



Northern Health  
and Social Care Trust



innovation  
Quality  
improvement



**ramp**

REFORM AND MODERNISATION PROGRAMME

## Complaints Annual Report

1 April 2016 – 31 March 2017

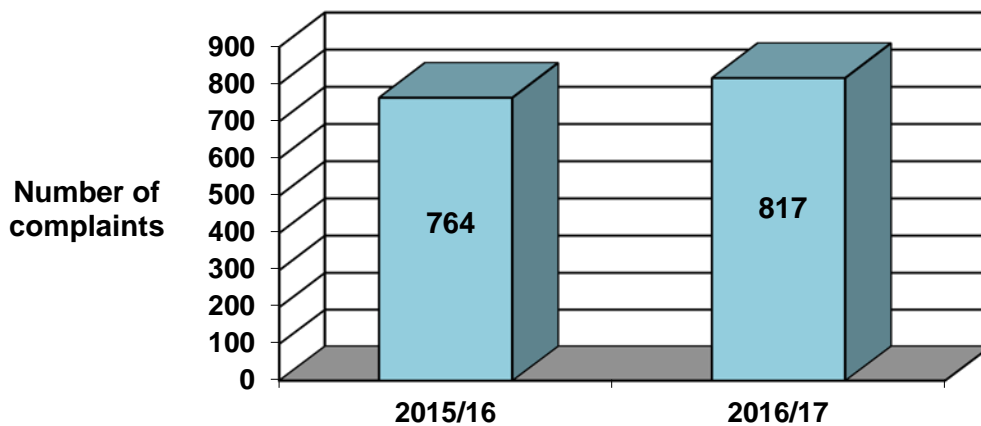
## Introduction

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 2016 to 31 March 2017.

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;

- 74,651 inpatients
- 438,420 outpatients
- 138,884 emergency department attendances
- 29,189 day case patients
- 4053 births
- 647 children looked after by Trust
- 459 children on child protection register
- 4,245 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 increased by 6% from 764 to 817 this year. However 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 investigation 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 2016/17



