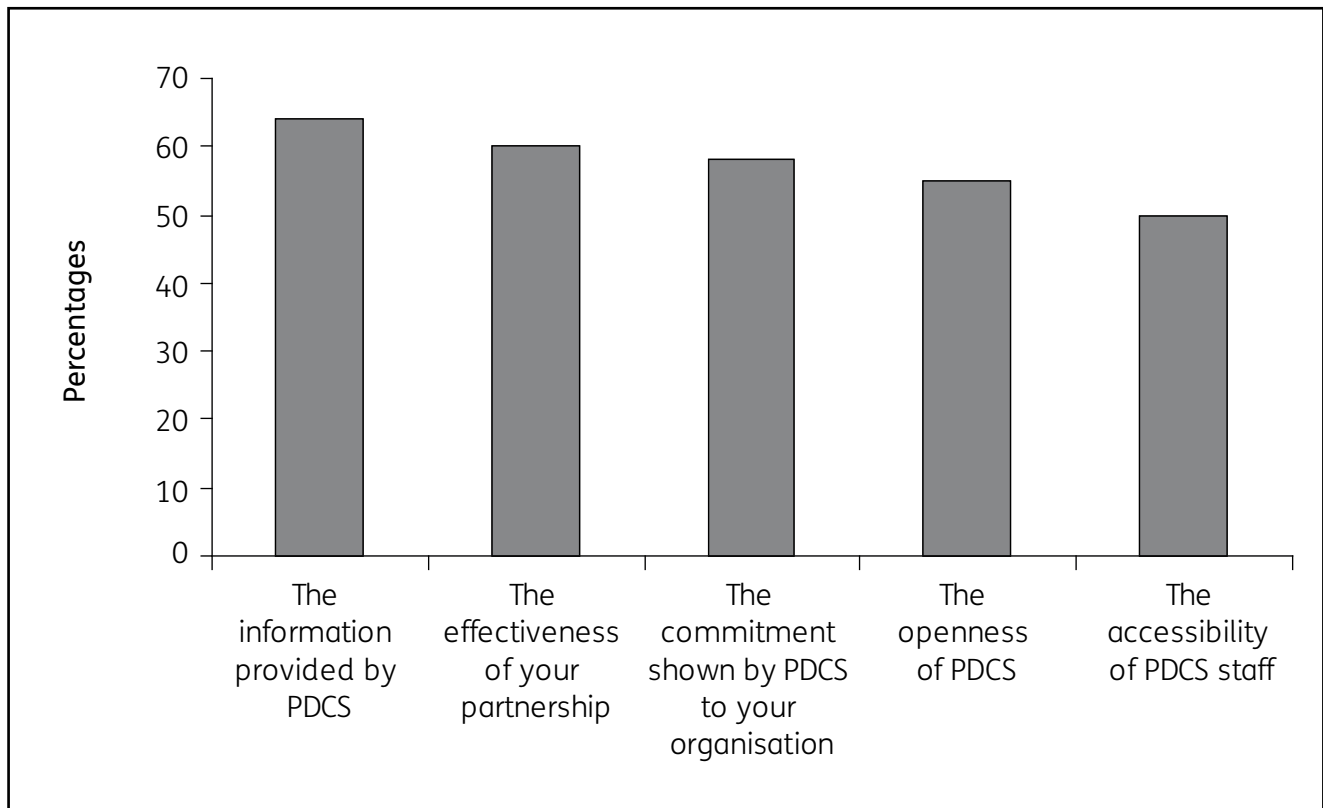
- The accessibility of PDCS staff.
- The effectiveness of your partnership.
- The commitment shown by PDCS your organisation.
- The openness of PDCS.
- The information provided by PDCS.

Scores are assigned to individual partners' and stakeholders' answers, such that 1 equals 'poor' and 5 equals 'excellent'. Figure A.9 shows the percentage of partners and stakeholders who answered '4' or '5'.

There is little difference between how well partners and stakeholders rate each of the five traits; there is only a difference of 14 per cent between the highest and lowest statements. The information provided by PDCS rated the highest, with two thirds of stakeholders (64 per cent) answering 'four' or 'five'. The effectiveness of partners' partnerships with PDCS rated second highest, with 60 per cent, closely followed by the commitment shown by PDCS, with 58 per cent. The accessibility of PDCS staff scored the lowest, with half of all respondents answering '4' or '5' (50 per cent).

The effectiveness of the partnership is a particular measure which applies just to partners, rather than stakeholders. Sixty per cent of partners rate the effectiveness of the partnership as good or excellent – giving a score of 'four' or 'five'.

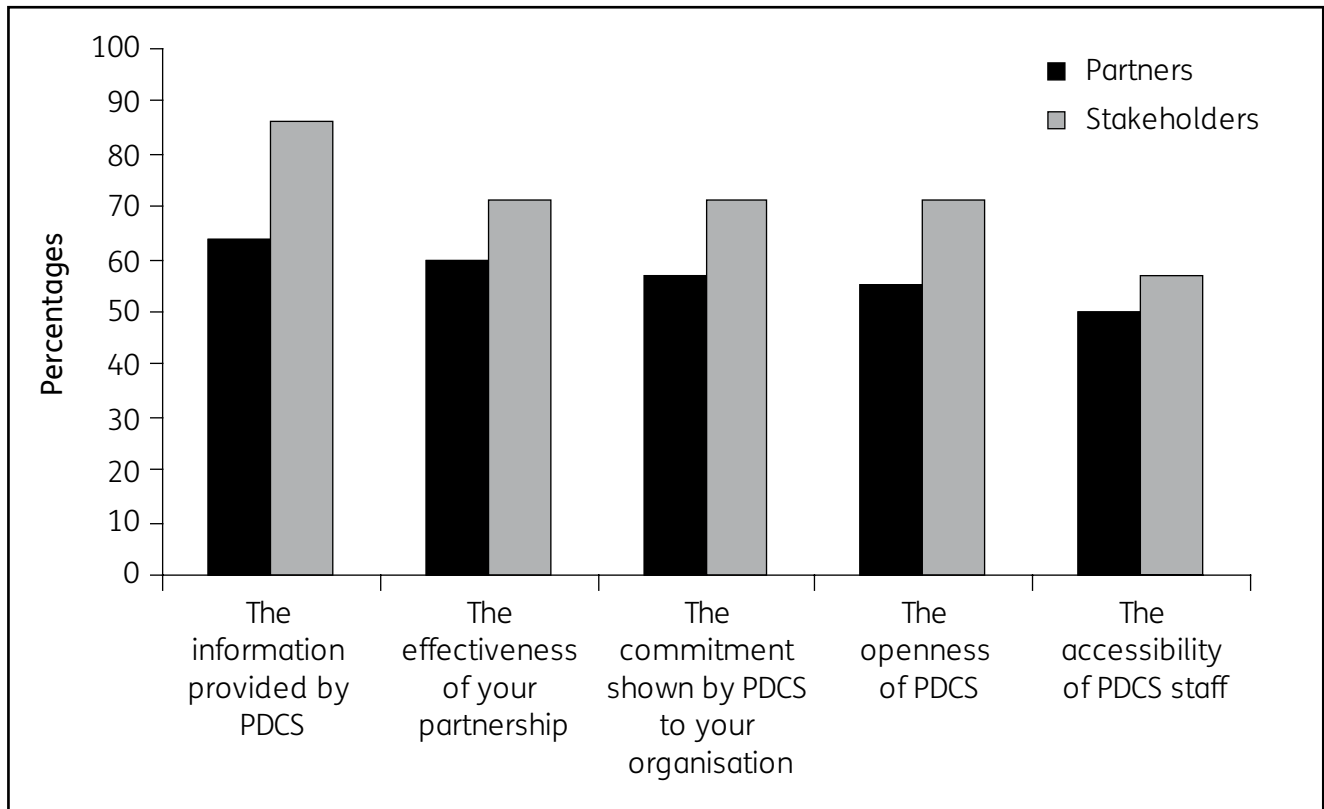
While the ratings could perhaps be higher, it is important to note that less than one in 20 respondents answered 'poor' in all five cases. In addition, at least 23 per cent of respondents answered 'three' or 'don't know' for each of the five statements, with 36 per cent answering this in relation to 'the accessibility of PDCS staff'. While negative ratings for PDCS are low, the high level of respondents who answered 'three' or 'don't know' identifies that this is an area for possible improvement.

**Figure 3.3 Rating PDCS, respondents who answered '4' or '5'**

### 2.3.1 Additional analysis

Analysing the data by region reveals some interesting results. Respondents from Wales and the West are the most likely to hold a positive opinion of PDCS for each of the five statements. Wales and the West recorded the highest rating of all the regions across the UK, the highest being 79 per cent for 'the information provided by PDCS'.

Stakeholders appear to be more likely than partners to be positive about the performance of PDCS across all five statements. The largest variance being 22 per cent for 'the information provided by PDCS', with six out of seven stakeholders answering '4' or '5', compared to 64 per cent of partners. However, it should be noted that, with the exception of 'the accessibility of PDCS staff', not a single stakeholder rated PDCS's services as 'excellent' for the other four statements.

**Figure 3.4 Rating PDCS, respondents who answered '4' or '5'**

### 3.4 How important or otherwise are each of the following to your customers?

- Speed of service delivery.
- Accuracy of service delivery.
- Customer service.
- Availability of information.
- Links to PDCS.

Partners and stakeholders were asked whether they agree or disagree with a set of statements relating to their relationship with PDCS. These areas are particularly applicable to partners and so the analysis focuses on this group.

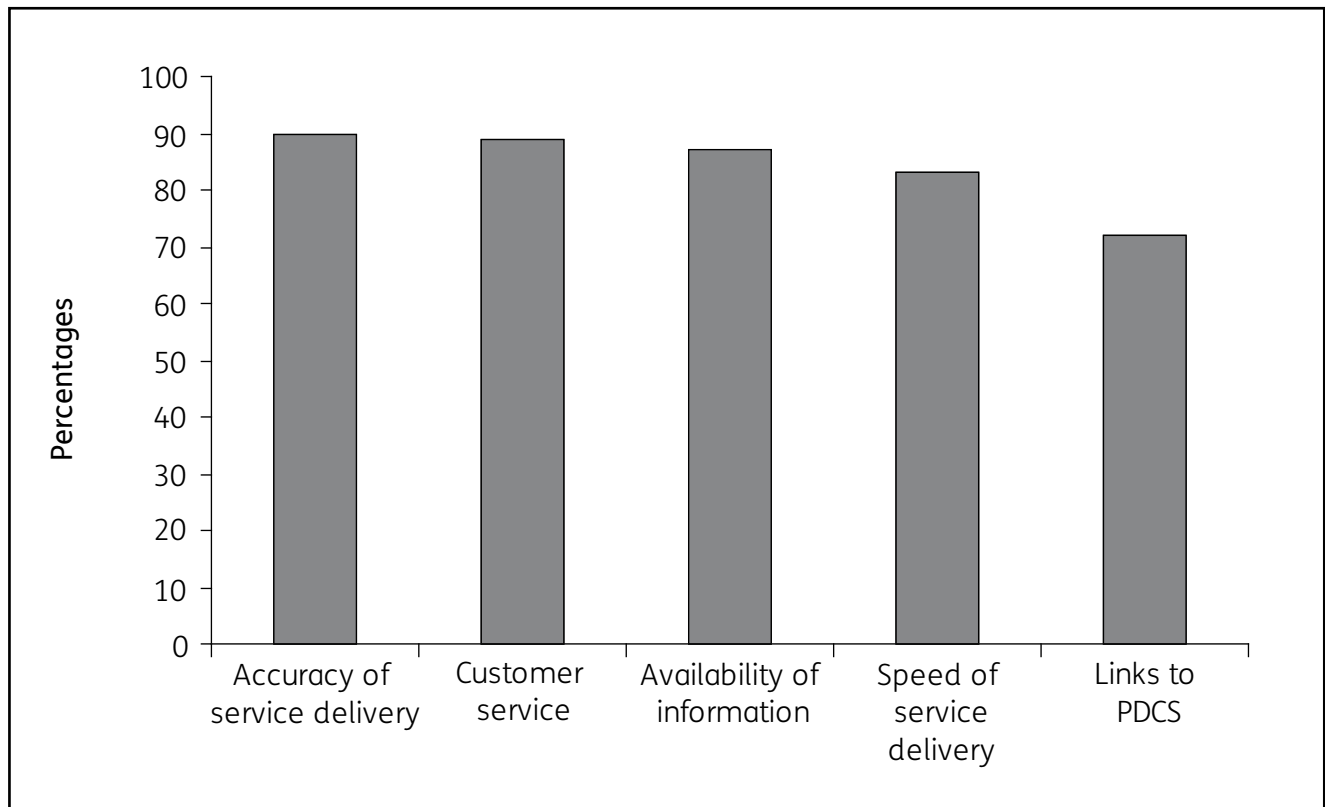
Scores are assigned to individual partners' and stakeholders' answers, such that 1 equals 'very unimportant' and 5 equals 'very important'. Figure 3.5 illustrates the percentage of partners who answered '4' or '5'.

