

Compliments & Complaints Annual Report 2022 - 2023

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 2022/2023.

I am delighted to report that the Trust received 3,979 compliments throughout the year, a 24% increase from last 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
Director of Human Resources
& Corporate Affairs



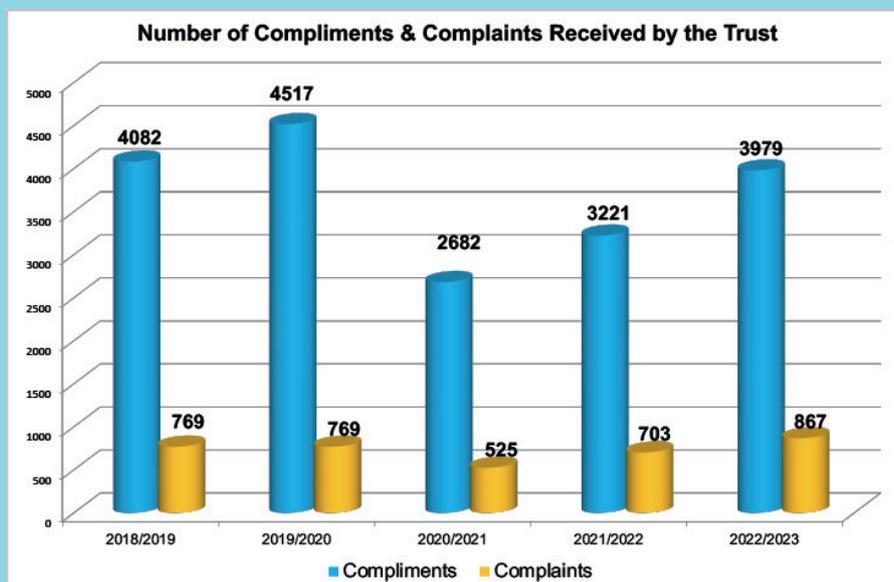
Facts & Figures

In the year 2022/2023:

- **3,979** compliments were received
- **867** complaints were received
- **97%** of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days
- **32%** 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 (2022/2023), the Trust received **3,979** compliments and **867** (includes COVID-19 related) complaints, which is an increase from the previous year (3,221 compliments / 703 complaints), as shown in the graph below.



Care Opinion



Care Opinion is the regional Health & Social Care Online User Feedback System which was launched August 2020 to support service users to share their experience stories with the Trust and have a direct response made by the service where the care experience took place.

During 2022/2023, the Trust has had 585 stories shared by our service users, which brings us to an overall total of 1,463 stories told. It is great to see our staff being recognised for providing great care through Care Opinion stories submitted by our service users. These stories are used to make improvements and to widen and accelerate learning.

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 2022/2023 the Trust received **3,979** 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
Quality of Treatment and Care	1125	277	264	361	57	60	457	2601
Staff Attitude & Behaviour	251	193	85	86	14	27	425	1081
Information & Communication	26	19	5	27	1	3	89	170
Environment	3		1	4			44	52
Other	32	6	15	21	1			75
Total	1437	495	370	499	73	90	1015	3979

"I wanted to pass on how impressed I am with the whole district nursing team who looked after my father-in-law. I referred him with two difficult venous ulcers on his leg. They religiously visited him / dressed his legs / cleaned his ulcers / ordered compression stockings / kept him out of hospital. His legs are like 'wee twigs' now and he is much better on his feet."

"I had occasion to call the Out of Hours Service. The doctor who took the call was most attentive to our concerns. He then made a home visit in which he dealt very gently and efficiently with our concerns, giving my father medication to assist his health problems. The service he offered was excellent and we are most grateful to him."

My husband attended A&E. It was a good experience. In a freak coincidence, as he was getting back into the car, he suddenly became septic. He had to turn around and come back inside the A&E. Your staff did everything right and likely saved his life. I can't thank you enough for the quick action provided that surviving sepsis depends upon. My children will have him around for longer because of you.