**Email**  
36%



**Letter**  
30%

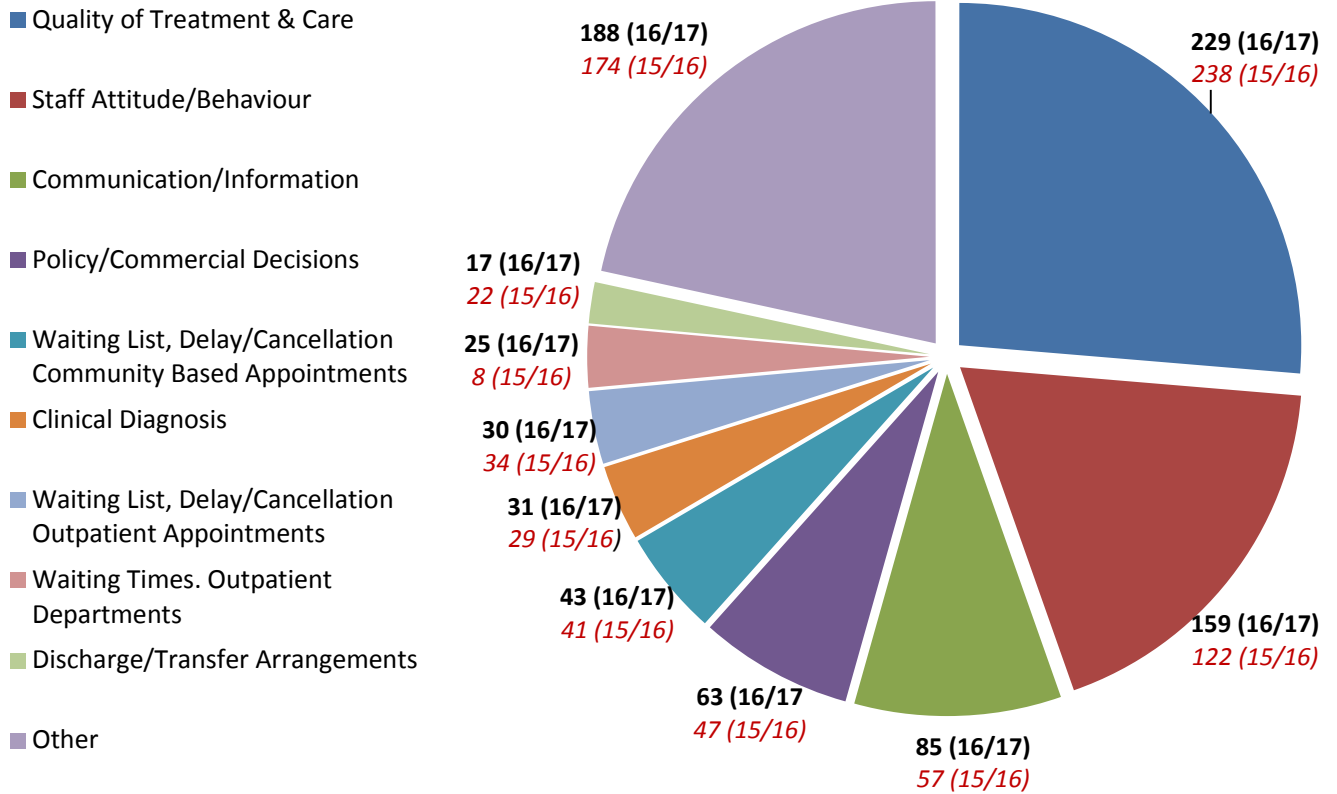


**Trust  
feedback  
form**  
29%



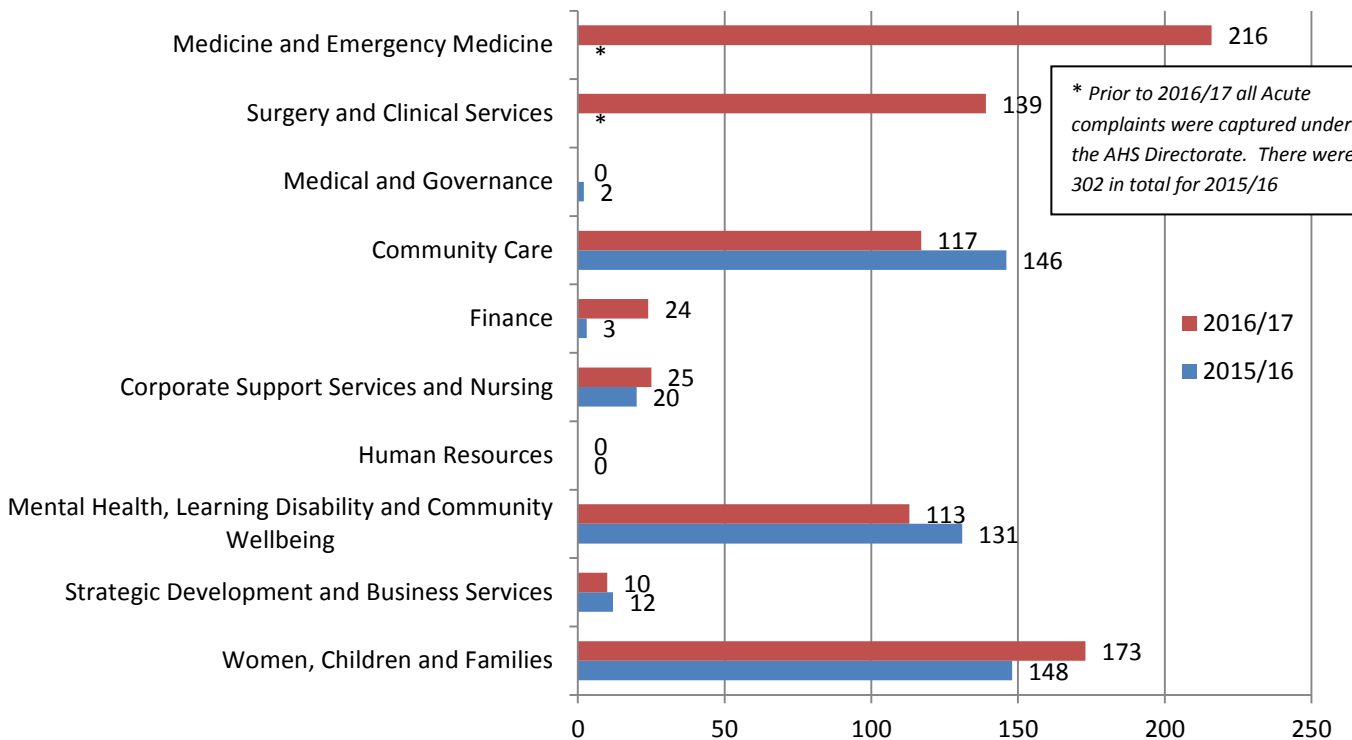
**Phone**  
5%

## A breakdown of the issues our service users complained about



## Complaints Received by Division

The services provided by the NHSCT are organised into 8 Divisions. The graph below shows the distribution of complaints across these Divisions over the past year.