It is quite clear that partners feel that all of the five services mentioned are important to their customers. Participants identify 'accuracy of service delivery' as the most important service for their customers, with 90 per cent. Indeed, 73 per cent of partners feel that this is 'very important'. 'Customer service' and 'availability of information' rank second and third most important, with 89 per cent and 87 per cent respectively. 'Speed of service delivery' ranks fourth with 83 per cent just more than half of all partners (55 per cent) who feel it is a 'very important' service for their customers.

Even, 'links to PDCS', which ranks as the least important, still records 72 per cent of partners answering '4' or '5', with 42 per cent of partners answering 'very important'. This is complemented by a maximum of two per cent of partners answering 'very unimportant' for each of the five areas.

Partners consider the 'accuracy of service delivery' to be important to their customers, with 90 per cent answering '4' or '5'.

**Figure 3.5 Importance of services**



PDCS is clearly held in high regard by its partners. The challenge over the coming months and years will be to maintain the high standard of service delivery to partners and stakeholders alike.

### 3.5 How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

- My organisation is happy for our customers to know that we have a partnership with PDCS.
- My organisation is proud to be a PDCS partner.
- PDCS understands the role my organisation plays in partnership with PDCS.
- PDCS supports our service provision well.
- Our customers are not aware of PDCS.

Partners and stakeholders were asked whether they agree or disagree with a set of statements relating to their relationship with PDCS. These areas are particularly applicable to partners and so the analysis focuses on this group.



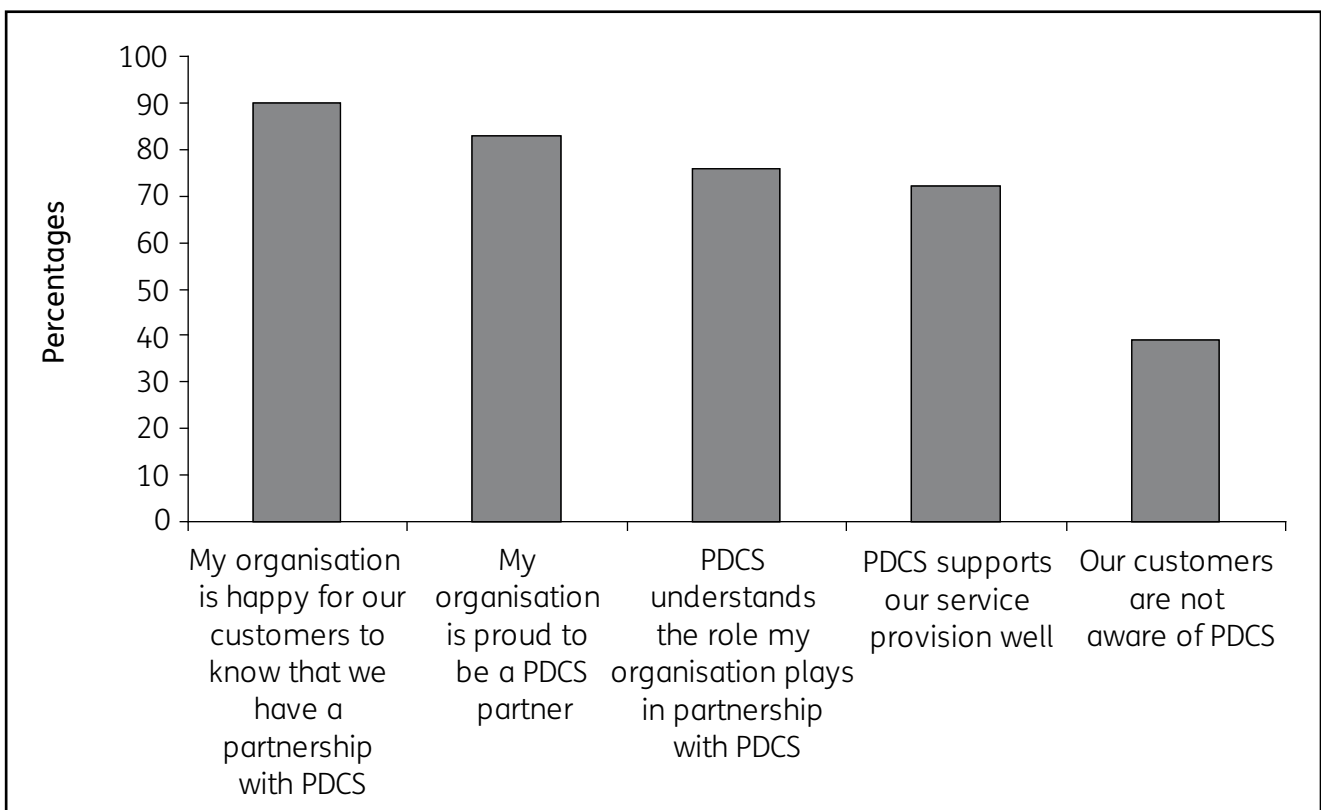
Figure 3.6 illustrates the percentage of partners and stakeholders who responded ‘agree strongly’ or ‘agree’ to each of the five statements.

The two statements that receive the highest scores both relate to partners seeing their partnership with PDCS as positive. An overwhelming majority of partners (90 per cent) state that their organisation is happy for their customers to know that they have a partnership with PDCS. Similarly, 83 per cent of partners feel their organisation is proud to be a PDCS partner.

Out of the five statements, partners rank ‘PDCS understands the role my organisation plays in partnership with PDCS’ the third highest score with three-quarters agreeing (76 per cent). They also hold the opinion that PDCS supports their service provisions well with 72 per cent agreeing and just one in five (19 per cent) disagreeing.

From previous questions, we know that 95 per cent of respondents stated they know at least a small amount about PDCS. Responding to the statement ‘our customers are not aware of PDCS’, 38 per cent of partners state their customers are not aware of PDCS, with 53 per cent disagreeing with this. This decreased level of awareness is perhaps not surprising given that customers who work with partner organisations are likely to only come into contact with The Pension Service or the Disability and Carers Service separately, rather than PDCS as an organisation.

**Figure 3.6 Levels of agreement, percentage of people who ‘agree strongly’ or ‘agree’**

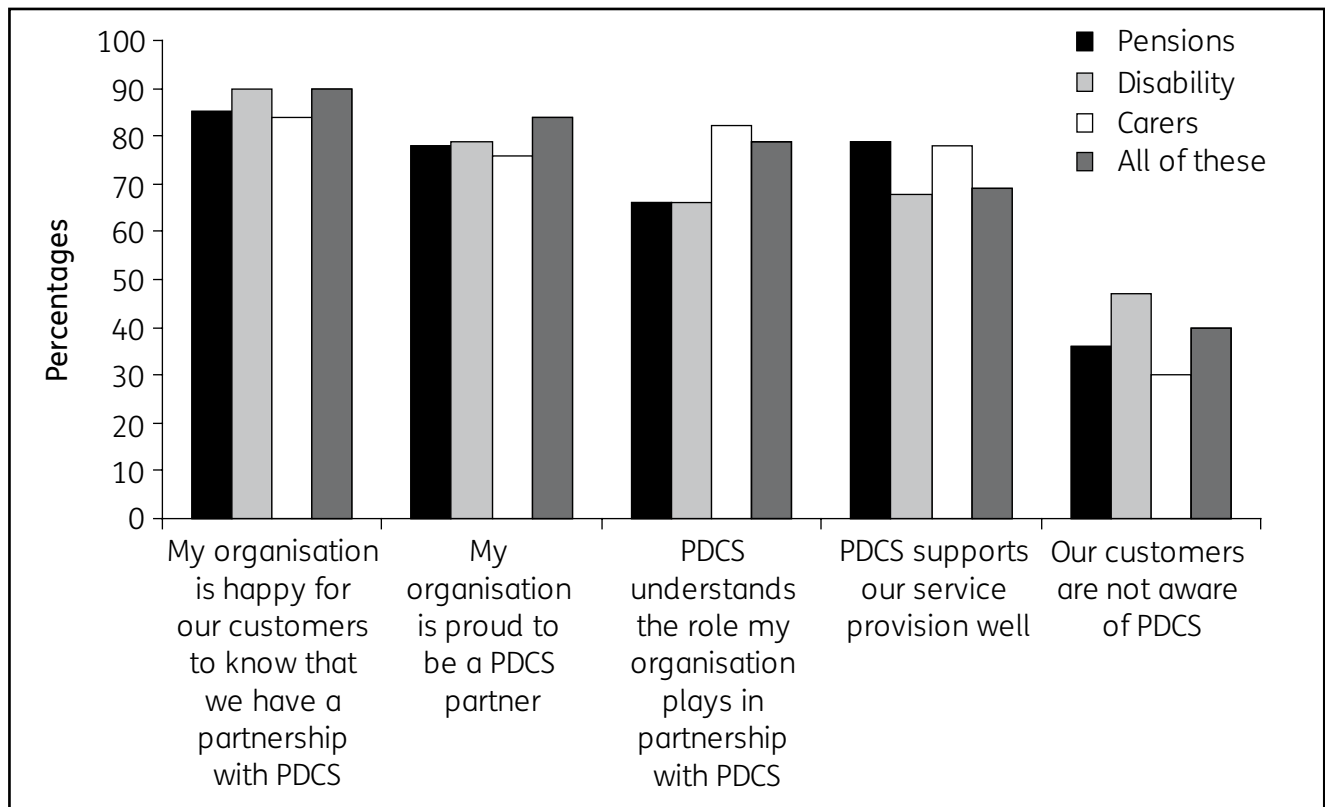


### 3.5.1 Additional analysis

Considering the focus of the partner organisation reveals some interesting results about levels of awareness of PDCS. A third of partners and stakeholders (30 per cent) whose organisation focuses on carers services agree with the statement ‘our customers are not aware of PDCS’.

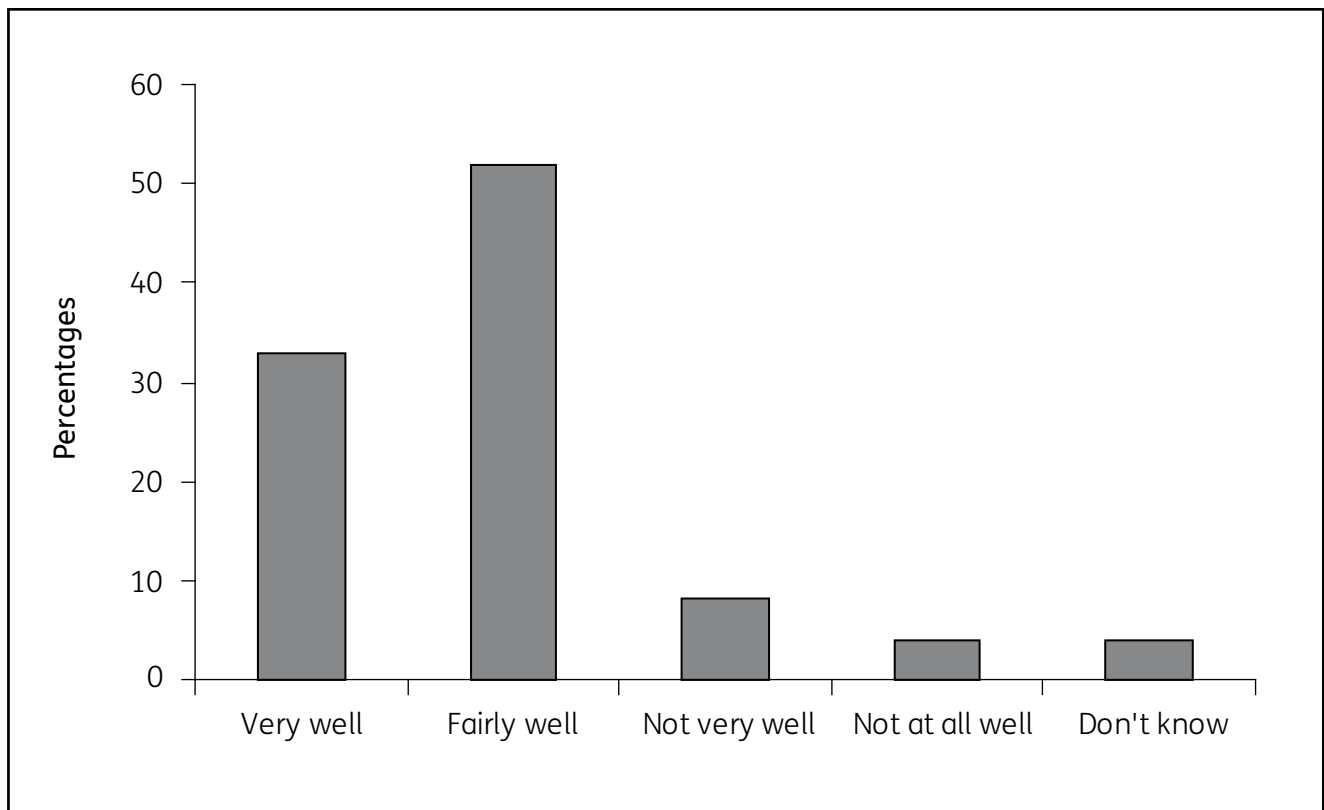
Almost a third of respondents (29 per cent) whose organisation focuses on disability services disagree with the statement 'PDCS understand the role of their organisation plays in partnership with PDCS'. This is supported by one in five (21 per cent) of those whose organisation focuses on pensions services who disagree with this statement. This is in stark contrast, to partners or stakeholders whose organisation focuses on carers services, with only four per cent who disagree with this statement.

