

Complaints Annual Report 2015 - 2016

Foreword

This is the Complaints Annual Report for the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust covering the year 1 April 2015 to 31 March 2016 which I am presenting as the newly appointed Director with responsibility for complaints.

At the outset, I would like to pay tribute to Eamonn Molloy for his contribution to this very important agenda and especially for his role in the establishment of the Trust's Lessons Learnt Sub Committee.

This committee is part of the Governance and Risk Management infrastructure. The role of this committee is to ensure that lessons learnt have been put into practice on an organisational wide basis.

Myra Weir

Director of Human Resources & Corporate Affairs

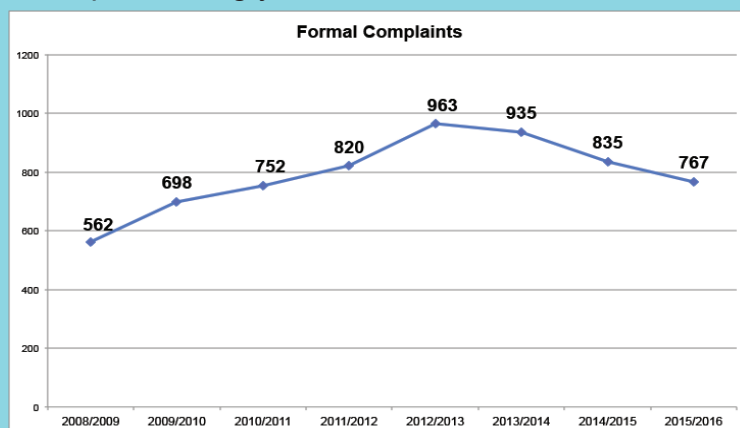


The overall number of complaints received reduced by 8% to 767 this year. Whilst we endeavour to ensure that our services fully meet the expectations of users, we wish to know when they do not and in these circumstances we welcome complaints to enable the Trust to take the appropriate remedial action to prevent a reoccurrence.

I would like to express my gratitude to Trust staff for their continued dedication to the resolution of complaints and for their sensitive handling of issues that are important to complainants.

Complaints this year

During the past year (2015 - 2016), the Trust received a total of **767** formal complaints. The chart below shows the number of complaints received over the past year in comparison with the 7 preceding years.



There has been a **8%** decrease in formal complaints in the past year.

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

The Trust:-

- Provides over 250 different health and social care services
- Serves a population of approximately 440,000
- Has almost 10,000 staff
- Provides services in peoples own homes and from the Ulster, Lagan Valley, Downe, Newtownards and Bangor Hospitals
- Saw about 150,000 people at our Emergency Departments during 2014/2015, treated about 31,000 people in hospital as daycases and admitted about 36,600 people to our 3 main hospitals
- Spends in excess of 50% of its resources on community based and personal social services, supporting people in their homes.

