

# Compliments & Complaints Annual Report 2021 - 2022

## Foreword

As the Director responsible for the feedback received into the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, I am very pleased to present the Compliments & Complaints Annual Report for 2021/2022.

It has been a challenging 2 years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the biggest challenge we have ever faced in health and social care. Staff and services in the Trust have risen to this challenge in such an incredible way.

I am delighted to report that the Trust received 3,221 compliments throughout the year and I appreciate the time that people have taken to acknowledge the services provided by our staff and teams.

As a Trust, we welcome the complaints received as this information is used to learn lessons and improve our services. We are committed to achieving the best outcomes for all of our patients and clients, and when things do not go well, we wish to know so that the appropriate remedial action can be taken to prevent it happening again.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff for their continued dedication to the resolution of complaints and for their sensitive handling of issues that are important to complainants.



**Claire Smyth**  
Interim Director of Human Resources & Corporate Affairs

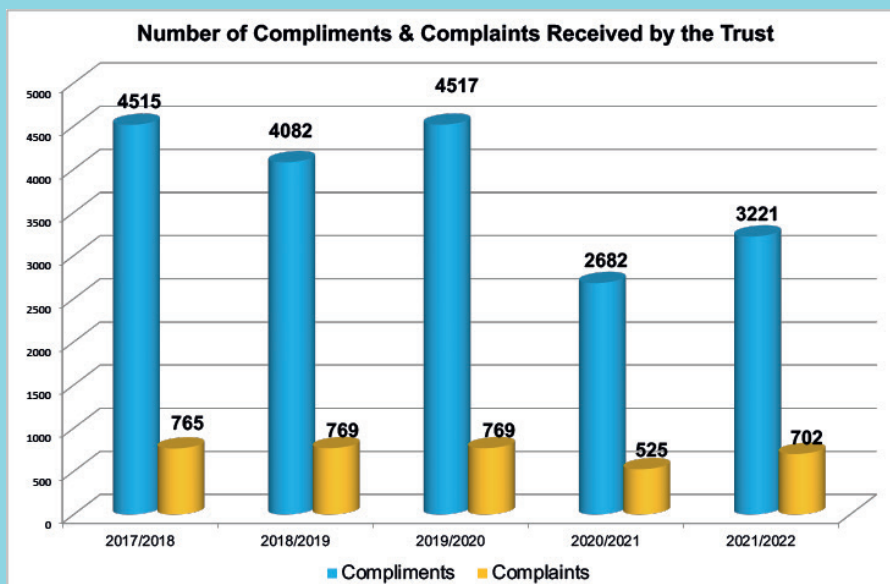
## Facts & Figures

*In the year 2021/2022:*

- **3,221** compliments were received
- **702** complaints were received
- **98%** of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days
- **36%** of complaints were responded to within 20 working days
- The top **3** issues of complaint were Quality of Treatment & Care; Staff Attitude / Behaviour; Communication / Information.

## How did we do this year?

During the past year (2021/2022), the Trust received **3,221** compliments and **702** (includes COVID-19 related) complaints, which is an increase from the previous year (2,682 compliments / 525 complaints), as shown in the graph below.



# Care Opinion

The regional Health & Social Care Online User Feedback System which was launched in August 2020, Care Opinion, supports service users to share their experience stories with the Trust and have a direct response by a service.



In the past year (2021/2022), the Trust has had 487 stories shared by our service users. It is great to see our staff being recognised for providing great care through Care Opinion stories. We use the stories to make improvements in response to service users' stories in order to widen and accelerate learning.

The Trust maintains a 100% record in providing response within the 7-day timeframe standard to Care Opinion stories since system launch (NI average is 80% / UK average is 72%). The Trust sits joint-first in UK of 235 healthcare providers for responsiveness to Care Opinion stories.

## Compliments

Whilst the Trust recognises that sometimes things go wrong, each year the Trust receives thousands of expressions of appreciation and 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 2021/2022 the Trust received **3,221** compliments (see below for some examples).