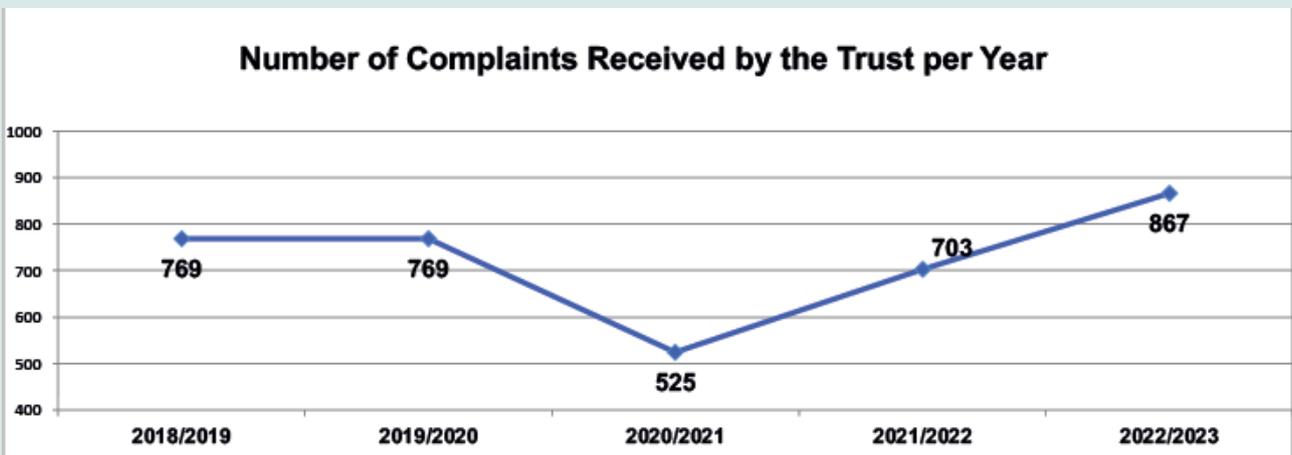
The mental health team have been an incredible support to me. My CPN is able to tell how I am within seconds of opening the door. The reception team at outpatients are fantastic and have gone above and beyond to help me at various points in my care. Along with these staff members I wanted to compliment the Recovery College which has been vital on my road to recovery. The courses have helped me understand my condition and how best to move forward. The singing group Voice of Hope enabled me to not only engage with a very useful skill for my toolbox but also expand my support network with people who understand. I wanted to compliment them as they have a vital resource for me and so deserve recognition for excellence which unfortunately in mental health services can be scarce.

Complaints

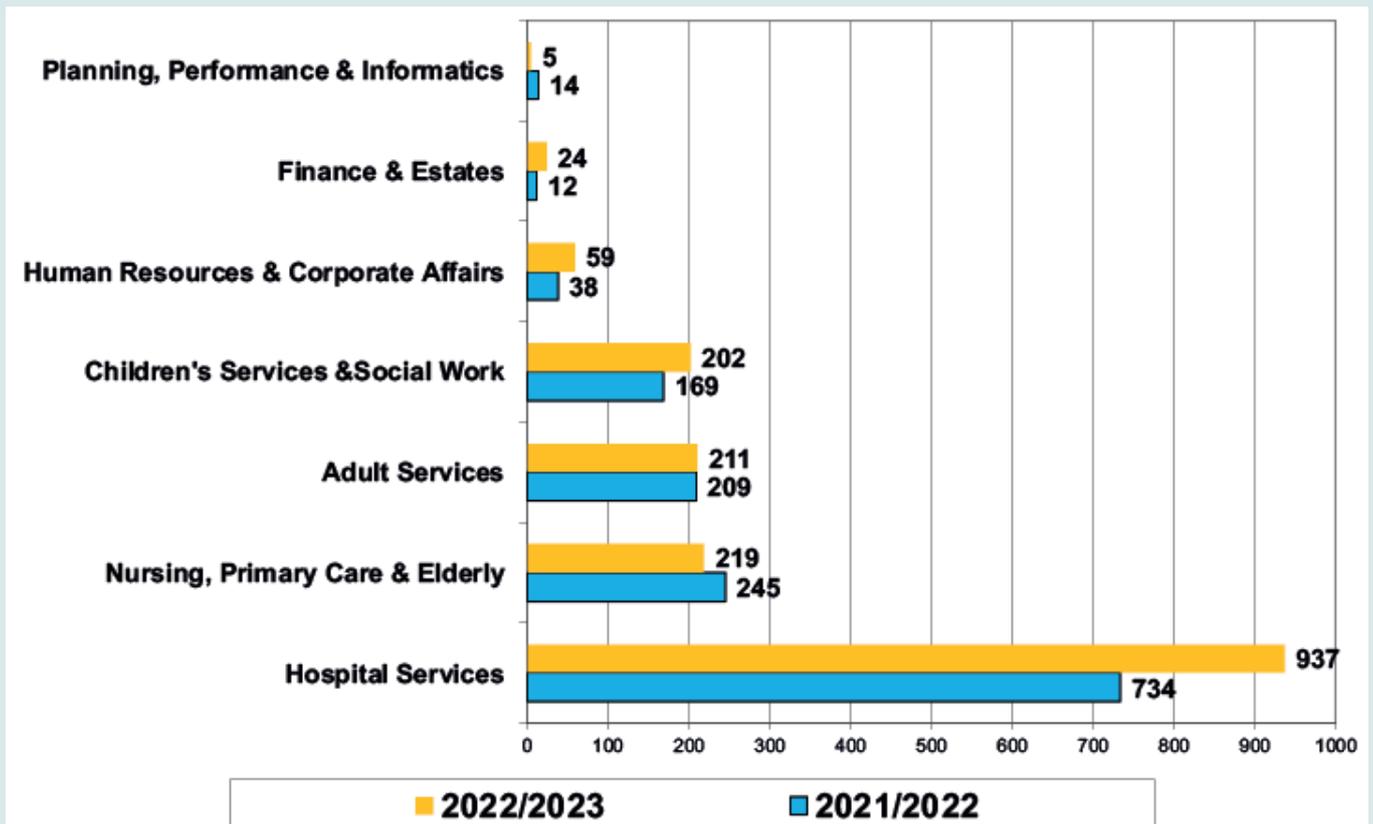
The number of complaints continues to be low considering the large geographical area the Trust covers and the number of contacts Trust staff have with patients and clients. The Trust:

- Serves a population of approximately 364,000
- Has over 12,000 staff
- Provides a wide range of health and social care services to people in their own homes, in community settings and in the Ulster, Lagan Valley, Downe, Newtownards and Bangor Hospitals
- Over 5,000 District Nursing visits every week
- 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 2020/2021 during the onset of COVID-19, however, in 2022/2023, numbers have increased significantly - see the graph below:



This graph below shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2022/2023 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 (2022/2023) in comparison to the previous year.

The figures are per issue of complaint, as a complaint can have more than one issue. For 2022/2023 we had complaints made by **867** complainants and these raised **1,657** issues, compared with 2021/2022 figures of **703** complainants and **1,421** issues.

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)	2021/2022		2022/2023	
Quality of Treatment & Care	371	26%	416	25%
Communication / Information	280	20%	372	22%
Staff Attitude / Behaviour	261	18%	266	16%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Outpatients Appointments	50	4%	70	4%
Clinical Diagnosis	47	3%	65	4%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Community Based Appointments	38	3%	47	3%
Professional Assessment of Need	30	2%	34	2%
Policy / Commercial Decisions	25	2%	31	2%
Property / Expenses / Finances	24	2%	26	2%
Confidentiality	35	2%	24	1%
Quantity of Treatment & Care	45	3%	24	1%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Planned Admission to Hospital	14	1%	24	1%
Privacy / Dignity	11	1%	23	1%
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments	3	<1%	23	1%
Hotel / Support / Security Services	3	<1%	22	1%
Records / Record Keeping	23	2%	21	1%
Waiting Times, A&E Departments	11	1%	21	1%
Discharge / Transfer Arrangements	41	3%	20	1%
Environmental	17	1%	17	1%
Other	92	6%	111	7%
Totals:	1421	100%	1657	100%

Response Times to Complaints

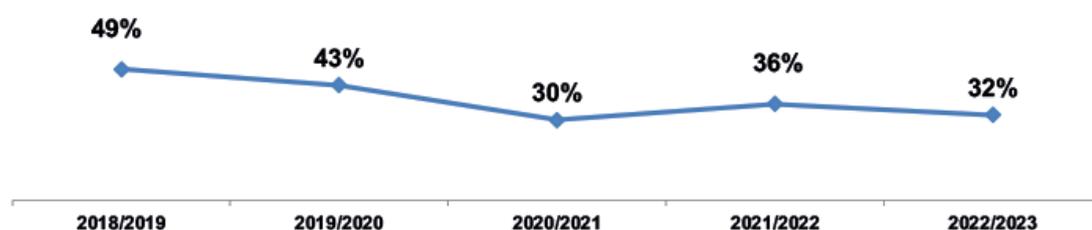
97% of complaints were acknowledged within the target of 2 working days which is similar to last year.