**Figure 3.7 Levels of agreement, percentage of people who answered 'agree strongly' or 'agree'**



### 3.6 How well does PDCS work with your organisation to provide a good service to joint customers?

Partners and stakeholders are overwhelmingly of the opinion that PDCS works well with their organisations to provide good services to joint customers. This is supported by almost nine in ten respondents (85 per cent), and 32 per cent agree strongly. Only a tenth of partners (12 per cent) and 14 per cent of stakeholders feel that PDCS does not work well to provide a good service for joint customers.

**Figure 3.8 Working to provide good service to joint customers**

### 3.6.1 Additional analysis

By region, partners and stakeholders from the Midlands and the East are the most likely to think that PDCS works well with their organisation to provide good services to joint customers, with 93 per cent answering 'very well' or 'fairly well'. Respondents from London and the South are the least likely, with 18 per cent disagreeing.

Considering partners' and stakeholders' roles within their organisations, top level directors, Chief Executives and Managing Directors are most likely to feel that PDCS does not work well with their organisation to provide a good service to joint customers. A quarter of top level partners and stakeholders are of this opinion (24 per cent), as are 19 per cent of functional managers and directors and 16 per cent of junior managers. Team heads are the most positive, with 88 per cent stating that PDCS works well with their organisation to provide a good service to joint customers, compared to less than one in ten (nine per cent) who disagree. Perhaps these differences are explained by the amount of personal contact with PDCS.

While 86 per cent of stakeholders say that PDCS works fairly well with their respective organisations to provide a good service to joint customers, none say that PDCS does this very well. On the other hand 33 per cent of partners say that PDCS does work very well with their organisations to provide a good service to joint customers.

## 3.7 How would you rate the information you receive from PDCS on each of the following:

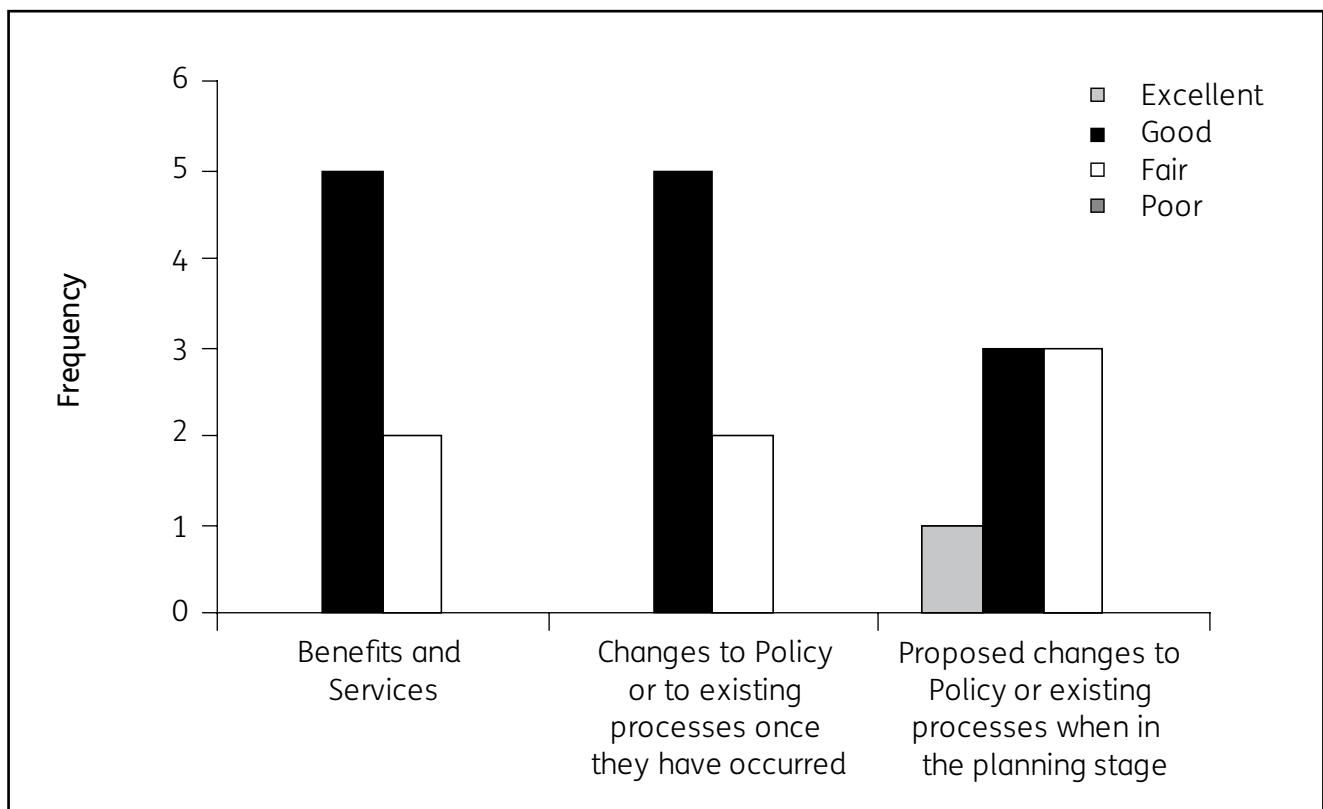
- Benefits and Services.
- Changes to Policy or to existing processes once they have occurred.
- Proposed changes to Policy or existing processes when in the planning stage.

Partners and stakeholders were asked to rate the information received by PDCS as ‘excellent’, ‘good’, ‘fair’ and ‘poor’ regarding the three different areas. This question and the following one are particularly applicable to stakeholders, rather than partners. Therefore, the analysis focuses on this group, but it is important to bear in mind the small sample size.

PDCS should be pleased with their overall positive reputation, but this question highlights a significant opportunity for information provision.

Stakeholders rate the information received from PDCS on ‘benefits and services and changes to policy’ or ‘to existing processes once they have occurred’ equally, with five stakeholders saying that the information is ‘good’ and two saying it is ‘fair’. Three stakeholders rate the information received regarding ‘proposed changes to policy or existing processes when in the planning stage’ as ‘good’, while one stakeholder rates it as ‘excellent’. Three stakeholders rate the information received as ‘fair’. Encouragingly for PDCS, no stakeholders rate the information received on any of the three issues as ‘poor’.

**Figure 3.9 Received information from PDCS**



### 3.8 How well do you think PDCS takes account of your organisation’s views on each of the following issues?

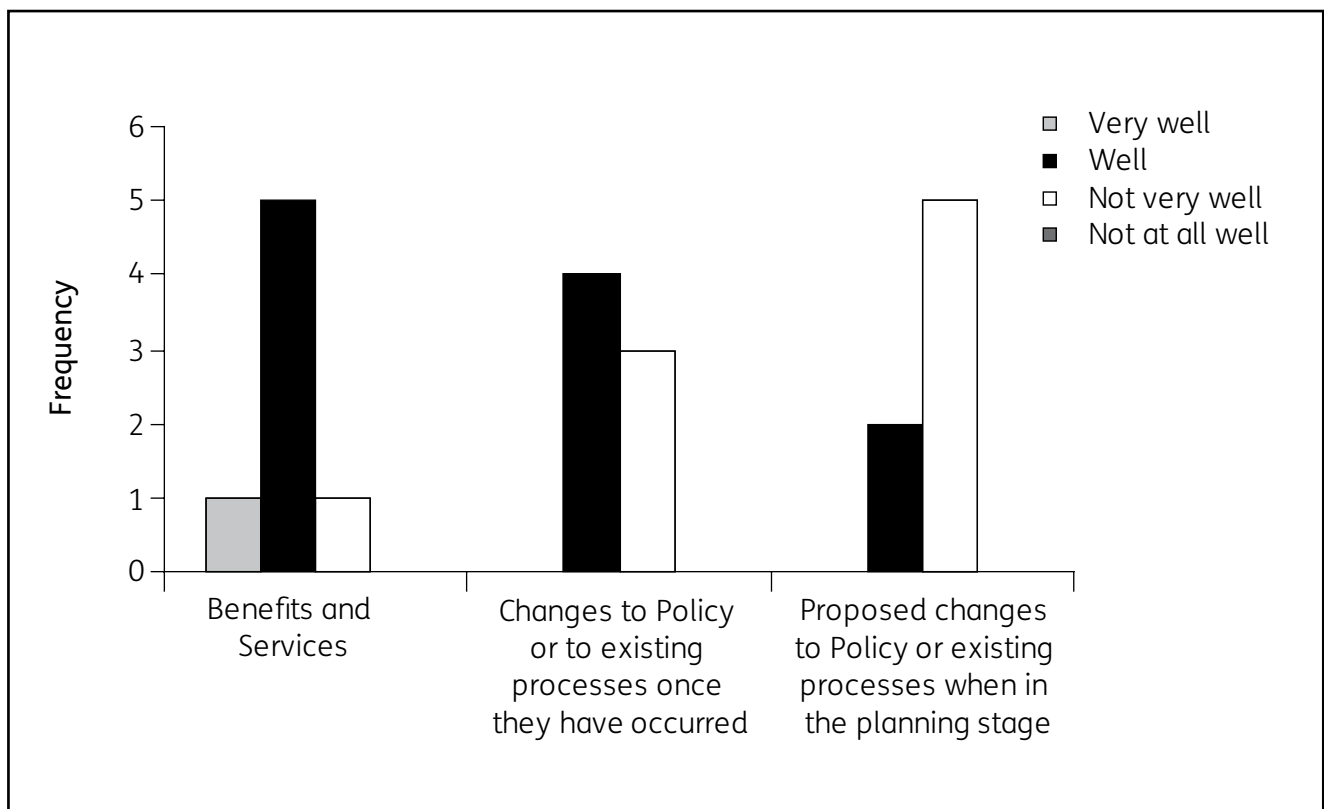
- Benefits and services.
- Changes to policy or to existing processes once they have occurred.
- Proposed changes to policy or existing processes when in the planning stage.

Partners' and stakeholders were asked to rate how well PDCS takes into account the view's of their organisation regarding the three different areas. This question and the following one are particularly applicable to stakeholders, rather than partners. Therefore, the analysis focuses on this group but it is important to bear in mind the small sample size.

Contrary to the previous question, while stakeholders feel the information they received from PDCS regarding changes in policy is predominantly good, it scores lower for taking account of their organisations views. Two and four stakeholders respectively feel that PDCS takes into account 'proposed changes to policy or existing process when in the planning stage' and 'changes to policy or to existing processes once they have occurred' was considered 'fairly well'. Five stakeholders feel that PDCS takes account of their organisation's views 'fairly well' with regard to 'benefits and services', with one stakeholder stating his organisation's views are taken into account 'very well'. Only one stakeholder thinks that PDCS does not take account of their organisation's views well with regard to benefits and services.

Stakeholders are unlikely to think that PDCS takes account of the views of their organisations in regard to proposed changes to policy or existing processes when in the planning stage. Opinion is split, with two stakeholders thinking that PDCS do this fairly well, while five disagree.

**Figure 3.10 Taking account of organisations' views**



## 4 PDCS communications

### 4.1 How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

- PDCS communicates well with me as a partner.
- PDCS takes on board feedback from my organisation well.
- PDCS keeps me up to date on new initiatives or changes to service administration.
- PDCS could be better at feeding back on outcomes to the enquiries we have.
- PDCS keeps me informed of the outcomes of joint initiatives.
- PDCS understands my organisation's objectives.

Figure 4.1 shows the percentage of partners who 'agree strongly' or 'agree'. This question is applicable to partners, rather than stakeholders. Therefore, the analysis focuses on this group.

