



Complaints & Compliments

Annual Report 2019 - 2020

Foreword

The Northern Ireland Ambulance Service HSC Trust recognise that a high standard of concerns, complaints and compliments management will ensure that lessons are learned and shared, and improvements made to enhance the patient experience and quality of services provided.

We aim to have a patient-centred environment, where patients, patients' relatives, carers, advocates and other service users are encouraged to express their views about the treatment and services that they receive.

The Trust continues to promote a culture where all concerns and complaints are received positively, investigated promptly and thoroughly and responded to sympathetically and time actions are taken to prevent recurrence when services provided have fallen below acceptable standards.

In addition to welcoming and valuing complaints and the resultant learning, the Trust values all compliments and is developing processes to promote learning from the positive feedback received to further enhance our performance, the patient experience and the quality of services we provide.

Facts & Figures

In the year 2019/2020:

- NIAS received **212,154** emergency calls and attended **180,072** calls and completed **190,204** non-emergency journeys
- **114** complaints were received
- **79%** of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days
- **25%** of complaints were responded to within 20 working days
- The top **3** issues of complaint were Transport, Late or Non-Arrival/Journey Time, Staff Attitude/Behaviour and Quality of Treatment & Care.
- **174** Compliments were received

Complaints this Year

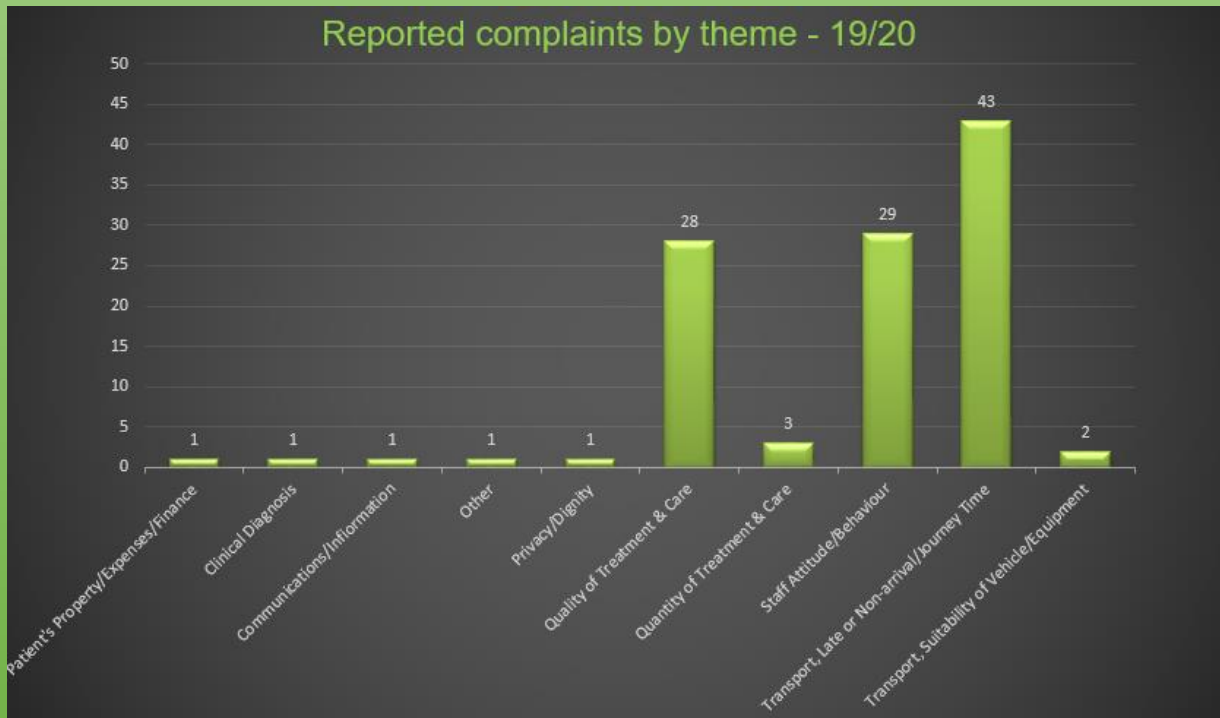
During the past year (2019/2020), the Trust received **114** complaints, which is a decrease of **9.5%** on the previous year's **126**.



