

# **Patient Complaints & Compliments Annual Report 2014/15**



## Executive Summary

This is the Annual Report of the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust Complaints Review Group. The Complaints Review Group provides assurance to the “Learning from Experience Steering Group” around all aspects of complaints and their management, including complaints made under the Children Order Complaints Procedure.

Patients, their carers and their families can make a complaint or a compliment about the services received in person, by telephone or in writing.

The recurring theme in a number of recent reports including the ‘Mid Staffordshire NHS Foundation Trust Public Inquiry’ by Robert Francis Q.C. and the Donaldson Report highlight the need to listen and learn from our patients. Only then can we truly improve our patient experience.

This report provides statistical information and commentary about the Belfast Trust’s complaint handling for the year 2014/15. It includes details of the numbers of complaints and compliments received during the year, performance in responding to complaints, NI Ombudsman investigations, and actions taken by the Trust in response to complaints.

The Belfast Trust delivers integrated health and social care to approximately 340,000 citizens in Belfast and the Borough of Castlereagh. The Trust also provides a range of specialist services to all of Northern Ireland. With an annual budget of £1.2 bn and a workforce of 22,000 (full time and part time), it is one of the largest Trusts in the United Kingdom.

It is worth noting that the vast majority of people who receive treatment and care from our services have a positive experience. However, when the standard of our treatment and care is not at an optimum level, it is then our priority to listen and learn from the experiences of patients and their families.

## Main Points of Note

During 2014/15, the Trust provided health and social care services for 150,000 inpatients, 130,000 outpatients, 75,000 day cases, 7,000 care packages and 128,580 adult Emergency Department contacts. Complaints received by the Belfast Trust should be viewed within this wider context.

- **2156** formal complaints were received in 2014/15 representing **0.4 %** of total attendances.
- **574** general enquiries were received in 2014/15.

- Compared with 2013/14 there has been a **12%** increase in formal complaints and an **11%** decrease in general enquiries
- **53%** of complaints were responded to within 20 working days
- **66%** of complaints were responded to within 30 working days
- **7** complaints were referred by Complainants to the NI Ombudsman compared to 22 in 2013/14
- The Complaints Department continues to support complaints resolution by facilitating meetings with complainants throughout the year. Meeting with complainants has proved to be an effective way of resolving complaints.
- **55** Complaints awareness training courses provided by the Trust Complaints Managers were attended by **1599** staff. The Complaints Department also provides Complaints awareness training to Band 2 and 3 Nursing Vocational Training Programme and “Complaints Response Writing” training to senior managers. Patient stories and examples of learning from complaints have been used in staff training sessions.
- The Complaints Department provide training three times a year in Root Cause Analysis (RCA) methodology for the investigation of complaints and adverse incidents. Sixty-three senior managers and clinicians from across all specialities and service areas have been trained in using this methodology.
- During the year the Trust responded to **53%** of complaints within 20 working days. The Trust’s target of **70%** will be closely monitored within the next financial year.