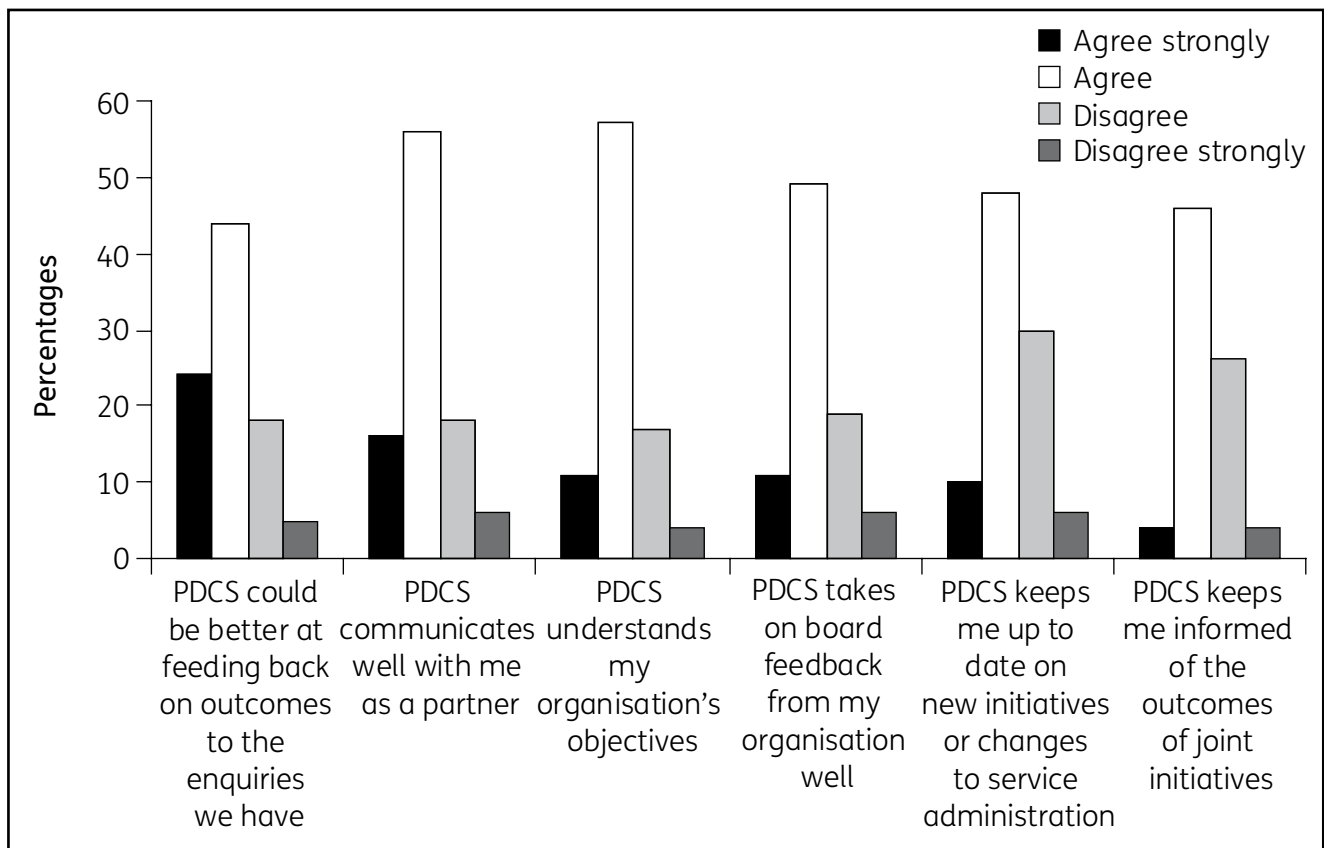
There appear to be mixed messages here. In general, respondents are in agreement with each of the six statements, with at least 50 per cent of partners agreeing or agreeing strongly for each statement. However, there are opportunities for improvement.

Of the six statements, partners are most likely to agree that 'PDCS communicates well with me as a partner' with 72 per cent agreeing. More than two-thirds of respondents (68 per cent) agree, with a quarter (24 per cent) agreeing strongly. This could be seen as an opportunity for PDCS to improve their feedback with partners on outcomes, and consequently improve their working relationship.

The majority of partners 71 per cent and 67 per cent respectively agree that PDCS communicates well with them as a partner and understands their organisation's objectives.

The statement that respondents are least likely to agree with is 'PDCS keeps me informed of the outcomes of joint initiatives' with half of partners in agreement (50 per cent). However, almost a third disagree (31 per cent). Similarly, 68 per cent of partners agree that PDCS could be better at feeding back on outcomes to the enquiries that partner organisations have, a quarter of whom agree strongly (24 per cent). With this in mind, more thorough and regular feedback to partner organisations may go a long way to improving general favourability towards PDCS.

**Figure 4.1 Percentage of respondents who agree with each statement**



### 4.1.1 Additional analysis

The group of respondents most likely to disagree with the four positive statements are junior managers. More than half of all junior managers (53 per cent) disagree that PDCS keeps them up to date on new initiatives and informed of outcomes of joint initiatives. Thirty-seven per cent disagree that PDCS takes on board feedback well, while a third disagree that PDCS understands their organisation's objectives well (32 per cent) or communicates well with them as a partner (31 per cent).

Analysing the data further reveals that those who have had face-to-face contact with PDCS are more likely to agree with each of the four positive statements, recording more positive responses than those who have not had face-to-face contact. Therefore, as mentioned earlier, face-to-face contact is a practice PDCS could utilise, as it appears to lead to increased favourability among partners perhaps through the medium of regular meetings.

Looking at the data further, stakeholders are more likely to hold a positive view of PDCS's communications than partners, recording higher scores on five of the six statements. Eighty-six per cent of stakeholders agree that PDCS keeps them well informed of the outcomes of joint initiatives and understands their organisations objectives. This compares to 50 per cent and 67 per cent of partners who agree with these statements respectively.

## 4.2 In which areas, if any, would your organisation value additional support or services from PDCS?

PDCS partners and stakeholders were asked unprompted where they would value more support. The top areas are given below.

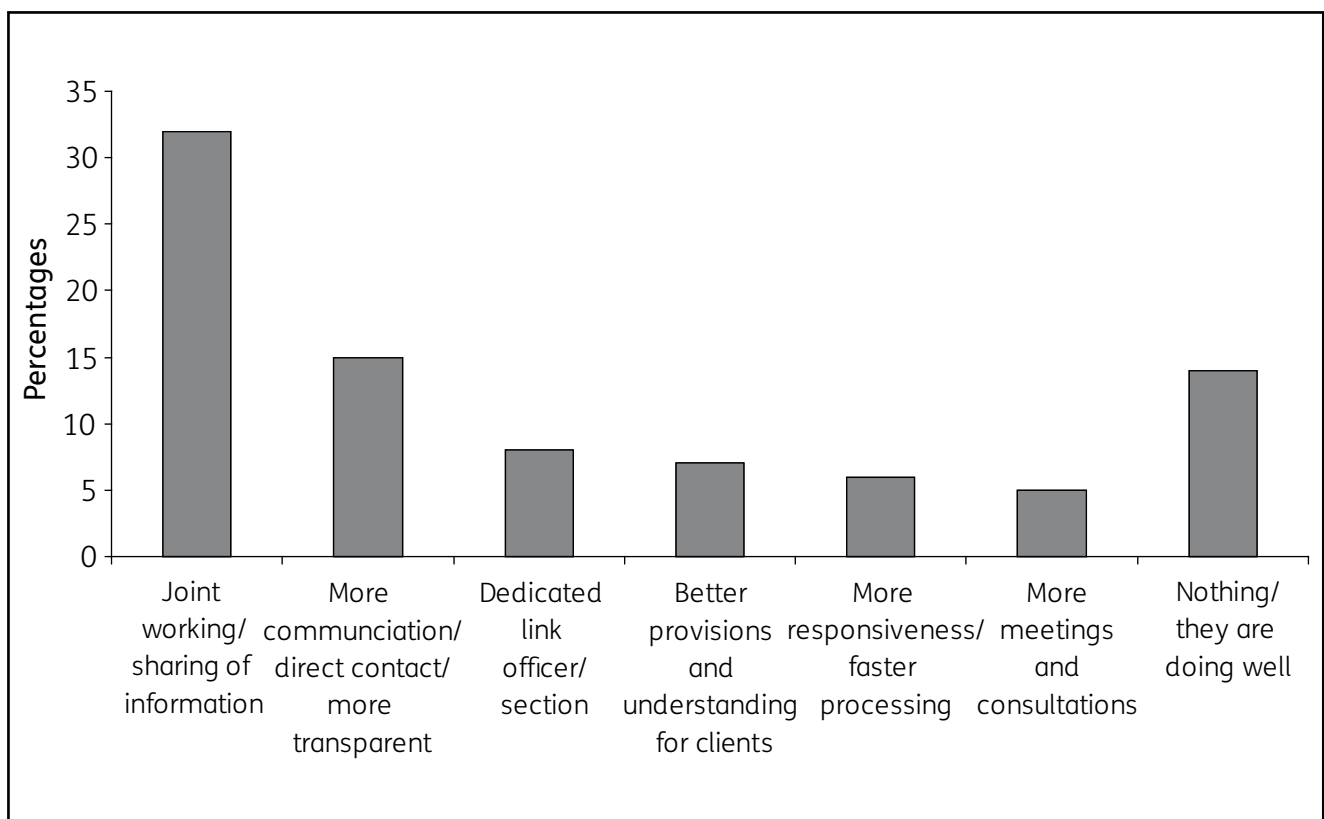
The area where partners and stakeholders are most likely to feel that their organisation would value additional support or services from PDCS is in joint working and the sharing of information. A third

of respondents say this (32 per cent). Fifteen per cent say they would like ‘more communication or direct contact’, highlighting possible opportunities for improvement.

Around one in ten of partners feel that having a dedicated link officer (eight per cent), as well as better provisions and understanding for clients (seven per cent) are areas where PDCS could offer additional support. Twenty-nine per cent of stakeholders cited more meetings or consultations could help build on the relationship.

However, 15 per cent of respondents are happy with the job that PDCS are doing and feel their organisation would not value any additional services. Given that respondents were unprompted, this reflects positively on PDCS.

**Figure 4.2 Areas of valued additional support**



**4.2.1 Additional analysis**

Encouragingly for PDCS, a quarter of partners whose organisation focuses on pensions services are happy with the services they receive from PDCS (24 per cent). However, more than a third of partners and stakeholders who feel that they could benefit from more joint working or sharing or information and feedback.

Only 16 per cent of partners and stakeholders whose organisation focuses on disability services are happy with the service they receive from PDCS. One in five (18 per cent) think they could benefit from more communication and a third (32 per cent) think they could benefit from joint working and sharing of information.

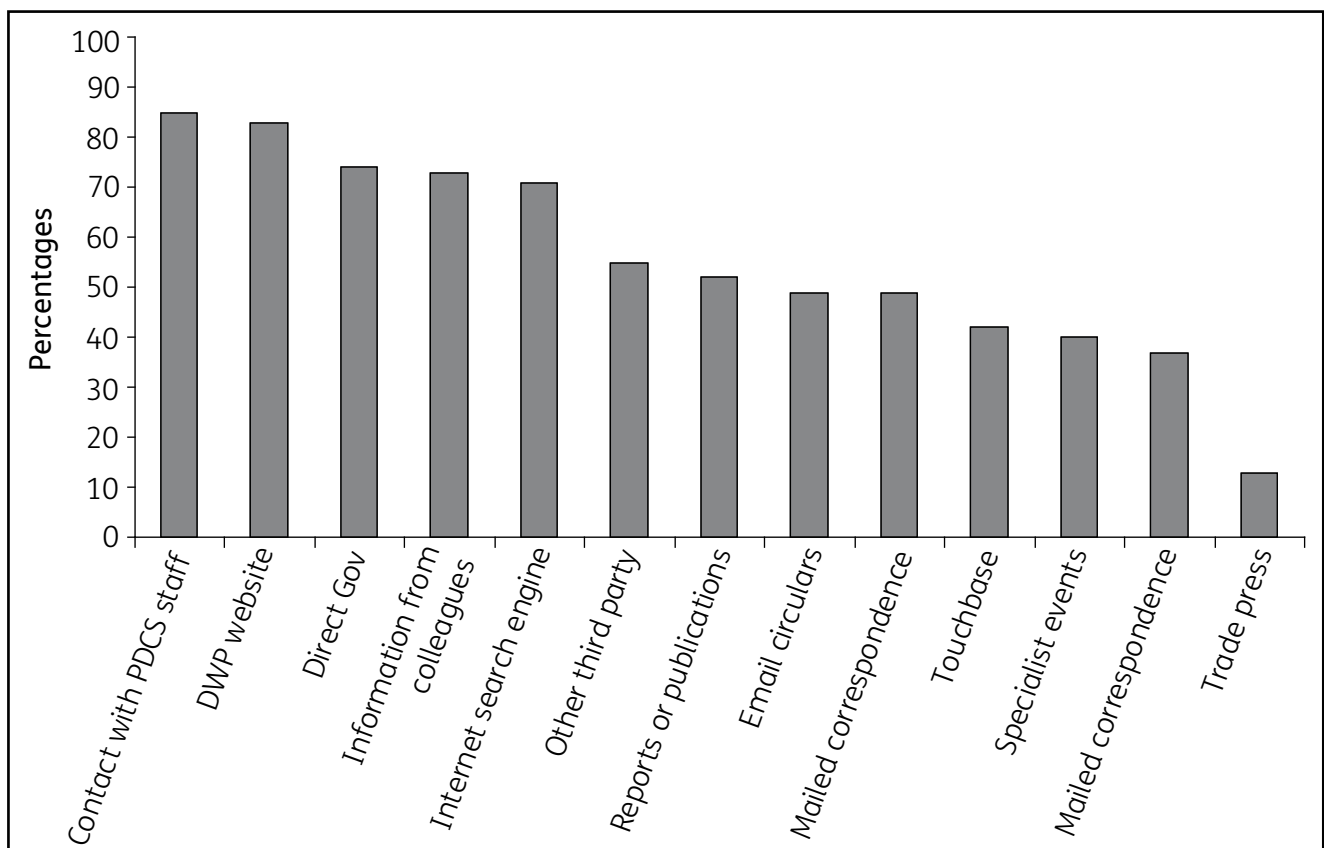
Similarly to organisations that focus on pensions and disability services, 22 per cent of partners and stakeholders who work in the carers service would benefit from joint working and sharing of information would support. Fifteen per cent feel they would benefit from more communication and more direct contact, while seven per cent feel they would benefit from a dedicated link officer and more meetings and consultations. Thirteen per cent are completely happy with the service they receive from PDCS and do not suggest any improvements.