The graph on page 1 shows the number of compliments received per year in comparison to the number of complaints. Please see table below which shows the subjects of compliments by the method received.

Subjects of Compliments by Method Received	Card	Email	Feedback Form	Formal Verbal	Letter	Social Media	Care Opinion	Total
Environment	3	6	2	8	1		1	21
Information & Communication	21	18	18	12	2	2	3	76
Other	33	12	3	7	2		385	442
Quality of Treatment & Care	1231	168	279	279	79	12	11	2059
Staff Attitude & Behaviour	250	139	128	65	25	5	11	623
<b>Total</b>	<b>1538</b>	<b>343</b>	<b>430</b>	<b>371</b>	<b>109</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>3221</b>

*"Sadly, my mum passed away. But I wanted to thank the entire team that were involved in caring for my mum - they were exceptional and treated her, and my family, with the utmost respect, professional at all times and showing nothing but kindness and dignity to my Mum, right up to the last breath. While we will grieve for a long time, it was truly comforting to know she was in such good hands and I would like to thank the entire team for everything they did."*

*"Social Worker made a referral to crisis team on behalf of a young person. Her high levels of skills meant she was able to assess an extremely risky situation with someone she had met on only a few occasions, with limited interaction from the child. She displayed respect, courtesy and positive support for this young person throughout a crisis assessment, and remained with her throughout the day until an inpatient bed for the young person in order to manage the risks. The young person felt listened to."*

*"I wanted to express my sincere gratitude for the professional and compassionate service you both showed me and my husband. Not only did you both show excellent knowledge, skills and experience, you went out of your way to help to relax my husband, and gave us privacy to reduce the impact of his challenging behaviour. His dementia is advanced and he can no longer communicate and has little control over his actions, but he does understand and responds to kindness and respect."*

*"I've just been for my anomaly scan. We spoke with Midwife after and she was absolutely wonderful. She was very friendly from the beginning and easy to chat to about any concerns we had. I had a list of questions and she seemed happy to answer them all and didn't make me feel rushed which was really great especially as she has other patients and I know we will only have a certain amount of time allocated. Everything was answered in detail showing her knowledge and experience which was so reassuring and helpful."*

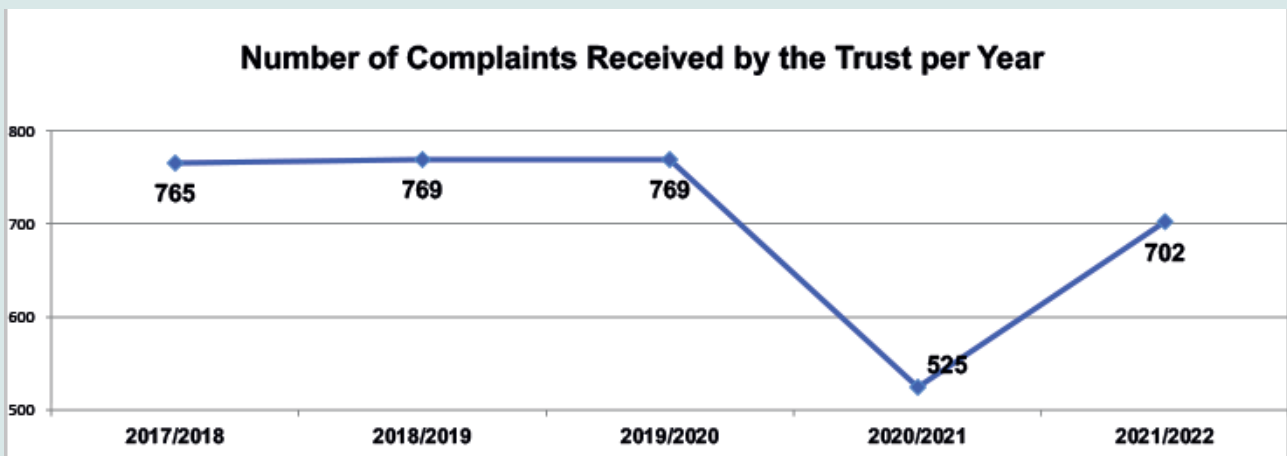
*"I spent around 7 hours in A&E yesterday and was amazed by the conduct of your staff. During that time, I witnessed abusive patients, a very busy A&E and yet every single staff member I came into contact with was lovely ... incredibly professional and kind during my treatment and an absolute credit to your staff."*