32% of complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days, which is a decrease of 4% from the previous year (36%), as shown in the graph below.

Following the COVID-19 pandemic, Trust staff have been working to rebuild services after many were suspended or reduced. Duties, such as investigating and responding to complaints, were impacted upon, which led to delays in responding to our complainants.

Significant work has been undertaken and is ongoing to support Directorates to address their complaints performance. The Trust continues to monitor timescales to ensure complainants are provided with timely responses. Our emphasis is also on the quality of the responses and ensuring resolution for the complainants, relevant to the issues raised.

Complaints Responded to Within 20 Working Days



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 **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 Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (Ombudsman) directly.

In **2022/2023** there were **26** complainants (3%), who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint, which is an increase from last year (21). Of these 26, 6 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman, 5 were settled without investigation and 15 others are ongoing. 10 other complaints, received by the Ombudsman prior to 1 April 2022, were closed during the past year, while 11 others remain ongoing.

A total of 17 complaints were closed by the Ombudsman during 2022/2023:

- 7 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman
- In 3 cases the Ombudsman did not uphold any of the complaint
- In 4 cases a settlement was reached without investigation
- 3 had some areas of failings identified and recommendations made by the Ombudsman for remedy / improvement to services.

Trends in Ombudsman cases

Increase in cases settled without further investigation by Ombudsman.

2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023
1	4

Examples of actions taken to settle cases:

- Further assessment of patient's need
- Addition of parents' signed written statement added to children's files
- Meeting with Trust staff to discuss decision making for treatment plan.

Examples of Recommendations made by Ombudsman for improvements / learning:

- Provide training on importance of monitoring patient's fluid levels and creating and retaining contemporaneous records of care
- Remind ward staff of the requirement that bed rails risk assessment should be reviewed within a minimum of 7 days
- Care management to be reminded of the significance of their role particularly when handling difficult family relationships
- Remind medics of the importance of documenting their attendance and assessment of patient as well as any examination findings and outcomes
- Reflect on communication with patient's families and / or next of kin and the importance of documenting such conversations.

Reduction in cases where failings identified by Ombudsman.

2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023
9	3

Themes in the failings identified were similar across both years:

- Record keeping
- Quality of treatment and care
- Communication.

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 2022/2023, a total of 190 were reported by the Independent Sector (informal and formal) – 89 Domiciliary Care, 92 Care Homes and 8 Supported Living and 1 Daycare.

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 **15** complaints dealt with at the informal 'problem-solving' stage. 10 were resolved with 5 ongoing at this point, and none progressed to Stage 1 of the procedure.

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 2022/2023 following complaints.

You said, We did

There are many examples of service improvements as a result of complaints in 2022/2023 and a few examples are listed below:

You Said:

Patient suffered a skin break.

We Did:

The ward team have standardised risk assessment reviews and have undertaken training and updates regarding pressure ulcer prevention.

You Said:

Poor signage for disabled access.

We Did:

Updated signage has been altered to show a one way system.

You Said:

Patient's rings went missing while in hospital.

We Did:

In any situation where a property disclaimer book cannot be completed by a patient, contact must be made with the next of kin to ensure property is safe and accounted for.

You Said:

Wheelchair user was not offered support to negotiate incline in corridor to reach appointment room. Partner could not control speed of wheelchair.

We Did:

Label has been introduced on all appointment letters advising patients with mobility issues to use another entrance that is level with no inclines.

You Said:

Lack of information sharing that patient had an Acquired Brain Injury.

We Did:

Nursing assessment and 'Medical Markers' forms have been changed to include details of Acquired Brain Injury. Speech and Language Therapist has been recruited to support patients with communication needs.

You Said:

Lack of awareness of vaccination related Postural Orthostatic Tachycardia Syndrome (POTS) led to failure to diagnose.

We Did:

Lead Educators are to include the topic of POTS in the teaching programme for medical staff.

You Said:

Fracture was not diagnosed.

We Did:

Clinical staff involved in assessing ankle injuries will be reminded of the need to consider further imaging in any patient re-attending with persisting symptoms following an injury.

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