



COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2015 - 31 MARCH 2016

Introduction

This is the eighth Complaints Annual Report for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) covering the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016. The NHSCT provides a broad range of health and social care services for people across the local council areas of Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Cookstown, Larne, Magherafelt, Moyle and Newtown-abbey. The Northern Trust provides services for a population of approximately 471,000 which is the largest resident population in Northern Ireland.

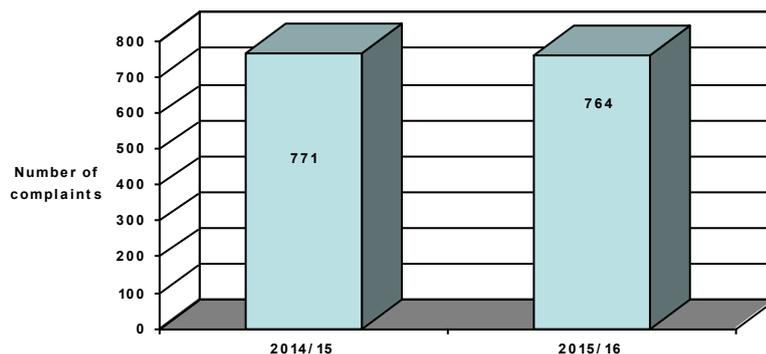
The report sets out a detailed analysis of the nature and number of complaints and concerns received by the Trust. The overall number of complaints received has decreased from 771 to 764 this year. During the year we have continued in meaningful engagement and involvement with our patients and service users, ensuring that appropriate remedial action is taken and that lessons are continually learned to prevent a recurrence.

We aim to respond to complaints within 20 working days where possible and strive to ensure that there is a full and objective investigation of the issues and concerns raised, reflected in the response provided. The Trust has a responsibility to ensure that every opportunity is taken to resolve the complaints locally and therefore complainants are encouraged to contact the Trust again should they remain dissatisfied. We will continue to do our utmost to resolve complaints.

Many of the complaints during 2015/16 were received by letter (28%) or through the Trust's service user feedback form (23%). Another 33% were received by email. The remainder (16%) were received by telephone, in person or through Trust staff. Compliments, suggestions and comments made by patients and service users are acknowledged and shared with relevant staff and teams.

Annual comparison of complaints

The total number of complaints received in the financial year, 1 April 2015- 31 March 2016, was 764 compared with 771 received during the previous financial year (1 April 2014- 31 March 2015).



What our service users complained about

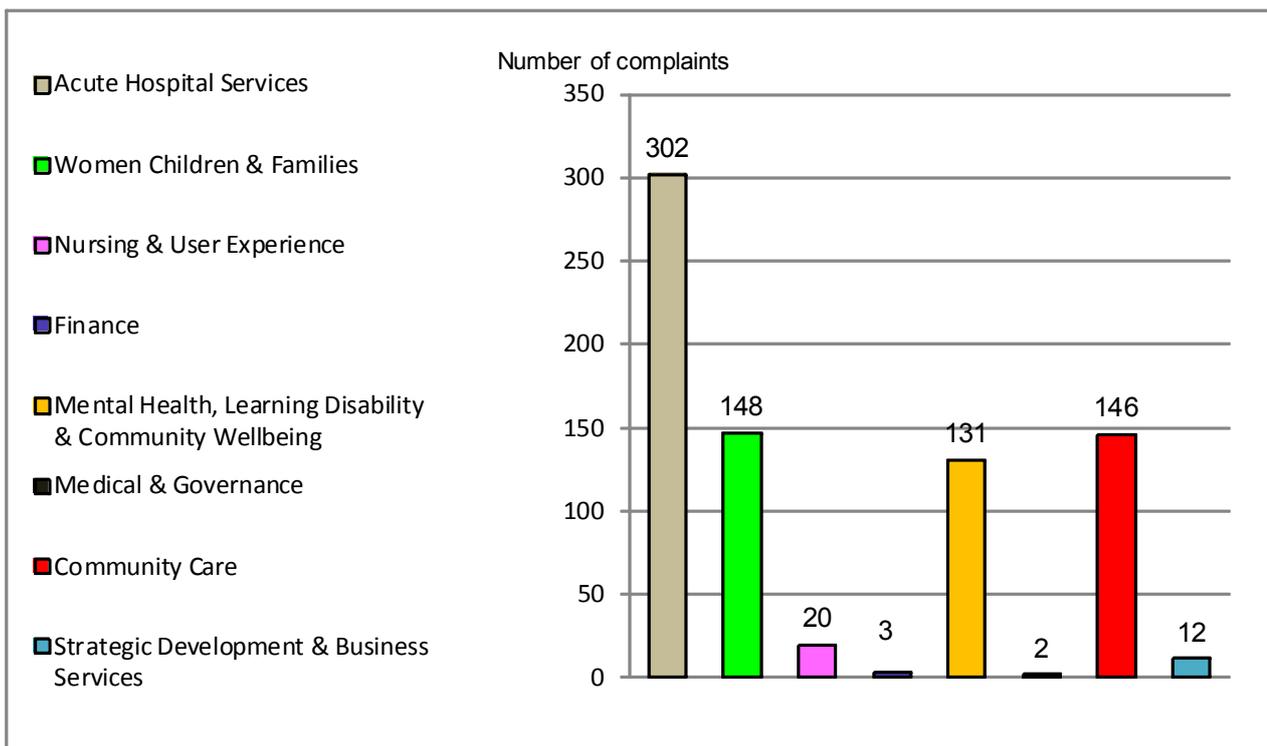
Subject	Number of issues	Percentage
Treatment & Care, Quality	238	30%
Staff Attitude/Behaviour	122	16%
Communication/Information to Patients	57	7%
Policy/Commercial Decisions	47	6%
Waiting List, Delay/Cancellation Community Based Appointments	41	5%
Waiting List, Delay/Cancellation Outpatient Appointments	34	4%
Clinical Diagnosis	29	3.5%
Discharge/Transfer Arrangements	22	3%
Hotel/Support/Security Services	21	2.5%
Other	174	23%
TOTAL	785	100%

764 complaints were received in total. This equates to 785 issues.