# Complaints

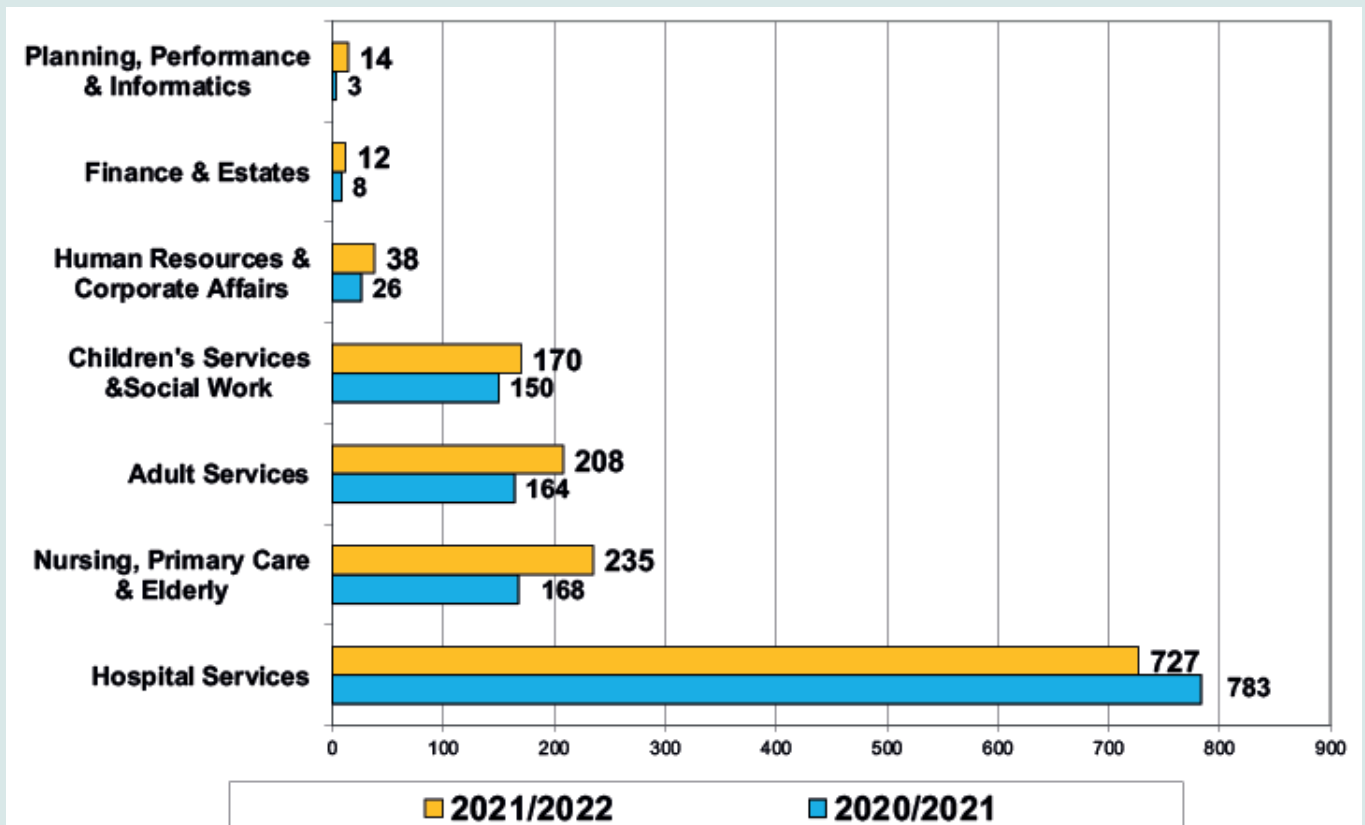
The number of complaints continues to be low considering the large geographical area the Trust covers and the number of contacts Trust staff have with patients and clients. The Trust:

- Provides a wide range of health and social care services
- Serves a population of approximately 364,000
- Has over 12,000 staff
- Provides services to support people in their own homes, in community settings and in the Ulster, Lagan Valley, Downe, Newtownards and Bangor Hospitals
- Approximately 125,000 people attended our Emergency Departments during the year, over 26,000 people were treated in hospital as daycases and about 41,500 people were admitted to our 3 main hospitals.