### 4.3 Which of the following, if any, do you currently use to get information about PDCS or its services?

The internet is a widely used tool for partners and stakeholders to obtain information about PDCS. In particular, the switch to the Directgov website is recent and important to measure. Eighty-three per cent of partners or stakeholders use the DWP website and 74 per cent use the Directgov website, while 71 per cent of respondents use internet search engines. However, the most widely used source of information to obtain information about PDCS for partners and stakeholders is contact with PDCS staff (85 per cent). Only 13 per cent of partners and stakeholders use trade press.

**Figure 4.3 Source of information about PDCS**



#### 4.3.1 Additional analysis

Analysing participants by their seniority within their organisation reveals some further interesting results. Top level directors' and Chief Executives' main source of information about PDCS is the DWP website (94 per cent). Contact with PDCS staff is the most popular source of information for functional directors (81 per cent) and managers (89 per cent), with 79 per cent of junior managers using a combination of Directgov and information from their colleagues as the most common source of information about PDCS. This emphasises the value of PDCS contact with key individuals.

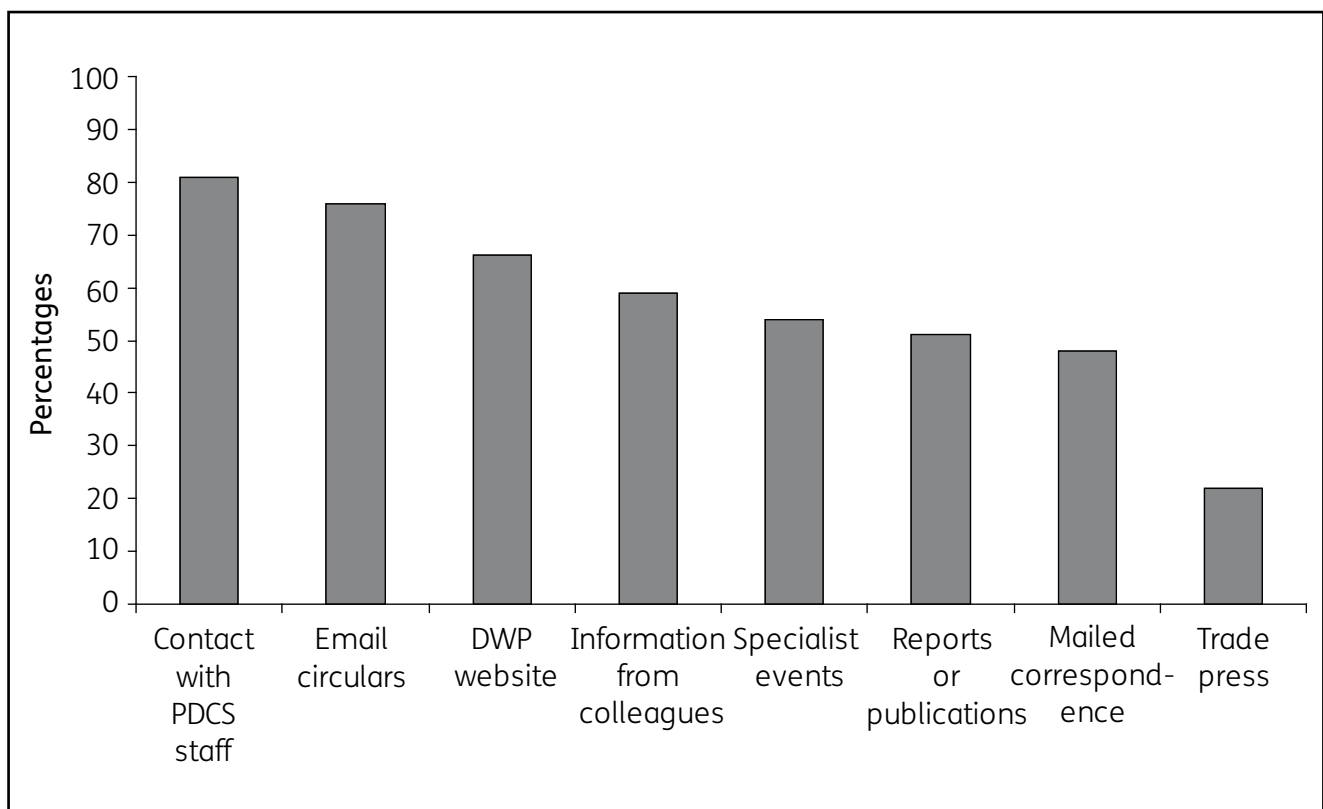
Stakeholders are more likely than partners to use different sources of information about PDCS or its services. All the stakeholders interviewed say that they use contact with PDCS staff, email circulars, mailed correspondence from PDCS, reports and publications, specialist events including publications, Directgov and internet search engines.

#### 4.4 How would you prefer to have contact with PDCS in the future?

In the future, partners' and stakeholders' preferred form of contact with PDCS is most likely to be with PDCS staff (81 per cent). This is followed by circular emails including updates and newsletters (76 per cent), and the DWP website (66 per cent). More than half of all partners and stakeholders would prefer to have contact with PDCS through information from colleagues (59 per cent), specialist events including conferences (54 per cent) and reports and publications (51 per cent). Only 22 per cent of respondents would prefer to have contact with PDCS by trade press.

This gravitation towards email circulars and using the DWP website is in line with increasing dependency on the internet as a means of communication. However, the fact that 81 per cent of partners and stakeholders would still like to be contacted by PDCS staff in the future, highlights that personal contact is still necessary. This is another significant opportunity for PDCS, given that 85 per cent of partners and stakeholders currently get information about PDCS from contact with PDCS staff, and the positive impact of face-to-face contact, which has been identified earlier in the report.

**Figure 4.4 Preferred method of contact**



Overall, it appears that partners and stakeholders are favourable towards all forms of communication, with most selecting a number of these options. This is implied by more than half of all respondents (51 per cent) who would prefer to have contact by reports and publications, even though it ranked sixth.

Compared to how partners and stakeholders currently receive information about PDCS, it appears they would like to be contacted more via email. Currently, half of all participants (50 per cent) receive information about PDCS through email circulars, and three-quarters (76 per cent) would prefer to be contacted this way in the future.

## 4.5 How useful, or otherwise, do you think each of the following is for your organisation?

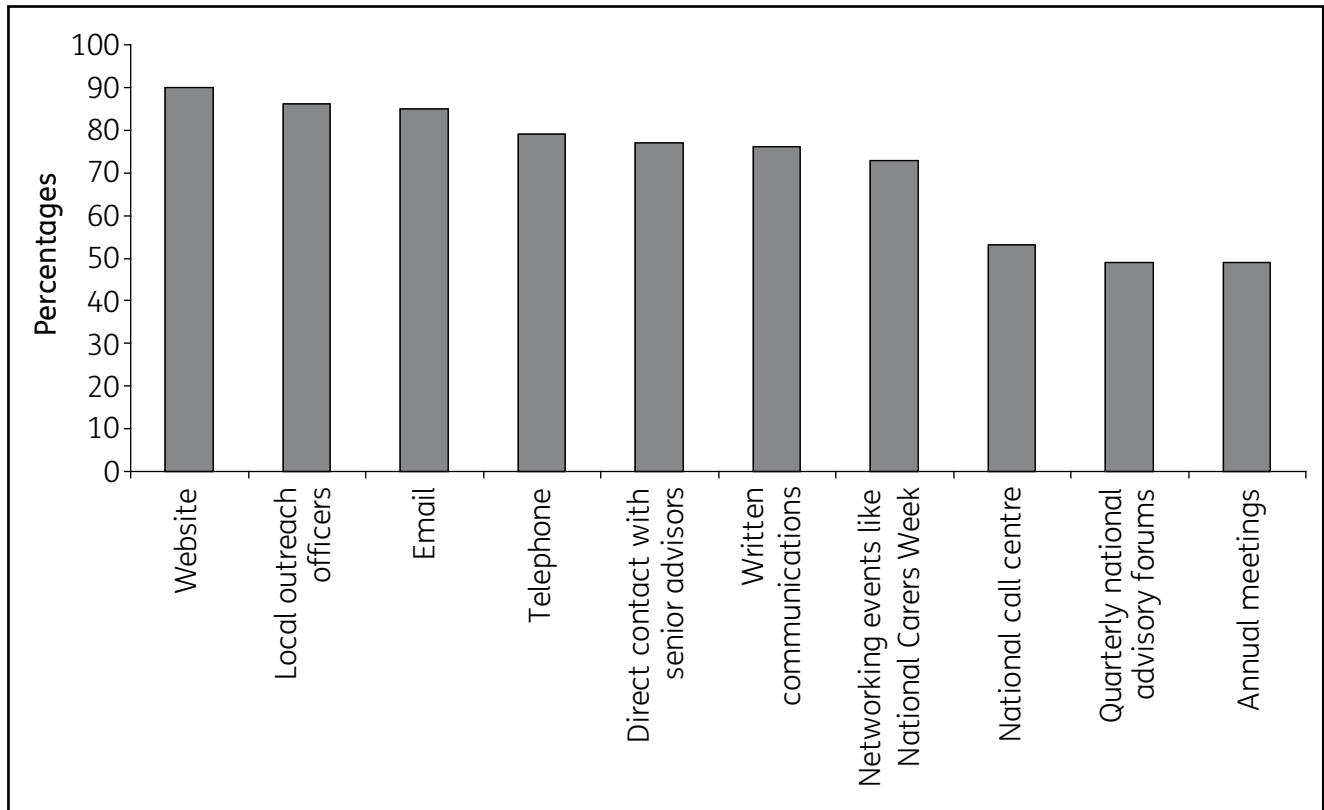
- Local outreach officers.
- Quarterly national advisory forums.
- Website.
- Email.
- Direct contact with senior advisers.
- Telephone.
- Networking events like National Carers Week.
- Written communications.
- Annual meetings.
- National call centre.

Scores are assigned to individual partners' and stakeholders' answers, where 4 equals 'very useful', 3 equals 'fairly useful', 2 equals 'not very useful' and 1 equals 'not at all useful'. Figure 4.5 illustrates the percentage of partners and stakeholders who answered 'very useful' or 'fairly useful'.

It is clear from Figure 4.5 that partners and stakeholders consider most of the initiatives at least fairly useful. Indeed, half of all partners and stakeholders (49 per cent) would find the two least popular initiatives, annual meetings and Quarterly national advisory forums useful. Local outreach officers appear to be very popular among participants, with 86 per cent stating that it would be useful for their organisations. This sentiment is echoed in the qualitative interviews too.

Websites and emails are also considered extremely useful by partners and stakeholders, with 90 per cent and 85 per cent respectively saying 'very' or 'fairly' useful. By contrast, telephones and written communications appear to be slightly less useful, with 17 per cent and 15 per cent of respondents find using a telephone or written communication 'not very useful' or 'not at all useful'. This highlights that with the development of technology and communications, there is a rapid move away from telephones and letters as a useful and efficient form of communication for organisations, with email and the internet considered more suitable in this modern era, and is something that should be considered by PDCS.

**Figure 4.5 Usefulness for partners' organisations**



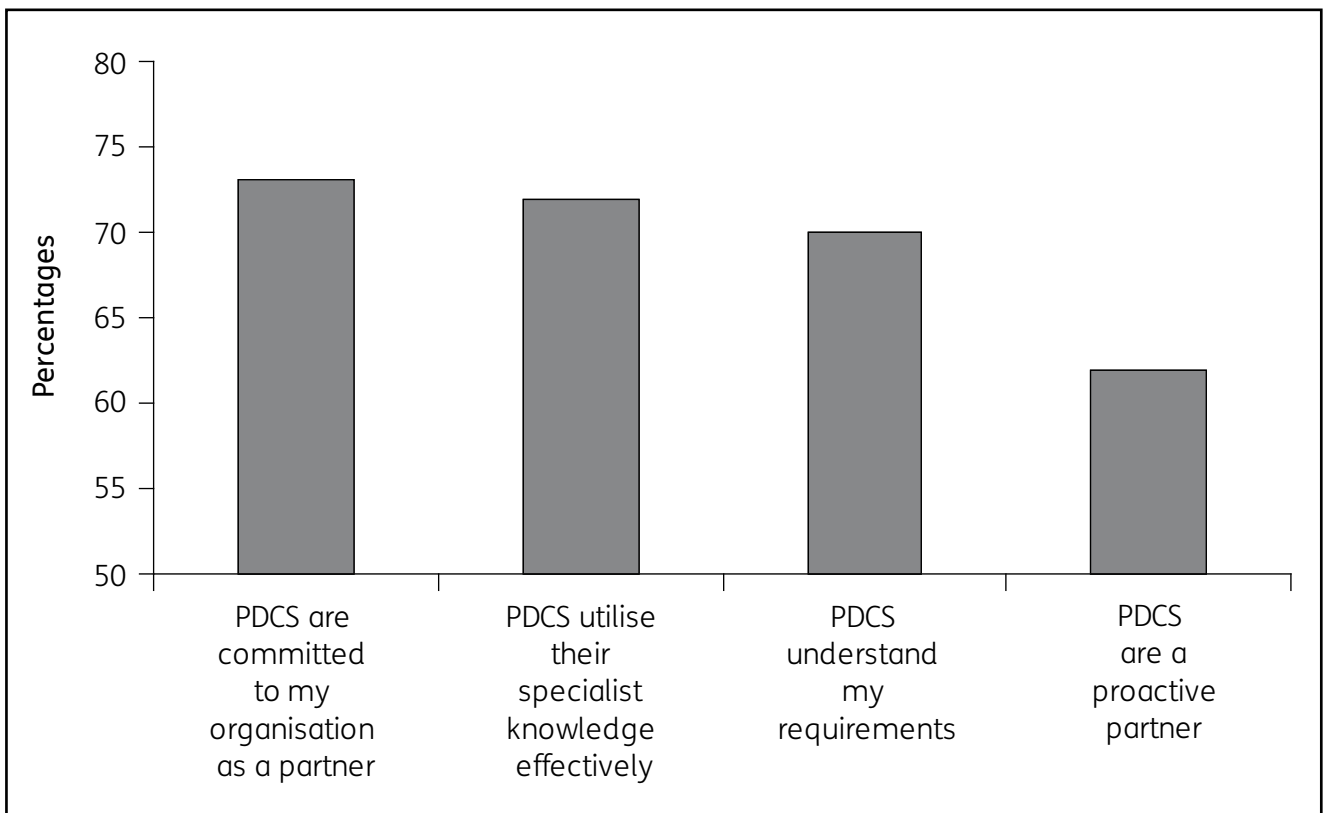
#### 4.6 How strongly do you agree or disagree with each of the following statements?