Of the 764 complaints received, 95 were re-opened during the 2015/16 financial year (12%).

Which Directorates received complaints?

39.5% of the complaints received during 2015/16 were in relation to services within the Acute Hospital Services Directorate. Specialties across the whole Trust receiving the highest number of complaints included Community/Primary Care, Family & Child Care, Mental Health Services and Emergency Medicine.



Response Times

The HSC Complaints Procedure outlines that complaints should be acknowledged within 2 working days and that complaints should be responded to within 20 working days, if at all possible.

Various factors can impact on the time taken to investigate a complaint such as information may be awaited from other agencies or due to the complexity of the complaint investigation.

During 2015/16, 69% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days, which is an improvement on the previous years' response time of 67%.

	Number of complaints 2014/15	Percentage 2014/15	Number of complaints 2015/16	Percentage 2015/16
Acknowledged < 2 days	771	100%	764	100%
Response < 20 days	516	67%	527	69%

Monitoring, Reporting, Learning

The Trust values all feedback received from patients and service users including complaints. When there is an identified need to improve our services we will take the necessary actions to ensure these improvements happen.

In order to record and monitor complaints activity, the complaints department is required to maintain a database of complaints and provide regular reports to senior management, divisions, and various Committees within the Assurance Framework including the Engagement, Experience and Equality Group. These reports highlight themes and trends across the Trust to ensure learning takes place. The Trust continues to provide monthly monitoring returns to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) regarding lessons learned from all complaints closed each month.

An action / learning proforma is completed, where appropriate, for complaints. We use this information to provide feedback to patients, service users and staff on the changes and improvements made. Complaints are discussed with relevant staff and issues brought to staff meetings where service improvements are agreed. A number of improvements have been introduced during 2014/15 following complaints. Listed below are some examples of learning across divisions:

The top three recurring themes for this year are about: treatment, care and quality, staff attitude/behaviour and communication/information to patients.

A complaint was received in relation to the lack of food allergen information being provided to patients at ward level. As a result of this complaint catering services have worked with ward staff and now provide a daily allergen awareness report. This report will assist nursing staff to ensure the correct information is provided when dealing with the individual dietary needs of patients/clients.

A complainant raised concerns about both the outpatient waiting room and accommodation for Psychological Therapies Service (PTS) appointments in Whiteabbey Hospital highlighting that it was not fit for purpose, communication and information to patients when cancelling appointments and staff attitude. The action taken was to improve the waiting area and accommodation for this service. Guidance and training has been developed for administrative staff to provide appropriate communication via voicemail when cancelling appointments. Feedback has been provided to the PTS staff about reflecting a positive attitude with their clients.

Since the implementation of the 10,000 voices project in 2013/14, there has been significant progress made within the Trust to address **staff attitude and behaviour and communication**, including, hello my name is ... campaign, learning events, workshops and integration of patient experience information into induction and training programmes. The Trust will continue to build upon this work programme going forward which will include engaging with staff and patients in developing "listening events" incorporating patients/clients feedback, 10,000 voices and complaints.

Compliments

Services across the Trust receive many compliments on a frequent basis, in the form of written thank-you letters, emails, cards or verbal feedback. A number of compliments are received directly by the Service User Feedback Department which are forwarded directly to the service areas. Between 1 April 2015 and 31 March 2016, 741 compliments were received, relating to a wide range of different service areas. Divisions/services also monitor the compliments they receive locally. Staff are greatly encouraged by the positive comments/feedback:

- “We would like to take this opportunity to say thank you to the staff of Drumross Adult Centre for all their hard work in supporting our daughter”.
- “I would like to thank all the staff in A2 who looked after us during our stay with our child”.
- “I can’t thank the staff in the acute admissions ward enough for the wonderful treatment I received”.

Children Order Complaints

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 and Complaints Procedure.

Over the year, there were four complaints dealt with under this procedure and these were all resolved at the informal “problem solving” stage. The timescale for responding to Children Order complaints is 28 days. All of these were responded to within 20 days.

Additional information

There were 268 formal enquiries and 357 informal enquiries received during 2015/16 with most being received from MLAs, MPs or local Councillors. A number of these were also received from service users, carers or other third parties. During 2015/16 complaints training was provided to Trust staff working in a number of different services and departments across the Trust. Complaints training was also included in a number of other courses delivered during the financial year including corporate induction, managers’ induction and NVQ training. Complaints training is now available on e-Learning.

If complainants are dissatisfied:

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

Ombudsman

For those who remain dissatisfied they may approach the NI Public Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman’s Office) directly. In 2015/16, there were 5 requests for information received from the Ombudsman. Three cases were closed following initial contact, one was referred back to the Trust for further local resolution and one is still on-going. Four cases which were opened in previous years were closed during 2015/16, and apologies were issued.