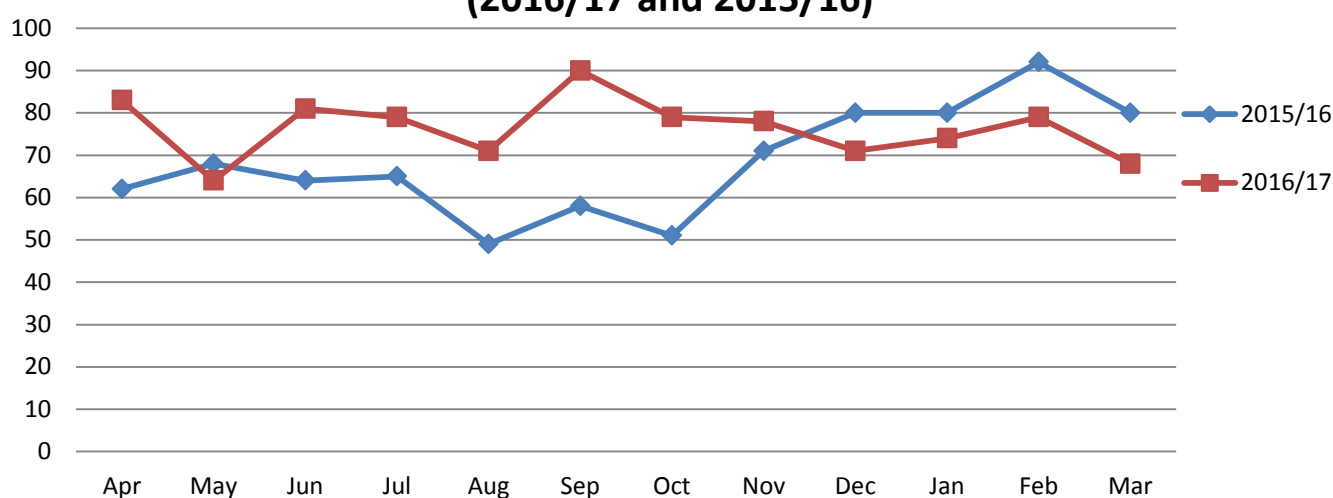
## Response Times

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

During 2016/17, **78%** of complaints were responded to within 20 working days, which is an improvement on the previous years' response time of **69%**.

### Complaints performance i.e. % of responses for Trust (overall) issued within 20 working days (2016/17 and 2015/16)



	Number of complaints	Percentage
Acknowledged ≤ 2 days	817	100%
Response ≤ 20 days	638	78%

## 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 Experience, Engagement & Equality (Triple 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 proforma 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 2016/17 following complaints. Below are some examples of learning across divisions:

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

A complaint was raised regarding the treatment and care delivered by the district nursing team in respect of wound management.

#### **Learning Points**

- A new system for wound management was put in place
- Additional training was provided to all district nursing teams
- Regular audits of the standard of record keeping would be undertaken to ensure that wound management is regularly assessed and reviewed by staff.

#### **B) Summary of Event**

A family raised concerns about the treatment and care provided to their deceased relative. It was highlighted that there were a number of record keeping short falls of the required record keeping standards. These included absence of times, dates and signatures and in one instance the absence of a record of a medical intervention that had taken place. On reviewing the deceased patient records, the family were concerned that the standard of record keeping had directly impacted on the care of their family member. Whilst this has not been substantiated, it is acknowledged that these short falls in documentation did contribute in heightening the family stress levels.