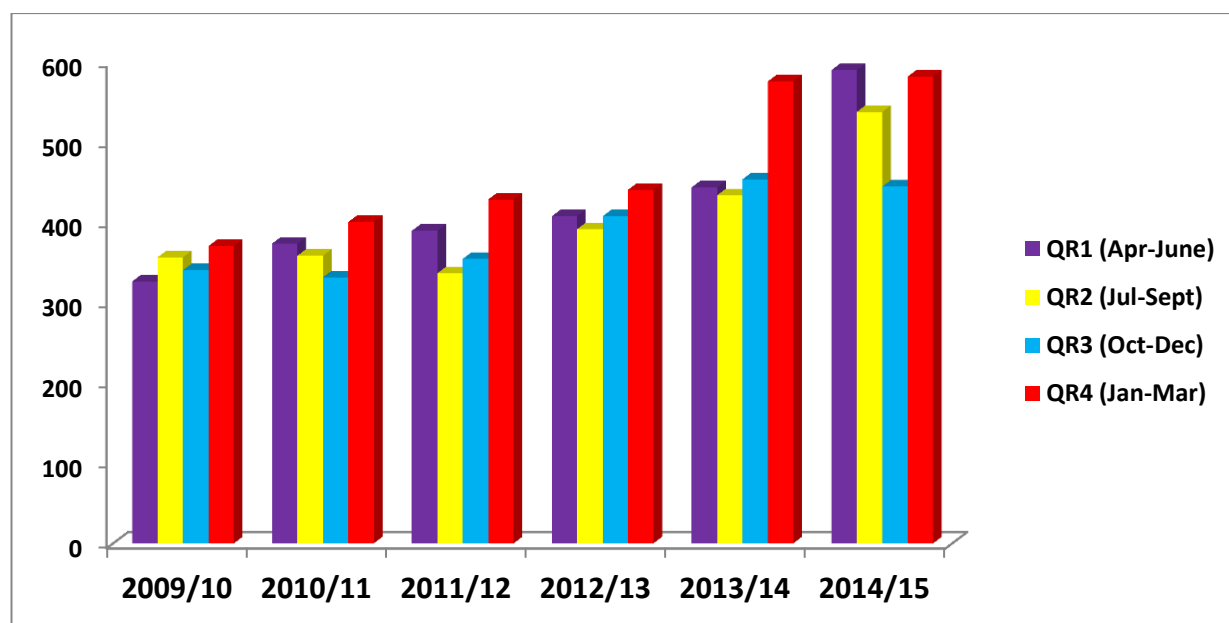
## **Formal Complaints Trend 2009-2015**

The numbers of Complaints received have increased year on year.

The following table and figures indicate a significant increase from Quarter (QR) 4 in the previous year on the number of complaints received.

It is notable that this trend continued in QR 1 of 2014/15 and was replicated in QR 4 2014/15. Analysis of forthcoming quarters will determine if numbers of formal complaints per quarter has peaked.

## Number of Formal Complaints by Quarter 2009-2015



## Annual Response Rates

The Trust aims to respond to all complaints received within 20 working days; however, the investigation and/or response may be delayed. This may be due to a number of reasons including the complexity of the complaint; the involvement of more than one Directorate or another Trust, General Practitioner concerns (which are managed by the HSC Board) and the need to request an independent expert opinion.

While we continue to seek improvement in the timeliness of responses, this must not be at the cost of providing a quality response. We will continue to monitor and benchmark with other Trusts across Northern Ireland in the next financial years, taking into account the relative size of the Belfast Trust's demographic area and its provision of regional services.

The following tables and figures show the breakdown of response times for the Trust and by Directorates compared to previous years.

Category	2009/10	2010/11	2011/12	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15
<b>Acknowledgement Times within 2 working days (WD)</b>	<b>79%</b>	<b>93%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>95%</b>	<b>96%</b>	<b>96%</b>
Response Times within 20 (WD)	49%	55%	63%	51%	50%	<b>53%</b>
Response Times within 30 (WD)	63%	70%	79%	68%	64%	<b>66%</b>

## Annual Response Rates according to Service Directorate

Service Directorate	No complaints 2014/15	No complaints 2013/14	20 Working Days Response Rate
Adult Social and Primary Care	177	178	76% (+10%)
Children's Community Services	85	60	57% (-19%)
Finance	52	45	58% (+7%)
Medical	0	1	0%
Nursing and User Experience	45	58	53% (+7%)
Performance, Planning & Informatics	44	58	70% (+16%)
Specialist Hospitals & Women's Health	774	566	60% (-1%)
Surgery and Specialist Services	400	380	50% (+3%)
Unscheduled and Acute Care	593	563	36% (=%)
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>2156</b>	<b>1924</b>	<b>53% (+3%)</b>

*NB The figures above in brackets denote the % improvement or decline in response rates in comparison to the Year 13/14.*

## Complaint Themes– Top 5 Subjects

Complaints are recorded under 38 category types which have been pre-defined regionally. A complaint can be recorded under one category or several categories, depending on the nature and complexity of the complaint. Analysis of this data helps us to identify any recurrent themes.