The number of complaints received over the years remained similar with a drop in the previous year during the onset of COVID-19, however, in 2021/2022, number have increased again - see the graph below:



This graph below shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2021/2022 in comparison to the previous year (per issue - a complaint can have more than one issue).



# What people complained about

The chart below shows the number of complaints by subject for the past year (2021/2022) in comparison to the previous year.

The figures are per issue of complaint, as a complaint can have more than one issue. For 2021/2022 we had complaints made by **702** complainants and these raised **1,404** issues, compared with 2020/2021 figures of **525** complainants and **1,302** issues. Of the 702, 22 of these were COVID-19 related.

The top three subjects of complaint in the past year were: Quality of Treatment & Care, Communication / Information and Staff Attitude / Behaviour. These are the same top subjects as last year, and this is similar across other Health & Social Care Trusts.

Subjects (per issue)	2020/2021		2021/2022	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Quality of Treatment & Care	370	28%	365	26%
Communication / Information	310	24%	276	20%
Staff Attitude / Behaviour	203	16%	260	19%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Outpatients Appointments	18	1%	50	4%
Clinical Diagnosis	72	6%	47	3%
Quantity of Treatment & Care	20	2%	45	3%
Discharge / Transfer Arrangements	27	2%	40	3%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Community Based Appointments	21	2%	39	3%
Confidentiality	17	1%	35	2%
Professional Assessment of Need	11	1%	27	2%
Policy / Commercial Decisions	30	2%	25	2%
Property / Expenses / Finances	12	1%	25	2%
Records / Record Keeping	42	3%	23	2%
Aids / Adaptions / Appliances	3	<1%	21	1%
Environmental	7	<1%	17	1%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Planned Admission to Hospital	9	1%	14	1%
Privacy / Dignity	24	2%	11	<1%
Waiting time, A&E Departments	8	1%	11	<1%
Discrimination	7	<1%	11	<1%
Other	91	7%	62	4%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>1302</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1404</b>	<b>100%</b>

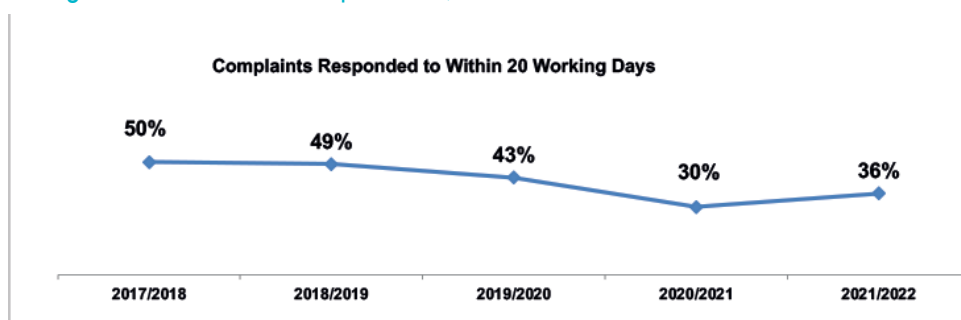
## Response Times to Complaints

98% of complaints were acknowledged within the target of 2 working days which is the same as last year.

36% of complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days, which is a slight increase of 6% from the previous year (30%), as shown in the graph below.

Over the past 2 years during the COVID-19 pandemic, Trust staff had to focus on their duties as front line health and social care workers to respond to the health crisis. Many services were suspended or reduced (including the complaints service) and staff were redeployed to support our front line staff. Duties, such as investigating and responding to complaints, were therefore significantly impacted on, which led to delays in responding to our complainants.

