

**Complaints / Service User  
Feedback Annual Report**

2019 - 2020

## Introduction

This report gives an overview of complaints and feedback received from service users, patients, their carers and family members by Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) from 1 April 2019 to 31 March 2020.

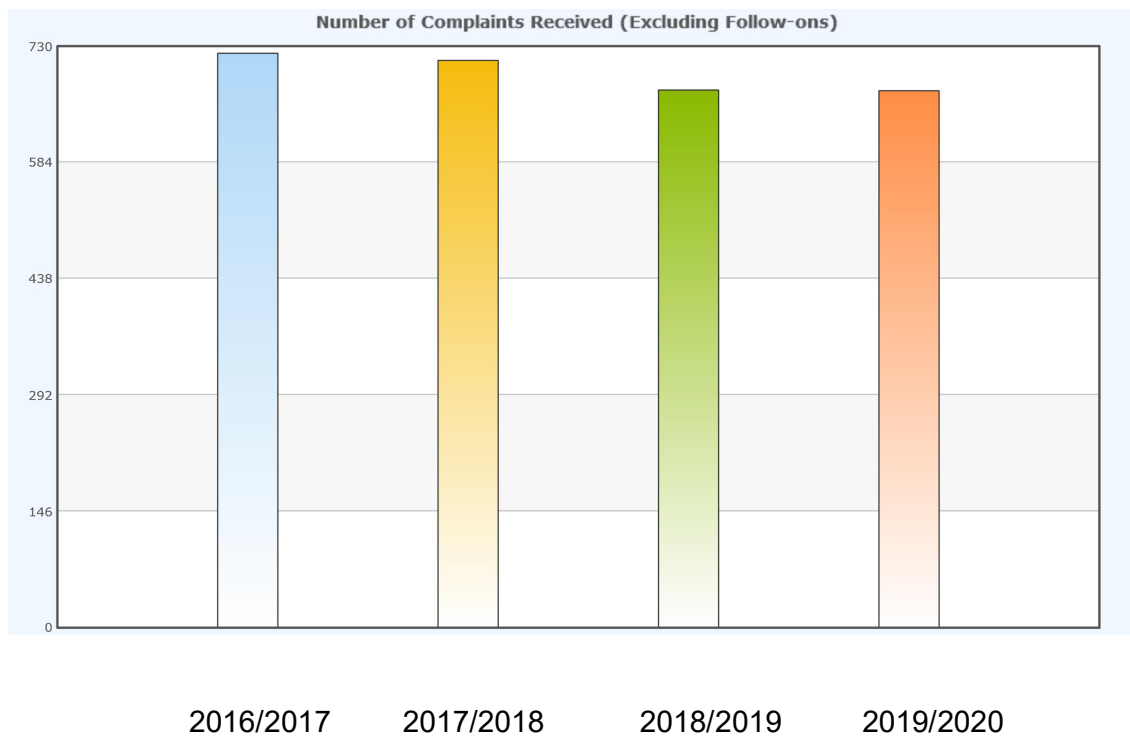
The NHSCT provides health and social care services to a population of approximately 470,000, which is the largest resident population in Northern Ireland. The Trust provided treatment and care for a significant number of people during this year including;

- 77,028 inpatients
- 237,485 acute outpatients
- 164,471 mental health outpatients
- 153,147 emergency department attendances
- 27,657 day case patients
- 3,867 births
- 674 children looked after by Trust
- 522 children on child protection register
- 4,158 domiciliary care packages for older people provided in the community



The report provides details of the number and nature of complaints received by the Trust. The overall number of complaints received decreased from 758 to 753 this year (this includes follow on complaints where complainants return to the Trust to request further information). We are committed to listening to and learning from all of our patients and service users, so that we can continually improve the quality of our services; particularly when the care provided may not have been of the standard that we ourselves would expect. Compliments and suggestions/comments made by patients and service users are acknowledged and shared with the relevant staff/teams.