A total of 2772 complaint subjects were raised by service users. The Top 5 Subjects or reasons for service users to complain remain relatively unchanged from previous years; however it is notable that “Waiting List, Delay/Cancellation Planned Admission to Hospital” has increased by 70%. 44% of these complaints in respect of this subject relate to the Musgrave Park Hospital site, and these are mainly related to the waiting times for orthopaedic treatments. 24% of these relate to the Royal Victoria Hospital site. A contributory factor to this increase may be due to the removal of the Health and Social Care Board funding which allowed the Trust to outsource services to private providers.

The Complaints Review Group has agreed to undertake a thematic review of the top 5 reasons for complaints. This is to further inform managers and our training as to the specific reasons for patients/clients dissatisfaction with our services and how we can improve our patient/client experience.

The following table and figures identify complaints received by category and compared to 2013/14.

<b>Formal Complaints - Top 5 Subjects</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
Communication/Information	469	455
Treatment & Care, Quality	461	404
Waiting List, Delay/Cancellation Outpatient Appointments	376	318
Staff Attitude/Behaviour	367	318
Waiting List, Delay/Cancellation Planned Admission to Hospital	337	199

## Grading of Complaints

All complaints are graded by the Complaints Managers using the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust (BHSCT) Risk Matrix. The grading helps determine appropriate action at the outset of the complaints handling process which may include immediate notification to Senior Trust staff including Directors and the Medical Director. Grading of complaints across 2014/15 would indicate 71% of formal complaints are graded as Low, 27% are graded as Medium and 2% graded as High. This grading may be reviewed at any time during the complaint investigation and is finally reviewed at the conclusion of the complaint investigation.

## Adult Emergency Departments 2014/15 – Complaints v Contacts

Review of contacts with our patients in relation to formal complaints received is an area for future development. We will endeavour to utilise Directorate statistics for wider comparisons in forthcoming financial years.

The table below indicates the percentage of complaints received in relation to attendances at the BHSCT Adult Emergency Departments – Royal Victoria and Mater Hospitals.

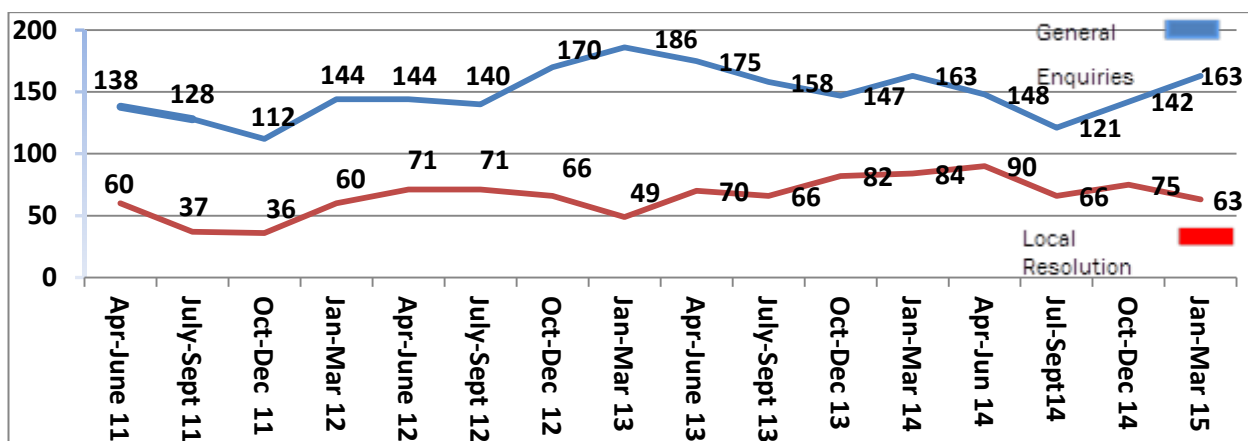
<b>Adult Emergency Departments</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
Number of complaints	116
Total Attendances	128580
Percentage overall	0.09%
<b>Royal Victoria Hospital ED</b>	
Number of complaints	95
Total attendances	82959
Percentage per site	0.11%
<b>Mater Hospital ED</b>	
Number of Complaints	21
Total attendances	45621
Percentage per site	0.04%