- PDCS understand my requirements.
- PDCS utilise their specialist knowledge effectively.
- PDCS is committed to my organisation as a partner.
- PDCS is a proactive partner.

Scores are assigned to individual partners' and stakeholders' answers, where 'agree strongly' equals four, 'agree' equals three, 'disagree' equals two and 'disagree strongly' equals one. Figure 4.6 illustrates the percentage of partners who responded 'agree strongly' or 'agree'. These statements are most relevant to partners and so the analysis focuses on their views.

The majority of respondents (62 per cent) say that PDCS is a proactive partner however with 31 per cent disagreeing this highlights a possible area for improvement. For the remaining three statements, there is a higher level of agreement. Partners are most likely to agree with the statement 'PDCS is committed to my organisation as a partner', recording a mean score of 2.96. 72 per cent of partners agree with this statement.. Similarly, 73 per cent agree that PDCS utilise their specialist knowledge effectively, and 70 per cent agree that PDCS understand their requirements.

**Figure 4.6 PDCS’s relationship with partners, percentage who answered ‘agree strongly’ or ‘agree’**



Forty-three per cent of stakeholders disagree that PDCS utilises their specialist knowledge effectively, compared to 13 per cent of partners who say the same thing.

Fifteen per cent of partners agree strongly that PDCS utilises their specialist knowledge effectively.

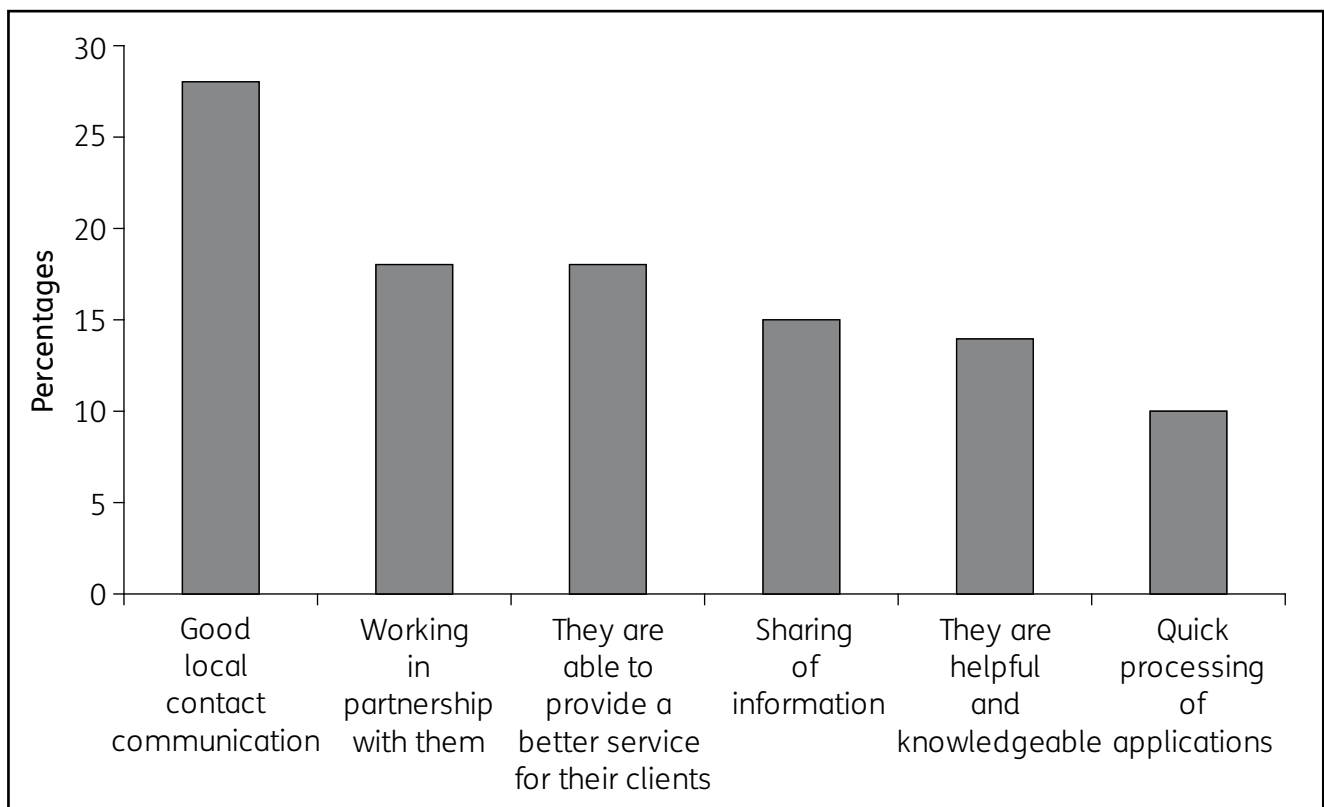
# 5 Evaluating the partnership

## 5.1 What would you say is the best thing about your partnership with PDCS?

Partners were asked unprompted what they considered to be the best thing about their partnership with PDCS. The top areas are given in this section.

Good local contact communication tops the list of the best things about a partnership with PDCS, with more than a quarter of all partners (28 per cent) saying this. This is very high considering the question is unprompted. One in five partners identify that the best thing about their partnership with PDCS is working in partnership with them (18 per cent) and that they are able to provide a better service for their clients (18 per cent). Fifteen per cent of partners say the best thing about PDCS is their ability to share information, while 14 per cent find them helpful and knowledgeable. One in ten participants feel that the quick processing of applications is the best thing about their partnership with PDCS.

**Figure 5.1 Best thing about partnership with PDCS**



### 5.1.1 Additional analysis

Both partners whose organisation focuses on pension services and disability services would say the best thing about their partnership with PDCS is their good local contact communication (24 per cent and 29 per cent respectively). A fifth of all partners whose organisation focuses on carers services say 'sharing of information' is the best thing about their relationship with PDCS.

Top level directors, functional directors and managers, team heads and other employees are likely to consider ‘good local contact communication’ as the best thing about their partnership with PDCS. While 16 per cent of junior managers agree, a third say the best thing is ‘working in partnership with them’. This may be because junior managers are most likely to have direct contact with PDCS.

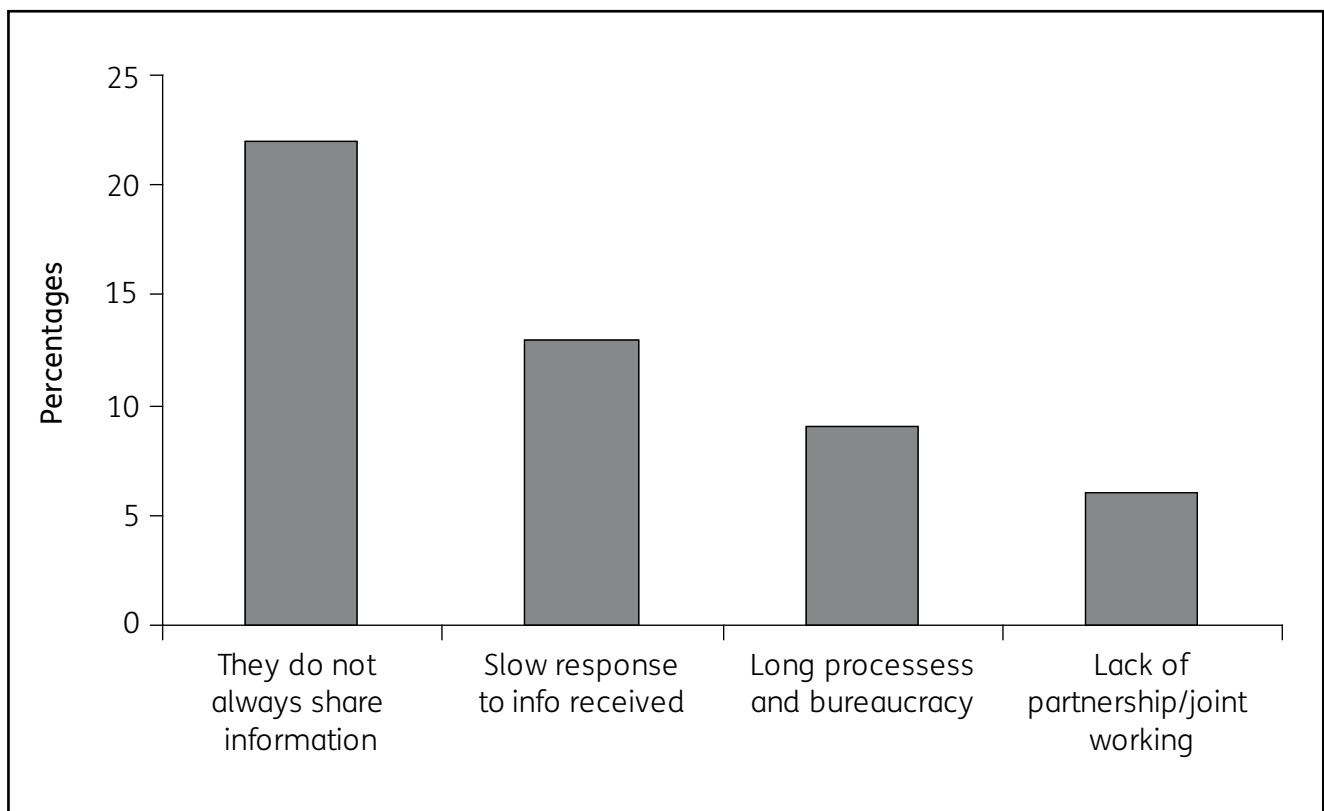
## 5.2 What would you say is the worst thing about your partnership with PDCS?

Partners are most likely to think that the worst thing about their partnership with PDCS is that they do not always share information. This appears to be a recurrent theme, with the lack of shared information or feedback being the main criticism partners have of PDCS.

Interestingly, 22 per cent of partners hold this view, which contrasts to 15 per cent answering that the sharing of information is the best thing about their partnership with PDCS. Similarly, around one in ten respondents think that the slow response to information received (13 per cent), and the long processes and bureaucracy (nine per cent) are the worst things about their partnership with PDCS, which contrasts to ten per cent who think that quick processing of applications is the best thing.

Encouragingly for PDCS, a quarter of all partners (24 per cent) say that there is nothing bad about their partnership with PDCS.

**Figure 5.2 Worst thing about partnership with PDCS**



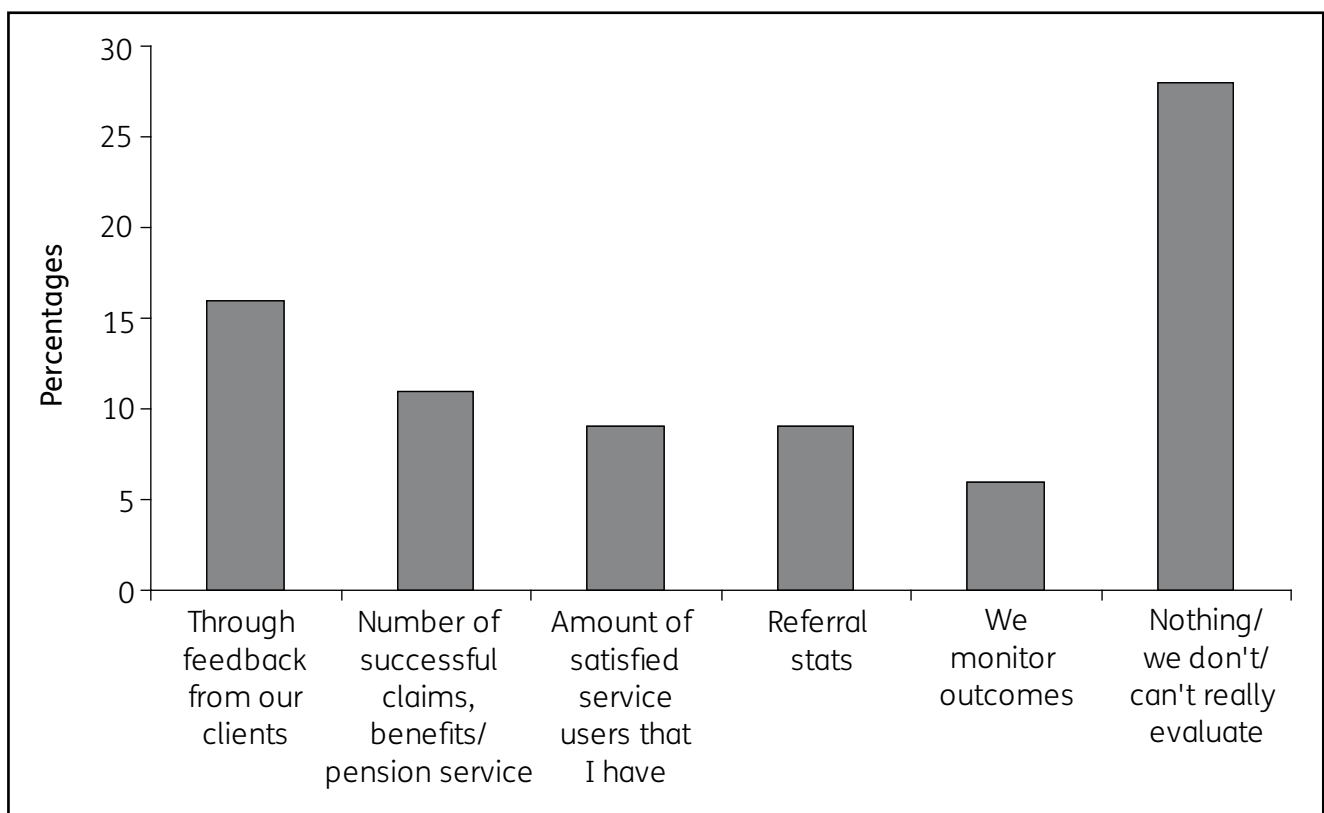
Twenty-nine per cent of partners say that the worst thing about their relationship with PDCS is that they are slow to respond to information they have received.