We aim to respond to complaints within 20 working days, where possible, and strive to ensure that there is a full, fair and objective review of the issues and concerns raised and that an effective response/outcome is provided. The Trust must offer every opportunity to exhaust local resolution and therefore encourages complainants to contact the Trust again should they remain dissatisfied. We will continue to do our utmost to resolve complaints.



**Method of complaints received during 2019/20**



**Email  
47%**



**Letter  
23.85%**

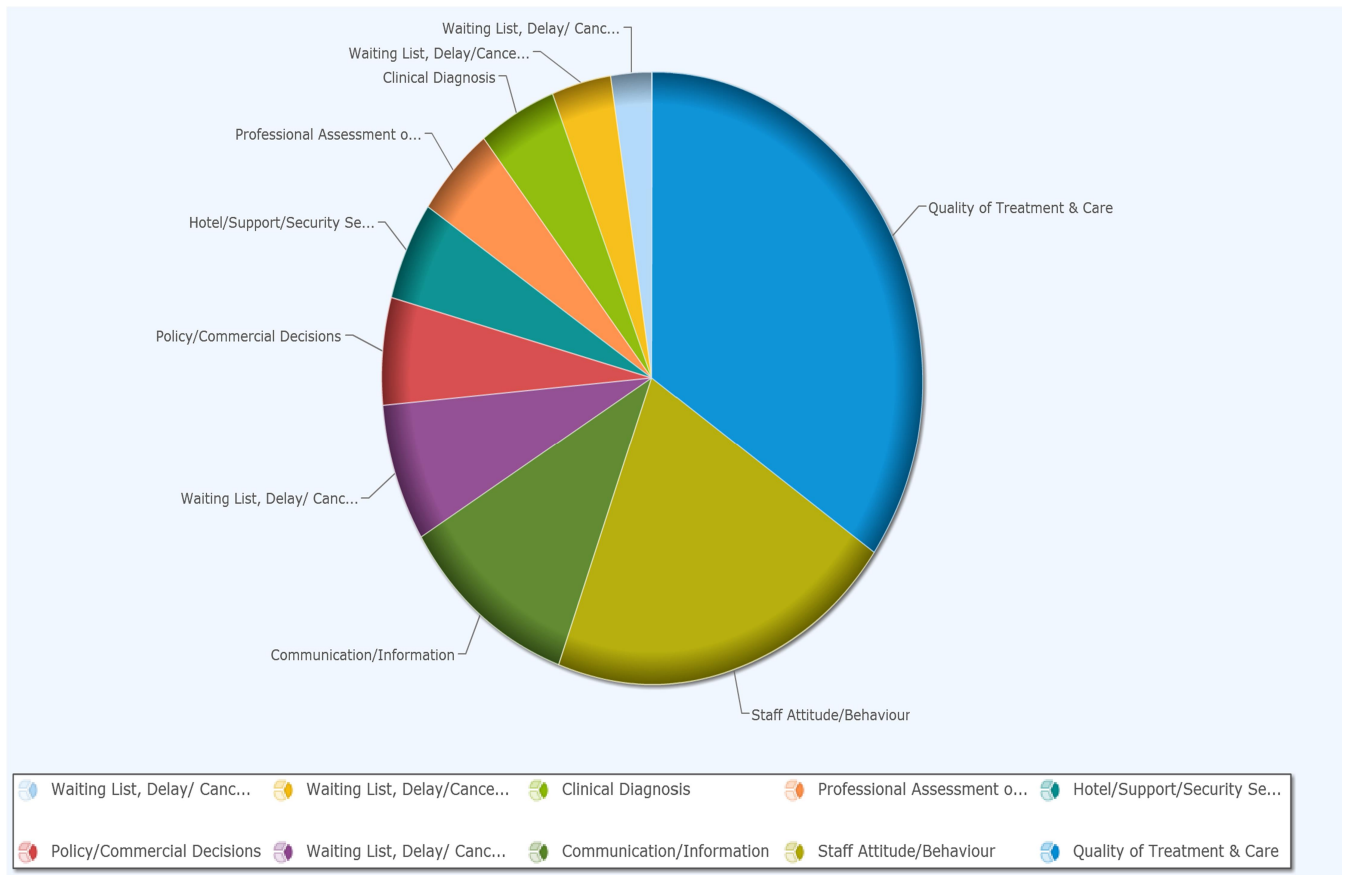


**Trust  
feedback  
form  
28%**



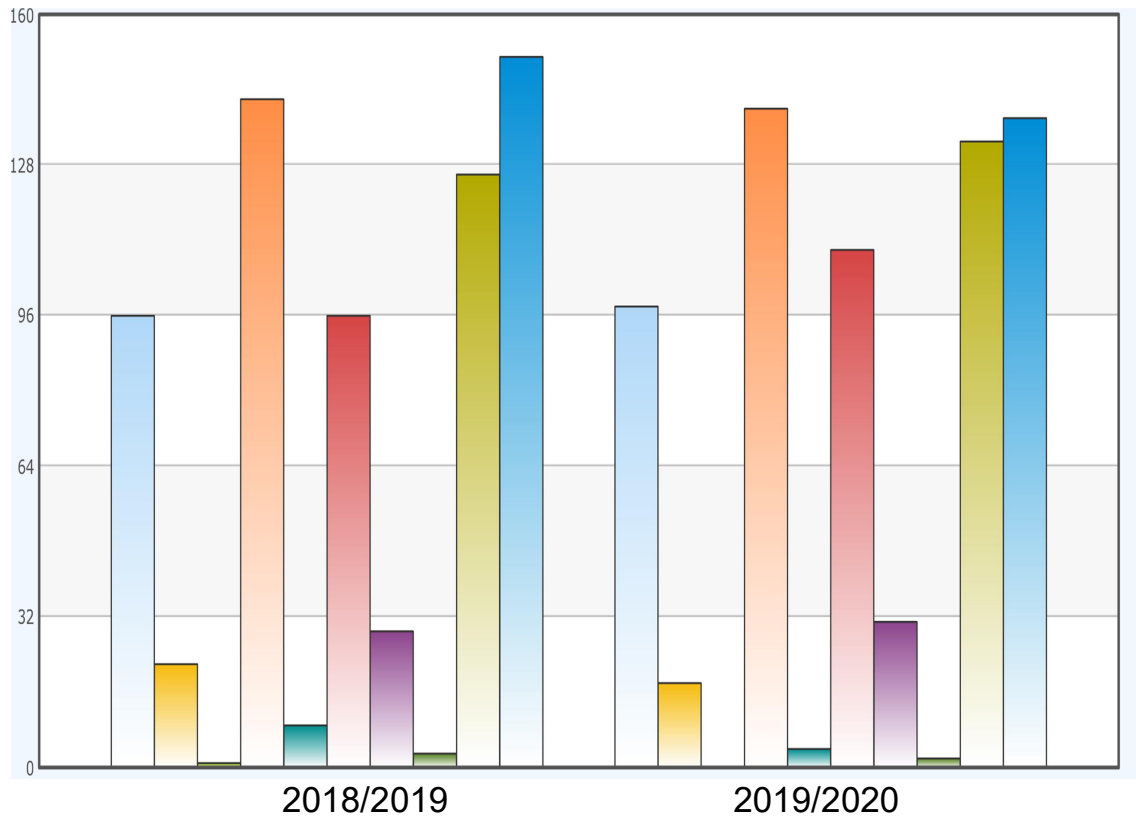
**Phone/  
Person  
2.15%**

## A breakdown of the issues our service users complained about in the Last Financial Year



## Complaints Received by Division

The services provided by the NHSCT are organised into 10 Divisions. The graph below shows the distribution of complaints across these Divisions over the past year 2 years.