## Number of General Enquiries and Local Resolutions by Quarter 2011/15

“General Enquiries” are mainly received via telephone by Complaints Department staff. These concerns are not subject to the HSC Complaint’s Procedure and can be resolved relatively quickly. Examples include; enquiries about position on the waiting list, clients unable to contact specific wards/departments and clients who request that their concerns are not dealt with as a complaint.

The Trust also continues to encourage staff to resolve and record concerns at service level and these are also monitored by the Complaints Department as cases resolved under “Local Resolution”. Complaints Awareness Training aims to encourage staff to resolve concerns locally. Service users may subsequently request that their concerns are further investigated formally under HSC Complaints Procedure.

The table and figures below indicate that there has been no significant change over the last four years in the combined numbers of Enquiries and Local Resolution concerns.



## Monitoring and Reporting

- The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety NI receives quarterly monitoring of Complaint Subject and Programme of Care Reports (CH8 report).
- The Health and Social Care Board (the Board) receives redacted monthly reports of all Formal Complaints received; these are reviewed and monitored by clinical and social care leads within the Board.
- The Trust Board receives Internal Performance Reports on a quarterly basis; these include the Complaints’ Department acknowledgement and response timeframes.
- The Governance Managers for the Service Directorates receive regular Complaint Reports which are discussed at Governance Meetings and lessons identified shared for learning.
- The Complaints Review Group meets 3 or 4 times a year. This Group is chaired by a Non-Executive Director and membership includes representation from the Service

Directorates, a Carers representative, the Complaints Department and the Risk and Governance Department. The Group review and monitors how complaints are managed and consider any lessons learned to provide assurance to Trust Board via the Learning from Experience Steering Group.

- The Complaints Department provide information in response to Departmental enquiries and ministerial questions.
- Information is provided to medical staff for the Doctor’s Revalidation process.

## The Northern Ireland Ombudsman (The Ombudsman)

Seven requests for information were received from the Ombudsman in year 2014/15. This is a 68% decrease in comparison to the year 2013/14 when 22 requests were received. Please note that some of the 2014-2015 cases were not opened in this particular financial year and some of the cases are also ongoing from the previous financial year.

<b>Breakdown of Cases</b>	<b>2014/15</b>	<b>2013/14</b>
Request for Information/Consideration Stage	7	22
Proceed to Investigation	5	9
Not Upheld	1	4
*Upheld	9	4
Transferred to Litigation	0	1
Referred for Independent Review	1	0

*\*When a complaint is recorded as “upheld”, this will also refer to those complaints that may be partially upheld and are not fully upheld by the Ombudsman.*

## Compliments

A total of 4,787 compliments were forwarded to the Complaints Department for logging on the DATIX system during 2014/15 compared to 5,403 in the previous year. This is likely to show an under reporting of compliments and the Complaints Department continue to encourage staff to report all compliments received as well as complaints.

Compliments are always appreciated and provide our patients and clients with an opportunity to share their positive experiences with our staff members.

The Belfast Trust would ask that service users continue to forward all compliments to our dedicated inbox: [complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

Throughout the year the Trust has received compliments from across all aspects of our services ranging from high standards of cleaning, portering, nursing and other medical and support personnel.

On occasions compliments may appear in the local press including one report in a local newspaper which praised medical and support staff for the care given to a child following an admission for 10 days with an infection in the weeks preceding Christmas. The Trust was pleased to share the positive feedback regarding staff in the Children’s Ward, Musgrave Park Hospital who had cared for the child. Praise was extended to the



Consultant who had explained medical issues in child friendly terms and also to a range of nursing and support staff, including the Hospital School and catering staff.