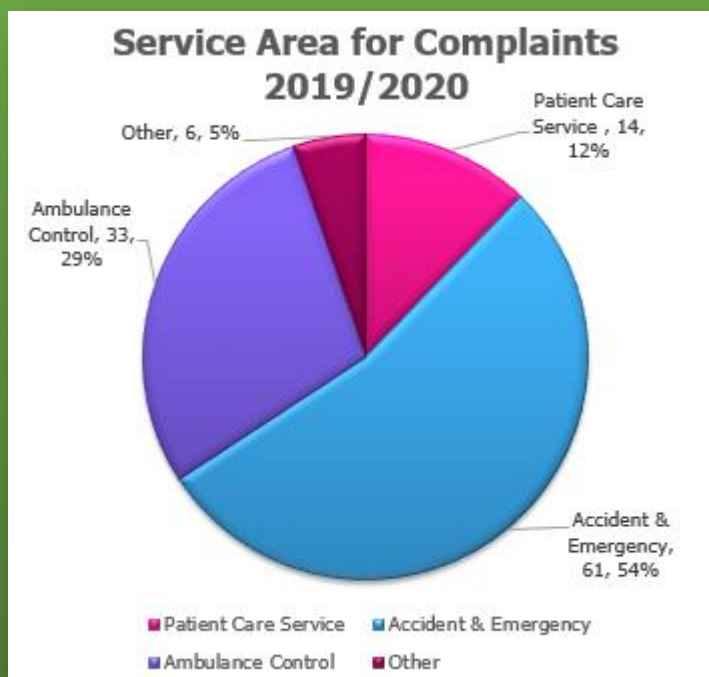
What people complained about

The chart below shows the number of issues identified within complaints by subject for the past year (2019/2020), the data reflects that one complaint can have more than one issue.

The top three subjects of complaint in the past year were: Transport, Delay & Non-Arrival/Journey Time (38%), Staff Attitude/Behaviour (25%) and Quality of Treatment & Care (25%).



Area of Complaints



This graph shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2019/2020. Of the 114 complaints received by the Trust, 29% (33) related to the Ambulance Control (Emergency & Non-Emergency Ambulance Control). 54% (61) related to the frontline Accident & Emergency Service and 12% (14) related to our Patient Care Service. The remaining 5% accounted for other areas including our Private & Voluntary Ambulance Service partners.

Response Times to Complaints

79% of all complaints were acknowledged within the target of 2 working days.

25% of all complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days.

	Total Number	Percentage
Acknowledged < 2 days	90	79%
Response < 20 days	28	25%

The Trust is committed to improving the responsiveness of its complaint handling processes and will seek to improve the response times for complaints in the coming year whilst ensuring there is an emphasis on the quality of the responses and ensuring resolution for the complainants, relevant to the issues raised.

If People are dissatisfied

Sometimes people are not always happy with the outcome of the investigation into their complaint. We encourage people to let us know if they are unhappy, and we consider other options to attempt to resolve their concerns. We routinely offer to meet complainants, as this allows the opportunity for more detailed discussions, face-to-face.

Ombudsman

For those people who remained dissatisfied, they had the option to approach the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman) directly. In 2019/2020, there were 3 complainants who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint.

Complaints Training

The trust delivered comprehensive complaints handling training throughout 2019/2020 to a wide variety of management staff.

Our staff who undertake the Investigating Officer role attended a training programme tailored around the handling and recording of complaints & compliments within the reporting period.

The course focused on discussing and developing effective complaints letter writing skills through a combination of group discussion and practical, supported exercises. The aim of the course was for managers to leave the day with the techniques and the confidence to respond effectively and efficiently to complaints through letters.

They also received training in the use of our online complaints/compliments Datix system. This system is used to log all of our complaints & compliments and allows us to easily track and process them.