### 5.3 How do you measure or evaluate the impact of joint working with PDCS?

Surprisingly, more than a quarter of all partners (28 per cent) admit that they have no real way of evaluating the impact of their joint working with PDCS.

The most common form of measuring or evaluating the impact of joint working with PDCS is through feedback from residents and clients, something that is shared by 16 per cent of partners. This is closely followed by the number of successful claims (11 per cent), the amount of satisfied service users that they have (nine per cent) and referral stats (nine per cent).

**Figure 5.3 Method of evaluation**



### 5.4 How, if at all, do you think PDCS could improve its consultation with your organisation?

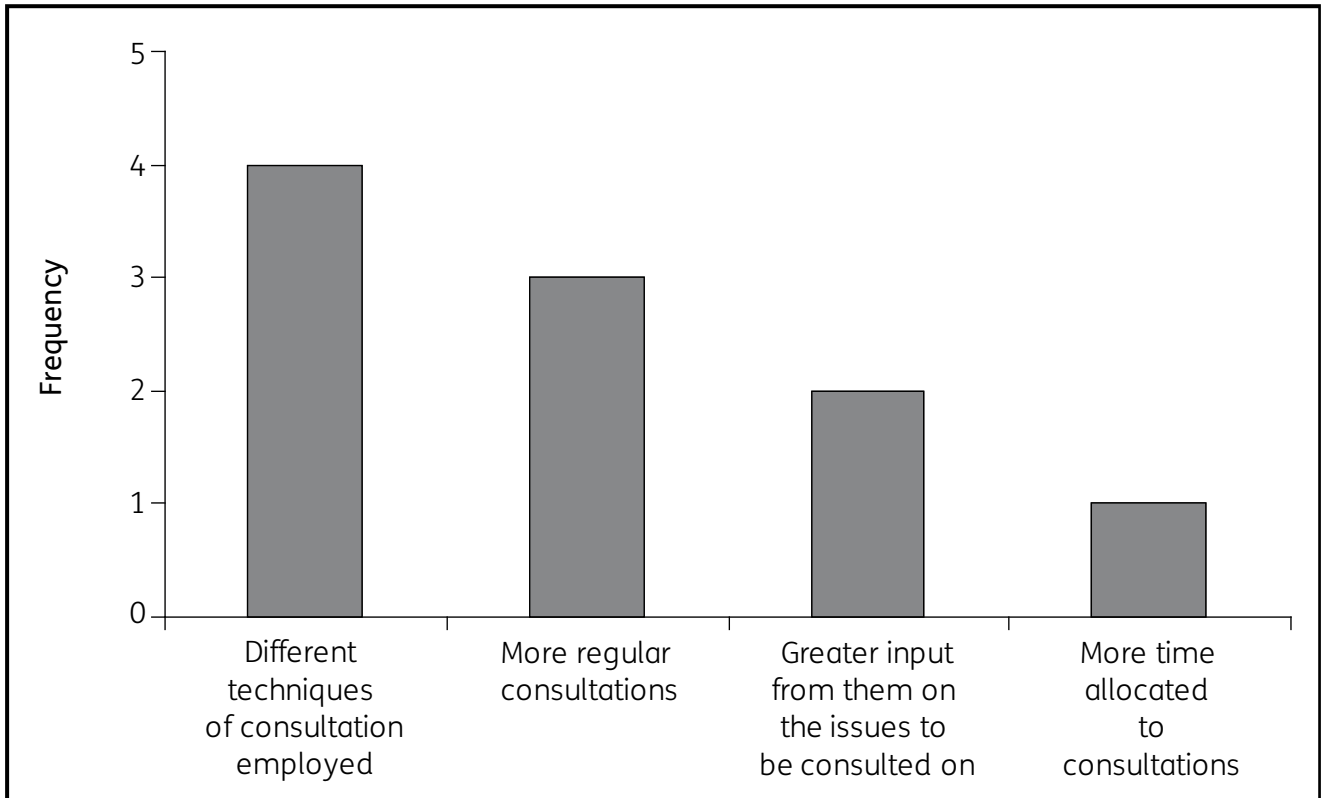
Since consultation with stakeholders is a key part of the relationship, this last section focuses on the views of stakeholders specifically. There is, however, an overlap with the priority areas for partners.

The most popular way in which stakeholders believe PDCS could improve its consultation is through more regular consultations, a view held by almost four respondents. Only two stakeholders feel that greater input from them on issues to be consulted on would improve its consultation with their organisation.

Furthermore, four stakeholders feel that employing different techniques of consultation would result in improved consultations between PDCS and their organisations. It is worth noting that these methods of improvement have received high levels of support from stakeholders, particularly considering the unprompted nature of the question.



**Figure 5.4** Possible areas of improvement



## **Part B**

# **Detailed responses to the qualitative partner and stakeholder audit**



# 6 Detailed responses to the qualitative partner and stakeholder audit

## 6.1 Introduction

Following the detailed quantitative interviews that were conducted among partners and stakeholders, ComRes conducted 20 in-depth qualitative interviews in order to obtain feedback on the first round of interviews and identify how PDCS could develop and improve their future work. ComRes interviewed people at different levels and from different organisations and, as would be expected, there were different opinions held about PDCS and the Satisfaction Tracker in general.

## 6.2 Overall experience

Broadly speaking, and encouragingly for PDCS, the Satisfaction Tracker is seen by participants in a positive light. It is evident in the feedback that there are some differences of opinion. However, those who raised concerns, recommendations or gave negative feedback on the interview were pleased to be given the opportunity to explain the reasoning behind their views.

As has been reiterated throughout the quantitative part of the report, PDCS enjoys effective and good relationships with its partners and stakeholders. This feedback was reinforced during the qualitative interviews. The opening verbatim comments sum up the positive partnerships that exist. One local partner commented *'I would not be able to do my job without them'* and PDCS is clearly held in high regard as a valuable partner. Many also highlighted the importance of daily contact and the value of a local 'designated liaison officer' or 'local visiting officer'.

The negative feelings towards the Satisfaction Tracker, where they existed, were broadly down to two factors, where the respondent felt that: (1) the broad approach did not match the uniqueness of some organisations; and (2) they were not the most suitable person to be interviewed.

There was a feeling among some partners that there are distinctive situations for different partners and types of organisations, which were perhaps not encapsulated during the Satisfaction Tracker. This may be a result of the merger of The Pension Service and Disabilities and Carers Service. While the majority of the interviews were conducted with organisations who deal with the three issues – pensions, disability and carers, those who just specialise in one area often felt that some elements of the Satisfaction Tracker were redundant and therefore tedious.

For those respondents who felt that the Satisfaction Tracker was not suited to their role or relationship, they felt that this inhibited them from answering in the best way due to their lack of personal experience. In some cases respondents said a colleague would have been better informed.

When it came to the content and style of the questions, respondents are generally very positive. Partners commented that they were pleased to have the opportunity to express both positive and negative opinions and reiterated that the questions were clear and objective. The main criticism was the occasional comment that the questions could have been less repetitive and in some cases, shorter. This is important to bear in mind for future waves of the Satisfaction Tracker, and the recommendations at the end of the report help to address this.

In addition to the broad sweep, some interesting and actionable points were made and discussed with regards to the following areas which will be covered in greater depth: (1) the length of survey; (2) the methodology of survey; and (3) targeting of the questions.

It is worth bearing in mind, throughout this analysis, the underlying partnership model and how this fits into the ongoing PDCS relationship. Given the affirmative views of partners and stakeholders demonstrated in the Satisfaction Tracker, the qualitative interviews serve to back this up and confirm that this is part of a wider strategy for managing these partnerships. As a national organisation, it is evident that the strengths of existing local contact need to be maintained from a central approach.

At its heart the message from these interviews is to ‘keep it national but local’.

### 6.3 Experience of the Satisfaction Tracker in general

#### 6.3.1 Recall

Generally, participants fall into two distinct groups when it comes to their perceptions of completing the survey: (i) Those for whom the survey was spot on; relevantly targeted; and who felt that they could answer clearly and adequately. (ii) On the other hand, there were participants for whom the survey was partially irrelevant in content; mis-targeted in terms of contacting them; or, alternatively, those who did not feel their experience enabled them to answer adequately.

- (i) The first group identified had a very positive recall of the interviews and rarely offered any suggestions for improvement. Generally speaking, these people have good communications with PDCS and adequate knowledge of their areas of operation. They are effusive in their positive remarks about both PDCS and the Satisfaction Tracker. Terms that were used to describe the survey from this group included ‘*comprehensive*’; ‘*relevant*’; and ‘*helpful*’. For these partners and stakeholders their remembrance of survey was on the whole very positive. For PDCS, they were encouraged to keep on doing the great job they already do.
- (ii) Nevertheless, some partners held different views. One participant describes the survey as ‘*fairly irrelevant*’ – but admits that this is due to not having much direct contact with PDCS. Others commented that it was ‘*frustrating*’ and ‘*all a bit of a blur*’. In exploring the reasoning behind these views, it is evident that feelings of frustration are down to the relevance, appropriateness and the length and content of the questionnaire. This can largely be addressed by a more targeted approach, and the advantages and disadvantages of this will be addressed.

#### 6.3.2 Value

Whether overall the Satisfaction Tracker was a positive or negative experience for partners and stakeholders, **there is awareness of the value both to themselves and PDCS of conducting these audits**. Stakeholders view this as an important part of ongoing communications, relationship building, and feedback processes. One commented that the interview is ‘*another medium for communication with PDCS*’. It is seen as a useful addition to, not as a replacement for, the current role of PDCS and support that stakeholders receive. It was commented that this is a useful, widespread practice, with mentions of consultations by DWP, Jobcentre Plus or others as taking a similar review process.

**‘This interview is a very useful way to let them know what we think’** commented one partner. The Satisfaction Tracker is seen to fit in to a wider communications process conducted by PDCS as well as encouraging feedback. As is identified in the Satisfaction Tracker, there is a desire among stakeholders to be given a greater opportunity for feedback and it is interesting to note that those who gave negative comments about the process were positive about being able to provide feedback. Nevertheless, all stakeholders praised the objectivity of the questions themselves.

The detail of feedback that was picked up during the qualitative element of the research does identify that those who have frequent contact with PDCS, and are well informed about the partnership, welcome this opportunity. One partner commented: *'it was nice to have an opportunity to recommend changes and give credit where it was due'*.

Having said this, there was some uncertainty from respondents as to what the aims and objectives of PDCS were in conducting this. While being willing to give their views a number requested more information on the objectives for the Satisfaction Tracker in order to give more constructive feedback.

### 6.3.3 Relevance and appropriateness

As noted previously, there is a difference of opinion towards the Satisfaction Tracker based on the relevance of the survey to the participant. As may be expected, for an organisation with such a large remit, a blanket approach to its partners in a stakeholder Satisfaction Tracker will suit some, but not others – one size does not fit all.

In broad terms, participants think that the Satisfaction Tracker was a very relevant exercise, and there is a broad understanding among stakeholders that it is not necessarily feasible to approach each organisation in depth about their relationship with PDCS. But there is an element of dissatisfaction among some, that this approach prevented them from answering as well as they could have from a more targeted approach. For example, one local partner commented *'it's unfortunate that the Satisfaction Tracker covered pensions and disability at the same time because I only have relevant knowledge of pensions'*. While this was not the majority view, given that many partners deal with all the service areas frequently, it is important to address this issue as it does apply to a significant group of partners and stakeholders.