The Trust continues to monitor timescales to ensure complainants are provided with timely responses and is actively working to address the backlog as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, our emphasis is 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 have continued to offer meetings with complainants, as this allows the opportunity for more detailed discussions, either virtually or face-to-face when able to facilitate safely.

In the last year **14%** of complainants contacted us to tell us they were not entirely satisfied.

## Ombudsman

For those people who remained dissatisfied, they had the option to approach the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman) directly.

In **2021/2022** there were **21** complainants (3%), who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint, which is an increase from last year (15). Of these 21, 6 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman, 1 was settled without investigation and 14 others are ongoing. 13 other complaints, received by the Ombudsman prior to 1 April 2021, were closed during the past year, while 7 others remain ongoing.

A total of 19 complaints were closed by the Ombudsman during 2021/2022:

- 7 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman
- In 2 cases the Ombudsman did not uphold any of the complaint
- In 1 case a settlement was reached without investigation
- 9 had some areas of failings identified and recommendations made by the Ombudsman for remedy / improvement to services.

## Complaints Procedure - Children Order

Complaints by, or on behalf of, children about services provided to them under Part IV of the Children (NI) Order 1995, are dealt with under a separate procedure – the Children Order Representations & Complaints Procedure.

Over the year, there were **17** complaints dealt with at the informal ‘problem-solving’ stage. 15 were resolved with 2 ongoing at this point, and none progressed to Stage 1 of the procedure.

## COVID-19 related complaints

The Trust received 22 COVID-19 related complaints during 2021/2022.

The issues raised were about such things as:

- Social distancing, wearing masks, PPE
- Visiting restrictions
- Having to take a test prior to procedure
- Lack of respite / day care facilities
- Communication around vaccination
- Lack of communication about COVID status on discharge
- Delay in getting COVID test.

In a lot of cases, the key issues were communication and people’s fears and concerns.

During this time, concerns were effectively resolved by telephone calls or virtual meetings with staff providing explanations, rationale and reassurance. Issues about social distancing, wearing masks, PPE, scrubs, were highlighted to staff and communicated widely via regular staff updates.

## Independent Sector Complaints

Social care providers in the Independent Sector, who hold a contract with the Trust, are required to report all complaints to the Trust to comply with the terms and conditions of their contract and other relevant regulations and legislation. In the year 2021/2022, a total of 182 were reported by the Independent Sector (informal and formal) – 84 Domiciliary Care, 88 Care Homes and 9 Supported Living.



## Lessons Learnt / Improvements from Complaints

We welcome complaints so that we can learn lessons and improve our services. An action plan is completed, where appropriate, for complaints. 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 often the issues are 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 2021/2022 following complaints.

### You said, We did

#### You Said:

*Patients' personal belongings lost whilst in hospital.*

#### We Did:

*A quality improvement project has started to improve the documentation and labelling of patient property. Patient experiences have been shared with staff in safety briefings and lost property procedure reiterated to staff.*

#### You Said:

*Information shared with client's family member.*

#### We Did:

*Guidance document developed to aid teams, to ensure that all requests from clients for information to be withheld from relative is recorded. A record of any discussion or decision made in relation to withholding information will be maintained and shared with manager.*

#### You Said:

*Lack of mouth care to patients.*

#### We Did:

*Ward procedure changed and each bay has now dedicated staff. Mouth care was made 'Focus of the Month' topic. Extra training provided to staff on oral hygiene and importance of placing dentures.*

#### You Said:

*Issues about communication and updates to families.*

#### We Did:

*A schedule has been established where one nurse or doctor will have responsibility for contacting next of kin on a regular basis to provide updates.*

#### You Said:

*Received one dose of medication that was higher than should have been.*

#### We Did:

*Learning identified, including the time that drug levels are taken, to give a more accurate result. Level of clinical pharmacy cover for the ward has been reviewed and teaching on treatment updated and provided to teams. Case was also shared with the wider Medical Team, for learning.*

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