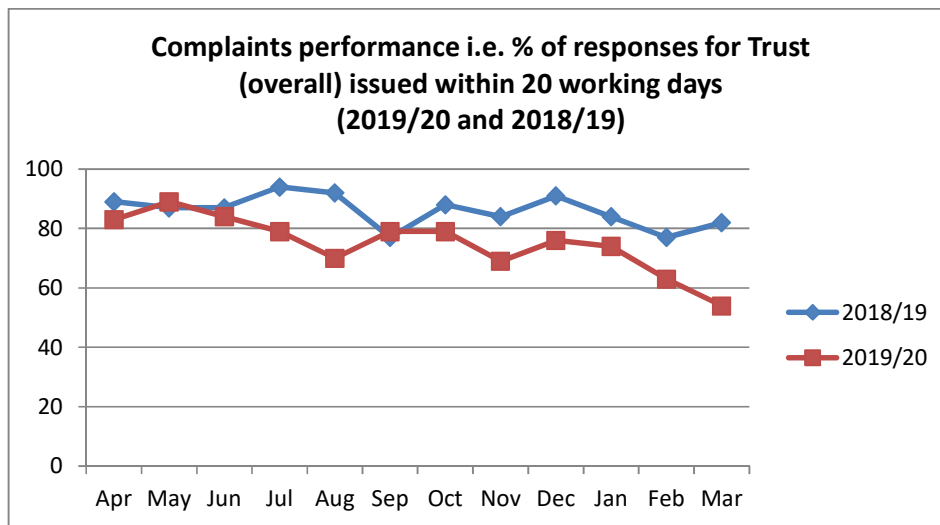


## Response Times

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 review a complaint, such as information may be awaited from other agencies or due to the complexity of the complaint review.

During 2019/20, 76% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days, which is an 11% decrease on the previous years' response time of 87%. **(The target response time is 72% within 20 working days).**



	Number of complaints	Percentage
Acknowledged ≤ 2 days	753	100%
Response ≤ 20 days	569	76%

(The figures in this report are subject to change based on the reporting process)



## **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 take all 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, directorates and various Committees within the Assurance Framework including the Equality, Engagement, Experience & Employment (Quadruple E) 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 pro forma 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 2019/20 following complaints. Below are some examples of learning:**

### **A) Summary of Event**

A service user was booked in for a homebirth, however developed symptoms of pre-eclampsia post term. She felt unsupported regarding her decision and choice for a homebirth and felt no one was advocating for her choice of place of birth, despite her understanding of the risks.

The service felt that all care and advice was in line with good practice to ensure the safety of both mother and baby, however it was acknowledged that the approach taken caused increased anxiety and worry for the Service User.

### **Learning Points**

- This complaint was discussed with all staff involved to increase awareness of the issues.
- A team meeting was held to discuss how best to balance promoting normality with having a 'difficult conversation' about risk assessments.
- A training programme is to be provided to all levels of staff about 'Having a Difficult Conversation' regarding how to balance promoting normality with sensitive discussions about risk assessments and safety for mother and baby.
- Head of Maternity notified of policy update requirements.

## B) Summary of Event

Complaint from a mother regarding cancellation of her son's respite at a Trust facility. Her son was already at the facility when she was telephoned by a member of staff, who had concerns when changing a nappy, and felt the child was unwell and possibly had a bug. The mother felt the telephone contact was very unprofessional. She also had an issue that due to miscommunication between staff there was a mix up regarding dates for short breaks. The mother was called to the school for a meeting and to collect her son, on a day when he had planned respite. She felt staff were unhelpful and dismissive, not giving her sufficient opportunity to contribute during reviews.

### Learning Points

- Improved communication
- Staff to be made aware of the effect of their non-verbal communication.
- Staff to be provided training regarding managing issues/conflict.
- Parents to be allowed to contribute to the short break LAC review process.
- A review of Risk Assessments for this young person.

