



# Compliments & Complaints Annual Report 2023 - 2024

## 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 2023/2024.

I am delighted to report that the Trust received 3,394 compliments throughout the 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.

Charlie Martyn  
Medical Director



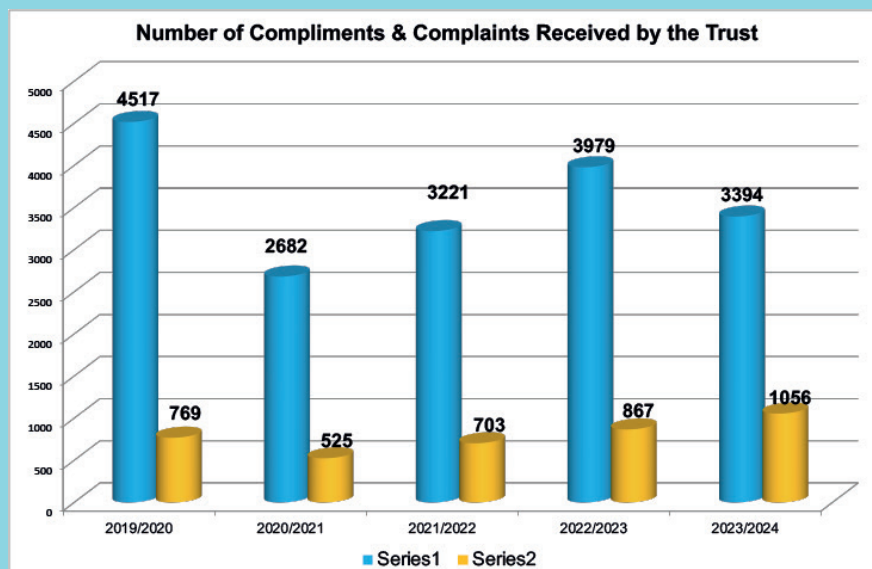
## Facts & Figures

*In the year 2023/2024:*

- **3,394** compliments were received
- **1,056** complaints were received
- **96%** of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days
- **36%** of complaints were responded to within 20 working days
- **46** informal complaints were addressed by front line staff
- The top **3** reasons of complaint for both formal and informal complaints were Quality of Treatment & Care; Staff Attitude / Behaviour and issues relating to Communication / Information.

## How did we do this year?

During the past year (2023/2024), the Trust received **3,394** compliments and **1,056** complaints (previous year 3,979 compliments / 867 complaints). The graph below shows the number of compliments received per year in comparison to the number of complaints.



# 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 stories of experience with the Trust and have a direct response made by the service where the care experience took place.

During 2023/2024, the Trust had 581 stories shared by our service users. It is great to see our staff being recognised for providing great care through Care Opinion stories. 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 2023/2024 the Trust received **3,394** compliments (see below for some examples).

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	1215	200	173	298	35	13	300	2234
Staff Attitude & Behaviour	198	133	130	39	17	21	285	823
Information & Communication	14	15	6	8	1	55	123	222
Environment	1	1	1	0	0	0	16	19
Other	54	4	2	33	2	1	0	96
<b>Total</b>	<b>1482</b>	<b>353</b>	<b>312</b>	<b>378</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>724</b>	<b>3394</b>

"I attended the Ulster Hospital Emergency Department at 7:45am. I was suffering from a prolonged episode of atrial fibrillation. Despite being extremely busy, I was seen promptly and although I had to wait for a DC Cardioversion procedure, it was completed successfully and I was discharged at 7:00pm. I would like to complement the very considerate and professional care I received."

"From the outset, it was clear that all of the staff and the quality of care were excellent from the regular appointments to the antenatal classes provided during the pregnancy. They made the pregnancy much easier and were more than happy to help with any questions or queries. Now that we are through the process, we have had an entirely positive experience."

"I must congratulate staff I met today. Firstly a lovely guy in the main entrance kindly directed me to the x-ray department. I had arrived early so did expect to wait. After a short wait I was called. The staff member was very supportive and as there had been 2 referrals, she professionally dealt with both. I left feeling so positive."

"My father was a patient on the ward for a prolonged period of time. When he was admitted he was very sick, we thought he would never leave hospital to be honest. Through the amazing efforts of the nursing staff, medical team, and multidisciplinary team he was brought back to health. On the Friday we thought he would die, by the Tuesday he was sitting up eating. I cannot thank the dedication of the staff enough, the nurses treated dad with such care and compassion, I will be forever grateful to them."

"Just a short note to say what a great doctor we have at Mental Health Outpatients who is concerned for both the patient and the carer."