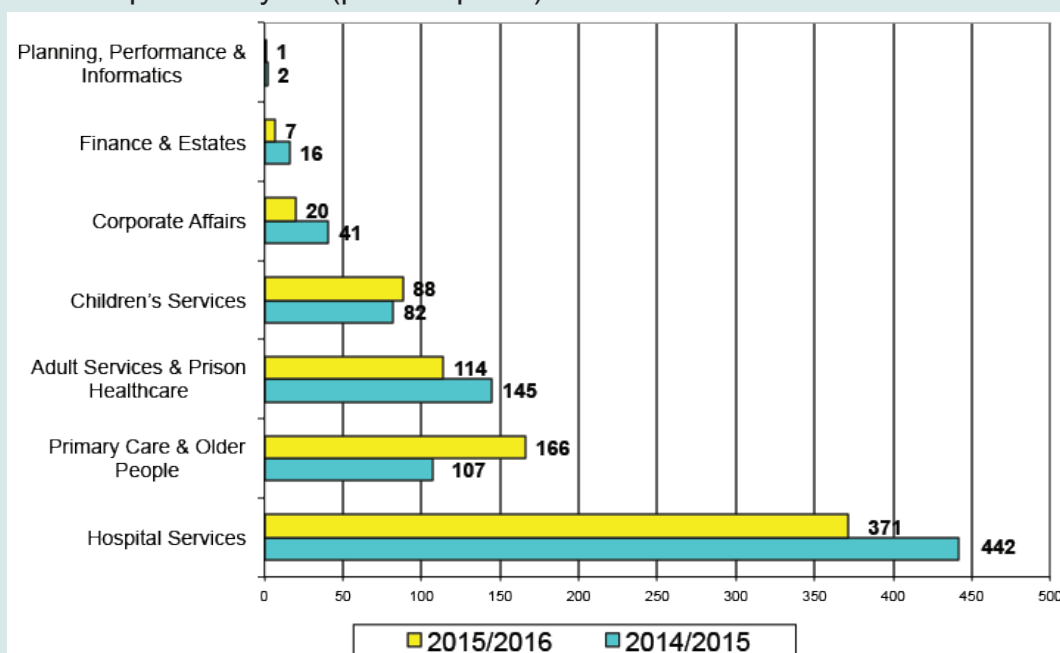
What people complained about

The chart below shows the number of formal complaints by subject for the past year (2015/2016) in comparison to the previous year (2014/2015). The figures are per issue of complaint, as complaints can have more than one issue each. For 2015/2016 we had complaints made by **767** complainants and these raised **1161** issues, compared to 2014/2015 figures of **835** complainants and **1331** issues.

The top three subjects of complaint this year were about quality of care, communication and staff attitudes in Northern Ireland. This is similar across all the Health & Social Care Trusts.

Subjects	2014/2015		2015/2016	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Quality of Treatment & Care	337	25.3%	296	25.5%
Staff Attitude / Behaviour	256	19.2%	224	19.3%
Communication / Information	151	11.3%	159	13.7%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Outpatients Appointments	83	6.2%	72	6.2%
Clinical Diagnosis	45	3.3%	42	3.6%
Policy / Commerical Decisions	35	2.6%	33	2.9%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Planned Admission to Hospital	22	1.7%	27	2.3%
Professional Assessment of Need	17	1.3%	27	2.3%
Records / Record Keeping	31	2.3%	26	2.2%
Discharge / Transfer Arrangements	32	2.4%	21	1.8%
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments	36	2.7%	17	1.5%
Aids / Adaptions / Appliances	16	1.2%	15	1.3%
Confidentiality	16	1.2%	13	1.1%
Property / Expenses / Finances	20	1.5%	14	1.2%
Quantity of Treatment & Care	21	1.6%	13	1.1%
Environmental	25	1.9%	13	1.1%
Hotel / Support / Security Services	16	1.2%	12	1.0%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Community Based Appointments	13	1.0%	11	0.9%
Waiting Times, A&E Departments	22	1.7%	10	0.9%
Waiting Times, Community Services	9	0.7%	10	0.9%
Access to Premises	23	1.7%	9	0.8%
Other	105	8.0%	97	8.4%
Totals:	1331	100%	1161	100%

This graph below shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2015/2016 in comparison to the previous year (per complaint).



Response Times

99% of complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days. We strive to investigate and respond to complaints within the target of 20 working days. However, due to the complexity of some complaints, this is not always possible.

In the past year, 2015/2016, **54%** of complaints were responded to within the timescale. This is a slight improvement from the previous year (53%). Response times will continue to be closely monitored during the forthcoming year to ensure complainants are provided with timely responses.

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, 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.

In the last year **15%** 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 NI Commissioner for Complaints (Ombudsman) directly.

In **2015/2016**, there were **9** complainants who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint.

Of these, 4 were not taken on by the Ombudsman and 5 are ongoing.

Prison Healthcare

The South Eastern Trust is responsible for Prison Healthcare in Northern Ireland. All complaints relating to healthcare in prisons or the secure college at Hydebank are dealt with through the Trust's complaints process.