One participant in particular noted that he had different experiences of working with The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service, so he struggled to trade in generalisations about PDCS. Yet another mentioned that he was unaware of the amalgamation of The Pension Service and the Disability and Carers Service.

One respondent, who said he felt uninformed and not the right person to speak to, said that there were *'so many questions...without having enough contact I was just going through the motions'* He followed this by saying when he came off the phone he was not sure if the information he had given was relevant or helpful. This was reiterated by others: *'The Satisfaction Tracker could definitely do with being tailored to different audiences. Nevertheless, I still felt I had the opportunity to talk about the things I wanted to talk about'*.

Another participant commented that since she only had ad hoc contact with DWP, she was unable to answer some of the questions. She went on to say that her organisation had different levels of contact with DWP and that the best person to interview would have been the head of HR who has oversight of these myriad strands of communication.

In addressing the appropriateness of the survey, a number of respondents mentioned the length. **While willing to give up 20 minutes of their time to speak on the phone, there was a feeling that it could have been shorter and this may also be worth considering for the future.** It is particularly noticeable that those who were most positive about the interview were most likely to mention the length as the only area for improvement. One respondent commented that something *'about ten minutes'* would have been more favoured.

In terms of the relevance and appropriateness of the questions, there was agreement that *'the questions were relevant because they focused on our dealings locally; about how business is conducted'*. In general, the Satisfaction Tracker was seen to flow on from the ongoing communications with PDCS.

Interestingly, one respondent commented on the survey that it was both *'too detailed and too specific'* and yet at the same time *'very generic'* and not tailored to his role. This refers to both the content of the questions and the broad sweep of the survey and highlights the need to identify the experience and backgrounds of different respondents.

### 6.3.4 Frequency

There were mixed opinions on how regularly the Satisfaction Tracker should be conducted. Responses ranged from quarterly to annually. Interestingly, there were often similar reasons for both given: the *'sensitivity'* of the survey to changing opinion was raised and this is an important point to consider. While one respondent summed up the views of a number by saying, about quarterly surveys, *'this would be sensitive enough to measure changes in perceptions and opinions, but wouldn't be too demanding on those that are called to be interviewed'*; others commented that an annual survey would be sensitive to changes of opinion and due to the good working relationship with PDCS, other issues could be raised when required.

*'[Quarterly surveys] would be sensitive enough to measure changes in perceptions and opinions, but wouldn't be too demanding on those that are called to be interviewed.'*

When asked to elaborate on this issue, many participants commented that existing lines of communication enable them to raise queries or problems as and when they arise. Moreover, one participant in particular says that *'change doesn't happen overnight'*; the implication being that there would not be any value in conducting surveys on a frequent basis.

As can be seen from the high level of readiness to be recontacted, there is a general willingness among participants, to continue taking part in consultations. They see this as a valuable exercise because it allows them to offer both constructive and negative feedback about the ways in which they interact with PDCS. While the anonymity of the interviews undoubtedly loosened tongues, it should be encouraging for PDCS that none of the respondents felt unable to approach DWP directly to give feedback.

Given the different opinions, and drawing together the views of different respondents, ComRes recommends regular consultations with key tracking question areas – but with an element of themed or targeted approach during different waves. For example, over a series of quarterly waves the *'topical'* part of the survey could cover topics including: policy briefings; customer satisfaction; feedback; or national versus central provision.

### 6.3.5 Methodology

As might be expected, participants offered mixed views on this issue of methodology. In sum, telephone interviews are not disliked but there are obvious, yet different, advantages to an online or a face-to-face methodology. These are detailed in the rest of this section.

Before addressing this point, there was one issue raised which was perhaps less expected. A number of respondents commented, unprompted, that they would like to have received more information before the interview was conducted. In particular some suggested a written briefing, or even the list of questions so that they could be better informed. Alternatively, others asked for further information about the aims and objectives of the research. This is an easy adjustment that could be made to future waves of the Satisfaction Tracker and worth considering. One commented *'I would have liked to get the questions before the interview so that I could give the answers some thought'*. This could perhaps be addressed by a more visual approach, for example online, or by providing briefing material.

While there is obvious value in providing a more detailed briefing to respondents before they conduct the interview, ComRes would also recommend avoiding educating respondents beforehand, which could skew the value of people answering on the spot. We recommend that this is an area to be discussed before future waves of the Satisfaction Tracker is conducted.

### Telephone

Particularly for those who are positive towards the whole Satisfaction Tracker, there is agreement that conducting the survey over the telephone is a good option. Even when alternative approaches were suggested there seems to be a feeling that the problems arising from alternative methods are mitigated by the telephone approach – for example, cost and time. One stakeholder, for example, commented that: *‘telephone is probably the only way. Face-to-face interviews would have been ideal, but I understand the logistics of this would have been a nightmare’*.

According to most participants, the most obvious advantage of telephone interviews is that they are personal. More importantly, the telephone combines all the advantages of direct personal contact with convenience and flexibility. However, alternatives were suggested as identified below.

### Online

Some partners and stakeholders recommended that an online approach may have been more appropriate. This was particularly favoured by those who felt that they needed input from colleagues to give the most helpful input. The online approach is seen to be more flexible and respondents can participate in their own time. Moreover, with regards to the multiple response questions, some participants feel that they could have considered their answers more carefully if they had the answers in front of them. One partner commented: *‘I am not a fan of multiple-choice on the phone’*.

Some of the partners who participated commented that they *‘found it hard to remember the scales of the rating questions’* and that is why an online survey would be better. Interestingly, this is shared by some and not others. Those who perhaps feel less engaged and would perhaps seek comments from colleagues or would prefer spending more time considering their answers would be more suited to an online approach; but for others this would have removed the preference for speaking to an interviewer.

*‘Face-to-face interviews would have been ideal, but I understand the logistics of this would have been a nightmare.’*

### Face-to-face

As the Satisfaction Tracker reveals, face-to-face contact is positively received among this audience. It is interesting to note the importance that some participants attach to face-to-face interaction despite widespread objections to time-consuming activities.

However, again and again we have seen the perceived value in local partnerships and local support which is highly regarded by PDCS partners. As such, it is perhaps less surprising that some participants recommended face-to-face interviews. A significant number of stakeholders made comments like: *‘In an ideal world this would have been conducted face-to-face, but I understand this would be a waste of resource’*. This sentiment, however, was not felt by all with some saying face-to-face would just be *‘a waste of time’*.



## 6.4 The questions

### 6.4.1 Content and style of questions

Overall the questions were described as *'comprehensive'* and *'clear'*. There was seen to be a good balance of open and closed questions, although some styles were repeated; this was particularly identified to be near the start of the survey. Once more, it was emphasised that while the questions were good, they could have been more tailored to the areas of expertise of the respondents.

*'Generally speaking the questions were pretty good, but they could have been tailored a bit more to my area of expertise.'*

Stakeholders generally did not think that they thought more could be added, or that the content was lacking. They made comments like: 'I don't really think anything was missing'. In line with the comments about the length of the survey, stakeholders are more likely to comment that the survey could have been shorter and less repetitive, than that there were areas missing.

Helpfully, respondents who commented that the survey was repetitive identified that some of the question styles were similar and particularly the rating or scale questions could have been varied more. *'There was some repetition and generally the whole thing could have been wrapped up a bit faster.'*

Others gave more explicit and helpful feedback, however, this was often specific to the individual, rather than replicated across the board. For example, one respondent commented that question ten was *'poorly defined'* and some of the questions were a bit vague. **Again this highlights the difficulties of maintaining a broad approach alongside obtaining detailed answers. We recommend that this is discussed further before future waves of the Satisfaction Tracker.**

Another partner commented: *'the thing I really didn't like was the questions which were figure heavy'* – this was in relation to the questions where scores were given for different aspects of PDCS's work. It is worth considering being particularly creative in the grid questions of which there were a number. This detailed feedback is vital to consider in planning for future waves, but it is important to bear in mind the positive backdrop in which these were given.

**Overall, participants were pleased by the different types of question and the detail and depth to which issues were explored.** However, the open ended questions were generally more favoured, which also came across in the warm reception received by the qualitative interviews.

### 6.4.2 Instructions and interviewers

In terms of the quality of the interviewers and the instructions, the feedback is fairly uniform. Respondents feel that they were guided through the survey adequately and they understood what was required of them. In one or two cases, participants noted that there was too much detail and instruction: 'I think the interviewer explained the questions in far greater detail than he really needed to'.

Once more, participants highlight the advantage of briefing material in advance: *'it was all very well communicated; if anything I would have liked more information in advance'*.

In terms of areas of improvement for the interview technique, respondents did not feel that the technique needed changing, but rather that the length of briefing needed more attention than the interview quality. In summary, one interviewee described his interviewer as *'pretty straightforward'*.

### 6.4.3 Objectivity

Participants are unanimous when it comes to the objectivity of the Satisfaction Tracker. There is agreement that in both the style of the interview, and in the questions asked, the interview was conducted objectively. Respondents commented that they felt able to answer how they wanted to and did not feel any pressure to answer in a particular way. *'There was ample opportunity to agree and disagree with anything that was raised.'*

*'I certainly didn't feel like I was being pushed into giving a particular answer.'*

The questions were described as *'very objective'* or *'very neutral'* and respondents felt comfortable and able to give their detailed views.

However, despite the overall consensus on the objectivity of the questions, a small number of participants said that they would like to have given subtler answers and have the opportunity to explain why they had answered in the way they had. This group was particularly receptive to the second, qualitative interview because they felt they could *'vent spleen'* more articulately and be more effusively positive about aspects of PDCS's work that they liked.

## 6.5 The future of the Satisfaction Tracker

### 6.5.1 Lessons from other partners

It is evident from the qualitative interviews that respondents are used to taking part in monitors and satisfaction surveys. However, some identified that these were often in response to a particular event or communication campaign.

One respondent commented *'we carry out lots of consumer satisfaction surveys after we have received or dealt with a particular kind or style of service. We are happier to fill these in because they are tailored towards one particular topic while it is still fresh in our mind and it's directed to the relevant person. PDCS should do this'*.

Some respondents were able to identify areas and organisations to learn good lessons from but it is worth noting that experience, and answers, varied considerably. For instance, examples of Jobcentre Plus were given in the context of both good and bad practice. Some of these include increased face-to-face contact (while acknowledging this is an ideal, rather than necessarily realistic). The Primary Care Trust (PCT) is seen as being much more proactive than PDCS by some stakeholders. This group particularly liked having named contacts within the PCT whom they could contact if they had any questions.

The lessons learnt from other organisations back up the findings that respondents would prefer something more targeted and relevant to them.

### 6.5.2 Impact on relationship with PDCS

Overall, the Satisfaction Tracker process was seen as a positive step for PDCS to be conducting, but not as a stand alone process. Respondents did not necessarily think that there would be a significant impact on the relationship with PDCS, but in most cases this was down to the already positive perception and relationship that exists. One respondent, who commented that they did not believe that the Satisfaction Tracker would have significant impact, said that was *'largely because I have not said anything incendiary'*. Following this they added that they *'would expect that PDCS would react if I had said anything controversial or if I had a particular concern'*.

On the other hand, some participants said that the interviews would not make a difference because PDCS is such a large organisation. There is a suspicion that PDCS has its own agenda, and a sense that the interviews were more of an opportunity for PDCS to simply understand stakeholders' perceptions rather than formulate new strategies around them.

### 6.5.3 Relationship building

PDCS has positioned itself in a positive way, by being a key partner to all these organisations. Looking ahead, partners encourage PDCS to keep doing what it does best. One commented '*I hope it stays the same*'. While there are opportunities and issues raised by certain stakeholders that need to be addressed, and chances to improve the consultation process, the strengths that have been identified can be built on to continue to enjoy strong working partnerships with these local and national organisations. **The interviews were often closed with comments like: '*I would not be able to do my job without them*' and a positive feeling towards the services PDCS provide.**

When asked for what they would like to see from PDCS in the future, perhaps unsurprisingly there was an echo of what was raised during the Satisfaction Tracker:

- policy briefings in advance of changes were cited as being valuable;
- more general information about what is going on and the technical side were cited;
- the ongoing feeling that 'local partnerships are more effective' is reiterated. We would encourage PDCS not to underestimate the value of localism for local organisations;
- it is important to be wary of a 'one size fits all' approach and don't move away from the value of personal, local relationships.

In summary, as one stakeholder put it, we would like to see '*more influence and feedback*' while maintaining a '*personal local relationship*'.

This research was undertaken to help Pension, Disability and Carers Service (PDCS) to design, develop and implement an ongoing comprehensive survey to measure both the levels of awareness of products and services provided by the PDCS and the levels of satisfaction of Partners and Stakeholders across a range of activities identified as key to successful consultation and partnership working.

The main objectives for this research were:

- To develop a set of questions based upon the core drivers identified in previous research to enable PDCS to measure and monitor the effectiveness of our stakeholder consultation, partnership activity and working relationships.
- To develop a tracking mechanism that will allow PDCS to report on the effectiveness of stakeholder consultation, partnership activity and working relationships.
- To pilot and implement a tracking mechanism that will allow PDCS to report on the effectiveness of stakeholder consultation, partnership activity and working relationships.
- To complete a first full tracking survey to enable PDCS to baseline the effectiveness of stakeholder consultation, partnership activity and working relationships.

This report presents the key findings and implications for PDCS.

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