

2017-18 COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the sixth Complaints Annual Report for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust for the past year, 1 April 2017 – 31 March 2018.

Complaints and compliments continue to be an extremely valuable feedback to the Trust and its staff on the delivery of health care to patients and service users. It is very important that we continue to welcome and acknowledge both complaints and compliments and that we have processes in place to learn from them and apply that learning positively to improve the service we provide to people throughout NI. All complaints received are reviewed by our Senior Executive Management Team and all closed complaints which show any learning are presented to the Trust Board. I would again take this opportunity to thank all those who took the time to contact us to enable us to address their concerns. May I also thank all staff who have spent time listening to and dealing with complaints whether raised formally or informally and for their approach and commitment to achieving a satisfactory outcome for the person complaining.



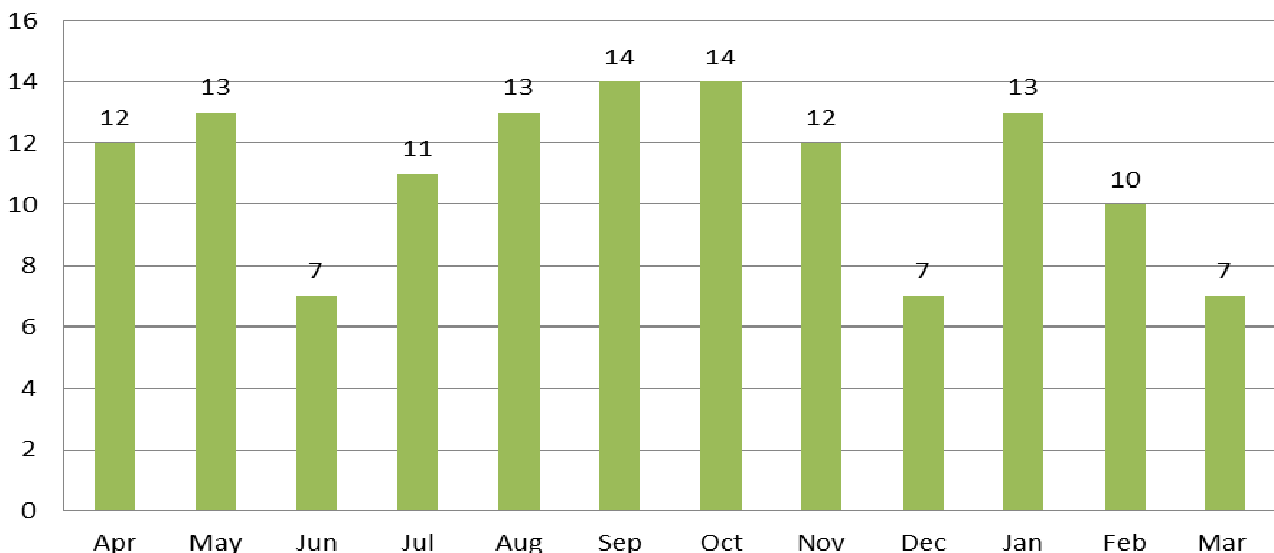
Ms Roisin O'Hara

Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services

During 2017-18 NIAS received **133** complaints, a decrease on the previous year's total of 164. In the same period we received **298** compliments which was increase on the previous year of 207.

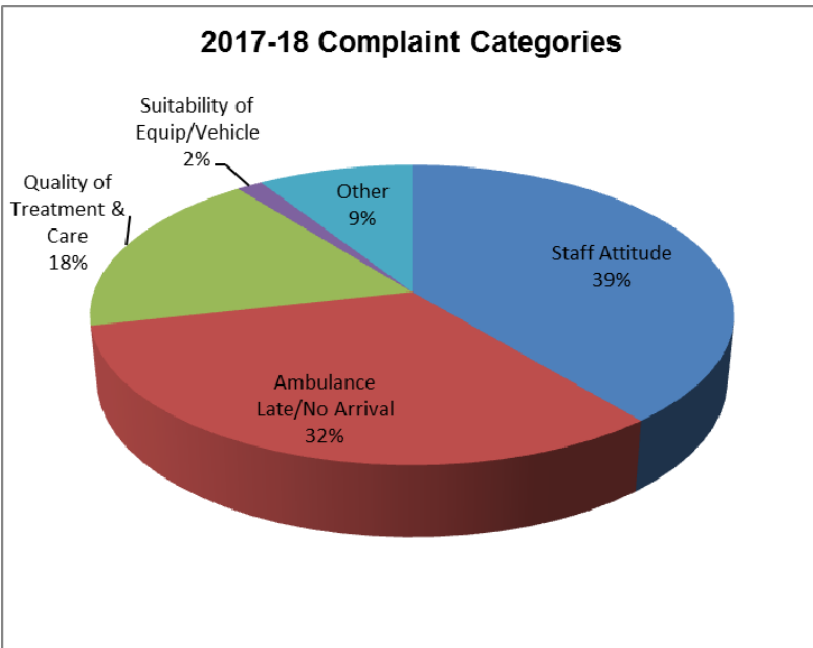
This year NIAS received an average of 603 emergency 999 calls per day. During the year we transported 354,628 patients – equivalent to one person in five of the population of Northern Ireland. The number of complaints received represents 0.06% of patient interaction by our staff.