#### **Learning Points**

- Medical and nursing staff have been reminded to ensure they adhere to their obligations under the GMC and NMC Professional standards for good record keeping. In particular they should ensure that they record interventions and contacts with patients. These should be clear, accurate and contemporary recordings which are dated, timed and signed.
- Regular record keeping audits will be completed as part of the Trust Corporate Audit Programme during 2017/18

### **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 2016/17, over 1061 compliments were received, relating to a wide range of different service areas.

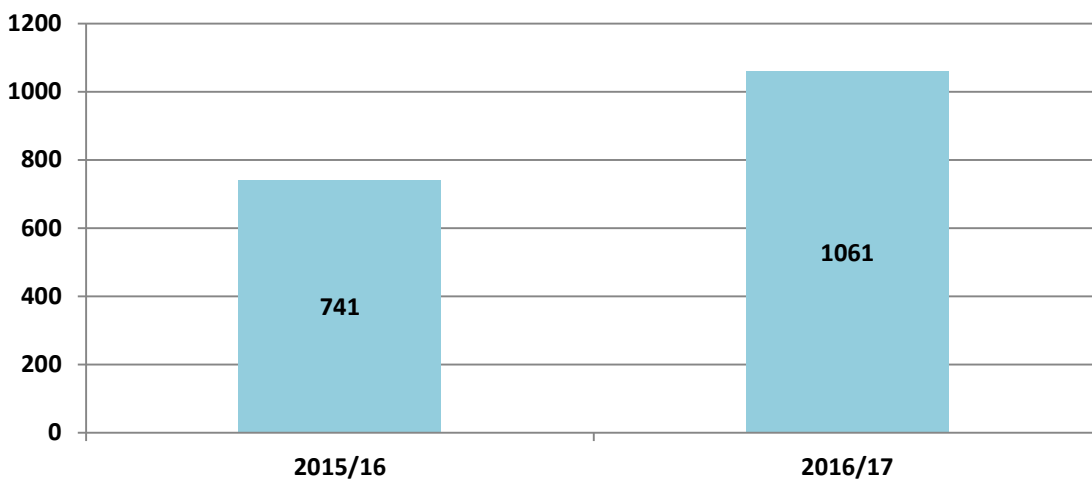
Divisions/services also monitor the compliments they receive locally. Compliments are always appreciated as they allow patients and service users' positive experiences to be shared with our staff, as well as identifying good working practices that can be shared with other service areas. Below are some examples of compliments received during 2016/17.

I am impressed and grateful for high level of care. Consultant patiently explained my condition by way of a diagram in terms I could identify/remember. The high standard of care extended to the ward and anaesthetist. Ward staff both day and night were polite/helpful/cheerful. Catering and domestic staff contributed to such a clean environment, including excellent/nutritious food.

Sincere appreciation for the kindness and help given to me by staff during my illness, including the Occupational Therapy Department and Home Care Workers. I could do very little for myself and staff were a tremendous help to my husband and me. They were always on time and carried out their duties with gentleness and cleanliness, backed by their words of encouragement.

Prompt and efficient care. All staff who had responsibility for my relative's care introduced themselves by their first names and indicated their role. Throughout the hospital I was struck by the politeness of porters, cleaning, canteen and other ancillary staff.

## Number of compliments received



## 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 three complaints dealt with under this procedure and these were all resolved at the informal “problem solving” stage. The timescale for responding to Children Order complaints is 28 days. All of these were responded to within 20 days.

### **Additional Information**

There were 225 formal enquiries and 382 informal enquiries received during 2016/17 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 2016/17, 68 face to face complaints training sessions were provided to Trust staff working in a number of different services and departments across the Trust. In addition, a total of 632 staff completed the eLearning complaints training module. 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. We would encourage people to let us know if they are unhappy, and we will consider other options to attempt to resolve their concerns. We routinely offer to meet complainants, as this allows the opportunity for more detailed discussions, on a face to face basis.

#### **Ombudsman**

During 2016/17, there were 4 requests for information received from the Ombudsman. One case was closed following initial contact and two are still on-going. However the fourth complaint case was considered by the NIPSO and an apology was provided by Trust. Any learning from Ombudsman cases is disseminated across the Trust.

# our vision

To deliver excellent integrated services  
in partnership with our community

# our values


COMPASSION

OPENNESS

RESPECT

EXCELLENCE

[www.northerntrust.hscni.net](http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net)

 Northern Health and Social Care Trust

 @NHSCTrust

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

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**Telephone:** 028 9442 4655