In 2015/2016 there have been **278** informal complaints, ie. dealt with by healthcare staff. There were **50** formal complaints made. The majority were resolved at that point, however, 5 approached the Ombudsman to investigate the complaint. 3 of these were not taken on by the Ombudsman and 2 are ongoing.

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 **32** complaints dealt with at the informal 'problem-solving' stage. All were resolved at this point except for one which progressed to stage 1 of the procedure and has now been resolved.

Monitoring

During this year the Trust's Lessons Learnt Sub Committee, which reports to the Corporate Control Committee, chaired by the Chief Executive, met on a quarterly basis.

The role of the sub committee is to ensure that the Trust has in place the necessary controls to manage its risk in relation to complaints, incidents and litigation claims. Its role is also to ensure that the lessons learnt have been put into practice on an organisational wide basis.

Lessons Learnt / Improvements from Complaints

We welcome complaints and the opportunities they provide us with to 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 2015/2016 following complaints. Here are some examples in some departments:

Hospital Services:

- Following a family raising concerns about communication with them regarding their relative's poor prognosis, deteriorating condition and death, we arranged bespoke bereavement training for the staff involved to highlight the importance of timely communication with families and how to deal with these difficult situations and conversations. This training proved to be successful with staff feeling better equipped to support bereavement and families.

Adult Services:

- Following concerns about not receiving medication, refresher training on administration of medicines was commissioned and attended by staff. In addition, regular audits will take place on omitted medications across all mental health units.

Primary Care & Elderly Services:

- As a result of difficulties experienced in relation to a patient's complex discharge, a flowchart is being developed between the nursing teams on the wards and in community which will prompt nursing staff to ensure the referrals run smoothly and with transfer of patients between hospital and community.

Children's Services:

- After concerns were raised about communication during a safeguarding investigation for a child, a leaflet for parents is being developed regarding the joint protocol processes and will include information on the right of parents to seek legal advice.

Compliments

While we accept that sometimes things go wrong, thousands of letters of appreciation and expressions of thanks are received to acknowledge the excellent services provided. Our staff certainly appreciate knowing when things go well, and in 2015/2016 the Trust received **7572** formal compliments.

"Thank you very much for my day trip – was a brilliant trip, had a very good time with the other patients and staff. My experience in the ward was very helpful; I enjoyed interacting with other patients and was made to feel part of a group. Thank you to all staff for making my time comfortable and welcoming."

"My husband was diagnosed and subsequently died from this terminal illness. We were assigned a social worker 2 years ago – she excelled as our social worker – she was knowledgeable, hardworking, compassionate, efficient and yet all the times professional – a credit to her profession."

"I would like to take this opportunity to express my deepest gratitude and heart felt thanks to all the staff on the mental health ward. I was admitted here in the darkest of times in my life. The staff have quite literally saved my life. They do a superb job under the hardest of conditions and deserve nothing but the highest praise."

"I had a visit to my home re my hearing loss. He explained to me ways a very deaf elderly person like myself could make use of ever changing technology such as louder phone, door bell & smoke alarm. I found his visit most helpful and was most appreciative of the time he spent reassuring me that my quality of life could be greatly improved."

"My Health Visitor has been incredible support to me. She encouraged and counselled me through many difficult days after the birth and continues to be a huge support. Always ready with practical and emotional support, information and reassurance. She has been instrumental in my recovery and my family benefit from her greatly."

"From I arrived at the hospital until I left, the staff could not have been more helpful. Even the procedure I went through was made very easy due to the staff nurses and doctor keeping me at ease the whole time. Very nice people."

"Staff - polite, efficient and helpful. Consultant very kind, informative and gave me dignity. My visit was a pleasant experience."

"The care and attention was superb and my mother was admitted to ward within 8 hours. The staff all work so hard and are so pleasant. Superb workplace and a big thank you for saving my mother's life."

Plans for the incoming year (2016/2017)

In the incoming year we plan to run a series of bespoke training days for our staff who investigate complaints in relation to effective complaints response writing.

We also have an ongoing survey asking people who have complained to tell us about their experiences of using the complaints process. The results will be analysed to see where improvements can be made.

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