NIAS Complaints Recieved During 2017-18



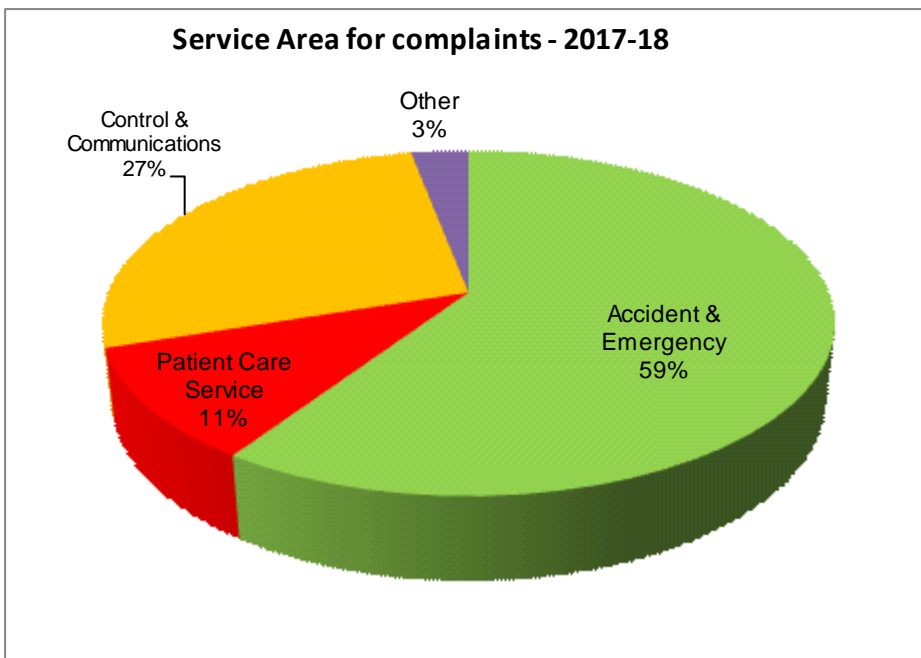
What our service users complained about

Subject	Count	Percentage
Ambulance Late/ No Arrival	43	32%
Staff Attitude	52	39%
Quality of Treatment/Care	24	18%
Suitability of Equipment/vehicle	2	2%
Other	12	9%



The majority of all formal complaints received (39%) relate to the attitude/behaviour of NIAS staff. 32% of the complaints received related to the delay of an ambulance. 18% of complaints related to concerns about the quality of Treatment/Care provided by ambulance staff. 2% related to the suitability of clinical equipment and/or the suitability of the ambulance and 9% of complaints were in the 'Other' category which includes driving incidents and lost property.

Area of Complaints



Of the 133 formal complaints received by the Trust 27% (36) related to the Ambulance Control (Emergency & Non-Emergency Ambulance Control). 59% (79) of complaints related to the frontline Accident & Emergency Service. 11% (14) of complaints concerned the non-emergency Patient Care Service and 3% accounted for 'Other' areas.

Response Time to Complaints

Of the 133 complaints received, 100% were acknowledged within 2 working days. 22% of the complaints received were fully responded to within 20 working days, a decrease of 6% on the previous year. The main reason for the delay in responding to complaints is the competing priorities of the Investigating Officers, who are also frontline Managers with responsibility to ensure service delivery is maintained on a 24/7 basis. 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.

	Total no.	Percentage
Acknowledged < 2 days	133	100%
Response < 20 days	29	22%

Learning from Complaints

Monitoring

Reporting

Learning

We welcome complaints and the opportunities they provide us with to learn lessons and improve our services. Complaints are discussed with the staff concerned to review how our services can be improved.

All outcomes and recommendations from complaints are reported to the Trust Board bi-monthly. Important complaints where learning can be gleaned, are reported to the NIAS Learning Outcomes Review Group.

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

- The process for informing callers of the ETA of ambulances is to be reviewed following a number of complaints received in this regard
- All staff who have received staff attitude/behaviour complaints have received appropriate counselling, in order to prevent any reoccurrences
- The process for when a paramedic should be driving the ambulance, or (attending) treating the patient, has been highlighted and guidance has been issued to staff
- The process for the removal of seats and correct vehicle layout, has been highlighted and addressed for non-emergency patient care service ambulances.



If people 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 as we can consider other options. We routinely offer complainants an opportunity to discuss their complaint with an Officer from the Trust.

Ombudsman

For those people who remain dissatisfied, they can contact the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO) to have their complaint investigated further. This year three complainants approached the Ombudsman for further investigation into their complaint.

During 2017-18, five complaints were investigated by NIPSO.



Compliments

While we accept that sometimes things go wrong, numerous letters of appreciation and expressions of thanks are received to acknowledge the excellent services provided to patients by our staff. Our staff certainly appreciate knowing when things go well. During the 2017-18 period, NIAS received 298 compliments which is an increase of 91 on the previous 2016-17 period.

Here are some examples of the compliments received during the year:

- *Thanks to the RRV paramedic and ambulance staff who where absolutely fantastic, they did everything in their power to keep patient comfortable;*
- *Sincere thanks to the call handler, "without her they would have not been able to cope" and thanks to the ambulance staff for saving their daughters life;*
- *Thanks to the crew for looking after her mother so well. These staff are an exact representation of what paramedics should be and sincere thanks to them both;*
- *sincere thanks to the crew helping her elderly aunt who suffers from dementia, they where so kind and gentle the entire time whilst providing the patient with lots of reassurance;*
- *Sincere thanks and praise to NIAS. The patient wanted it placed on record that the care he received was the best he has ever received and states the crew went above and beyond the call of duty;*
- *Thanks for the way I was treated at such a scary time. I am grateful to all the staff members for their care and attention*