Learning from Complaints

We welcome complaints so that we can learn lessons and improve our services. Where appropriate action plans are developed and followed. We use this information to feed back to patients and staff on the changes and improvements made.

Complaints are discussed with the staff concerned and learning is brought to staff meetings for discussion as to how services can be improved.

A number of improvements have been put in place over the year 2019/2020 following complaints. Here are some examples:

- Service Users received a tour of our Emergency Control centre with a view to gaining additional knowledge and understanding around our triage and call taking processes.
- A Clinical Newsletter was issued to all staff detailing recent operational and clinical updates. These included:
 - The new Aspirin Diagnostic tool used by medical dispatchers in our control centre
 - The Sepsis trigger tool to aid early diagnosis of possible sepsis
 - The management of burns and the use of Clingfilm
- IPC visits to our private & voluntary ambulance service partners
- All staff who have received staff attitude/behaviour complaints have undertaken reflective practices and where appropriate, received counselling and further training, in order to prevent any reoccurrence.

New Developments 2019/20

In August 2019, NIAS developed new Concerns, Complaints and Compliments, Policy and Procedure documents.

HSC Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health and Social Care Trust

Title:	Concerns, Complaints & Compliments Policy		
Author:	Linda Rafferty, Programme Manager		
Ownership:	Michael Bloomfield, Chief Executive		
Date of SMT Approval:	16/07/2019	Date of Trust Board Approval:	01/08/2019
Operational Date:	08/08/2019	Review Date:	08/08/2020
Version No:	V3.0	Supersedes:	V2.0
Key Words:	Concern, Complaint, Compliment, Investigation, Learning, Shared Learning		
Other Relevant Policies:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DoH Guidance in Relation to the Health and Social Care Complaints Procedure 01 April 2019 The HSC Complaints Procedure Directions 01 April 2009 Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Principles of Good Complaint Handling and Good Administration February 2009 NIAS Risk Management Policy and Procedure NIAS Learning Outcomes Review Group Terms of Reference September 2018 		
Version Control for Drafts:			
Date	Version	Author	Comments
28/05/19	V0.1	L Rafferty	Initial draft – circulated to SMT and Complaints Manager
03/06/19	V0.2	L Rafferty	2 nd draft – circulated to those listed in Consultation section
<i>It should be noted that pending NIAS restructuring of Directorate roles and responsibilities that the following Trust Board accountabilities currently exist:</i>			
Medical Director	Learning outcomes from Concerns, Complaints and Compliments		
Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services	Complaints management system, policy and procedure		
All Directors	Local performance management		

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During 2020, NIAS also updated their website to include a user-friendly Feedback portal. This allows service users to provide details of concerns, complaints or compliments with one click.

GIVE US YOUR FEEDBACK

For more information

Compliments

Whilst the Trust recognises that sometimes things go wrong, each year the Trust receives hundreds of letters of appreciation and expressions of thanks to acknowledge the excellent services provided.

We are proud of our staff and ensure that positive feedback is shared and celebrated. Our staff certainly appreciate feedback from their patients and clients, and knowing when things go well.

In 2019 /2020, the Trust received 174 compliments.

Here are some examples of the wonderful praise we have received.

"The call handler who took my call stayed with me and told me what to do.

You do an amazing job in helping people to remain calm and reassured which is hard to do over the phone."

"The crew had a cheerful and pleasant approach whilst remaining professional. Unsung heroes and heroines of our day"

"They attended to my mum with such dignity, care and compassion. I have never come across two nicer men in all my life. An absolute credit to the NIAS."

"The crew were friendly, calming, professional and efficient. They conducted their medical assessment with care and diligence. I felt safe and secure which was comforting after the fall."

"A huge thank you for your kindness & compassion"

"Thank you to the paramedics who took my mum to hospital, for acting as fast as they did and for essentially helping to save her life."

"We are truly blessed to have people such as yourselves dedicated to looking after others"

"We were particularly touched by the exceptionally caring and compassionate manner in which you both dealt with my ill mum and anxious father. Mum wasn't just seen as a patient but recognised by you as a much loved person at the heart of our family."