## Compliments received

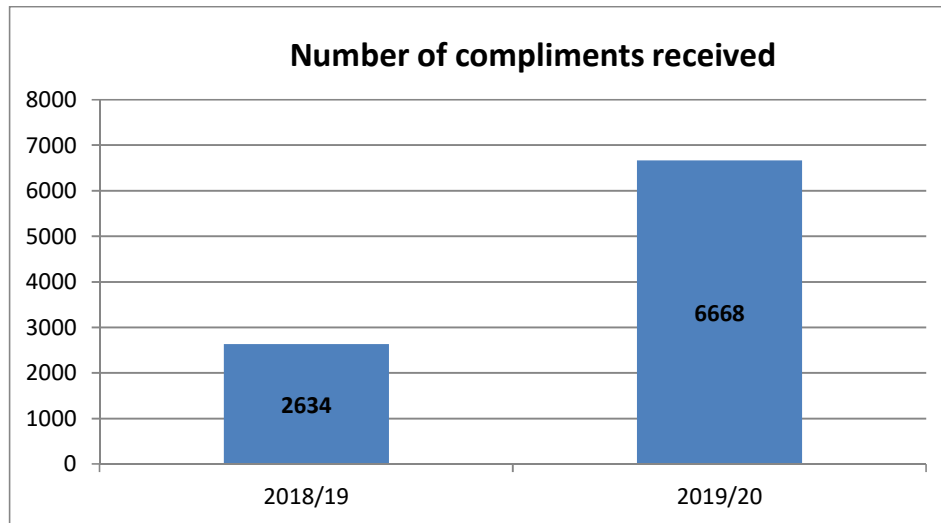
Services across the Trust receive many compliments on a frequent basis, in the form of written thank you letters, emails, cards and verbal feedback. During 2019/20, over 6668 compliments were received, relating to a wide range of different service areas. Divisions/services also monitor the compliments they receive locally. Compliments are always appreciated as they allow patients and service users' positive experiences to be shared with our staff, as well as identifying good working practices that can be shared with other service areas. Below are some examples of compliments received during 2019/20.

I want you to know that I appreciate the Help from the Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. We felt heard and realised these is hope!

During my admission to A&E I was treated with the utmost respect and dignity. I was fully informed about my care at every stage. Everyone from Domestic staff to Consultants were just amazing!

The care in the delivery suite was exceptional. My baby was born 5 weeks early and staff explained his care at every stage. I watched the ward change due to the pandemic and use of PPE. The exceptional care didn't go unnoticed in this difficult time.





## 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 & Complaints Procedure.

Over the year, there were two complaints dealt with under this procedure and these were resolved at the informal “problem solving” stage. The timescale for responding to Children Order complaints is 28 days. One was responded to within 20 days, the other took slightly longer as it was felt important to speak to the complainant in person. The complainant was initially reluctant to interact with the investigating office, but eventually agreed.

### Additional Information

There were 226 formal enquiries and 351 informal enquiries received during 2019/20 with most being received from MLAs, MPs or local Councillors. A number of these were received from service users, carers or other third parties.

During 2019/20, over 3432 staff received face to face, E Learning Complaints Training Level 1 and Complaint Reviewer Training Level 2. Complaints Training was also included in a number of other courses delivered during the year including Corporate Induction, Managers’ Induction and NVQ training.

### **If complainants are dissatisfied:**

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

### **Ombudsman**

Sometimes people are not always happy with the outcome of the investigation into their complaint. For those who remain dissatisfied, they may approach the NIPSO Office directly. The Advice, Support Service and Initial Screening Team (ASSIST) is the public's first point of contact with the office. Where the ASSIST team decide that they cannot resolve the complaint, the case is forwarded to the Ombudsman's Investigations Team.

In 2019-20, there were 8 requests for information from the NIPSO Office:

- 4 cases were closed and not upheld,
- 1 was offered an alternative resolution (with a consolatory payment of £300) and
- 3 are on-going.
  
- Of 5 older complaints investigations:
  - 3 were not upheld,
  - 1 was issued a letter of apology and
  - 1 remains open.

Our Vision

**To deliver excellent integrated services in partnership with our community**

If you would like to give feedback on any of our services please contact:

**Email:** [user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net)

**Telephone:** 028 9442 4655



Northern Health and Social Care Trust



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