A compliment was received from a patient's daughter who had spent.....“ two decades working for the NHS and overnight had become the daughter of a patient with cancer”. She spoke highly of all staff involved and in particular, a Social Worker who had made it possible for her father to wake up in his own bed surrounded by his family. She commented, “I could not think of a finer example of care, compassion, competence, communication, courage and commitment to a patient and their family”.

## **Learning**

The Trust continues to investigate complaints in an open and transparent way and complaints are considered to be an important source of learning. Learning from complaints is one of the ways the Trust aims to improve the service user experience and ultimately the safety and quality of the services we provide.

Below is an example of a how learning from a complaint changed practice, reduced the likelihood of reoccurrence and will improve patient experience.

### **Summary of Event**

A 71 year old patient with Alzheimer's disease was admitted on 29 Nov 14 with wound complications. The patient was subsequently discharged home with his wife, who was the main carer. The patient also had a VAC (vacuum assisted closure) pump in situ to drain the wound; however, no training or written instructions were provided to his wife regarding the management of this equipment. The patient was advised to return to the ward in two days' time to have his wound reviewed. However, within one day of discharge, the device alarmed and when his wife contacted the ward for advice, the nurse was not very helpful and only advised to switch the device off. Unfortunately, the VAC pump overflowed and when his wife contacted the ward again, she was then advised to return to the ward. By this time, it was quite late at night making a journey back to the ward difficult for the complainant and her husband.

### **Learning Points**

- The carer should have been provided with verbal and written instructions on the use of the VAC pump prior to discharge.
- The carer should also have been provided with helpline numbers.
- The VAC pump guidance leaflet was only available to the nurse on the ward via the Trust intranet; this meant staff had to print the instructions before providing them to the patient/carer.
- Additional canisters (3) and sponges or dressings for the VAC pump, should have been provided for the patient at discharge.
- The Trust Tissue Viability Nurse was made aware of the incident who contacted the VAC pump suppliers as a result of the concerns raised. It has since been agreed that the suppliers will also provide an information leaflet inside each individual VAC pump box. This learning has been applied regionally.

## Future Developments

- Learning from Complaints remains a high priority for the Trust. The Trust continues to review and improve how learning is shared, both within the Trust and regionally where applicable.
- A complainant satisfaction survey has been designed and data will be analysed to further improve the handling of complaints.
- The Trust recognises that families can experience a great deal of distress when a loved one dies, particularly if concerns have been raised regarding any aspect of care. We want to deal with any concerns raised in a sensitive and timely manner. We plan therefore to offer meetings with the clinical team to provide support and try to resolve any outstanding matters as quickly as possible. The Complaints Department will also continue to develop close links with the Trust Bereavement Co-Ordinator.
- Pilot areas have been identified for the roll-out of Datixweb which will facilitate the management of complaints more effectively and efficiently. This system will allow managers who investigate complaints direct viewing access to their local complaints information, to record any activity in relation to their complaints and permits the production of timely reports for their particular service areas.
- The Trust will liaise with regional colleagues in the management of complaints data to enable improved trends analysis of complaints across the region.
- E- Learning for staff continues to be developed to allow easier access to Complaints Awareness training for all staff.
- Greater collaborative working will be encouraged by partnering the Complaints Managers with a specific Directorate. It is hoped that this will further develop joint working to ultimately improve and enhance the complaint handling experience.
- Workshops with senior managers in Complaints Response Writing will continue to be developed.
- In liaison with the NI Ombudsman's Office, a workshop is planned for senior managers to improve awareness of the Ombudsman role and to share the learning from Ombudsman's reports.
- The Complaints Department staff receive on-going training in resilience awareness which will allow them to deal effectively and empathetically with Complainants.

## The Complaints Team can be contacted at:

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