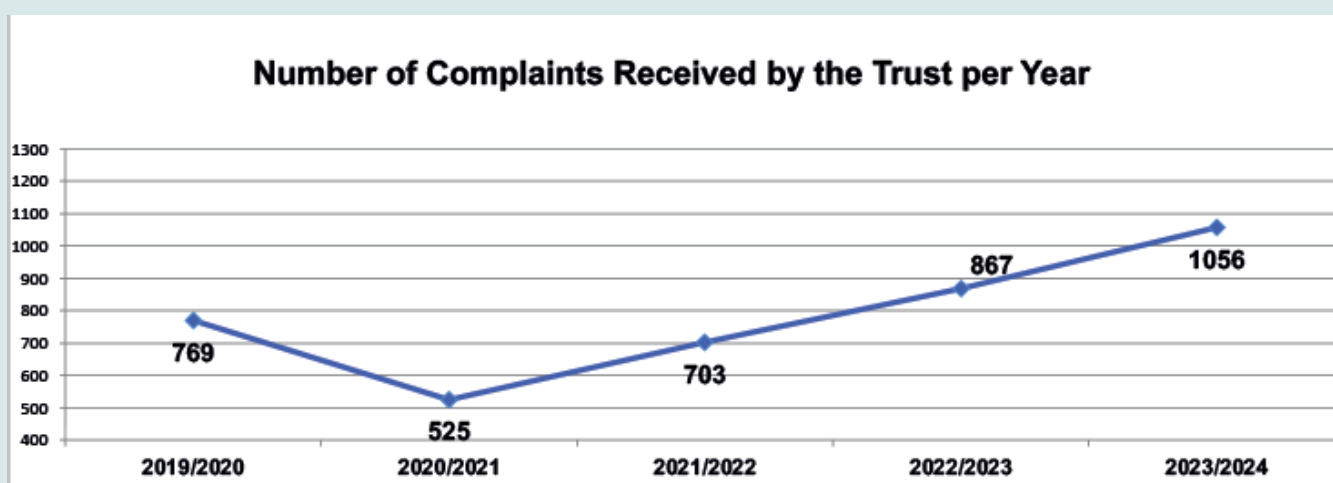
"A big thank you to physiotherapy team for all the support, advice and help provided after my hip replacement. The lower limb class really helped too."

## Complaints

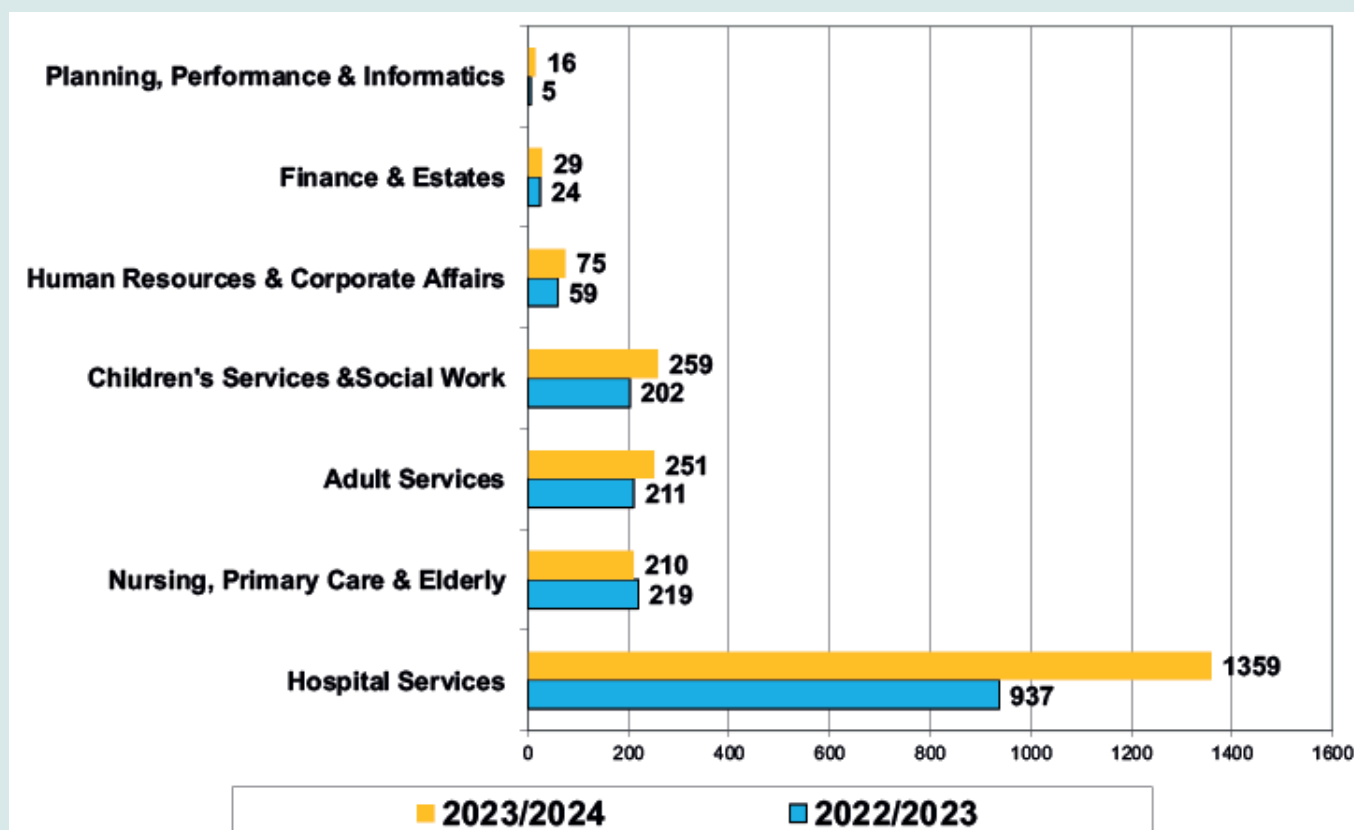
The number of complaints continues to be low considering the large geographical area the Trust covers and the number of contacts Trust staff have with patients and clients. The Trust:

- Serves a population of approximately 440,000 including East Belfast
- Employs over 11,500 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
- Delivers over 5,000 District Nursing visits every week
- In addition, approximately 160,000 people attended our Emergency Departments during the year, over 35,000 people were treated in hospital as daycases and about 39,000 people were admitted to our 3 main hospitals.

The number of complaints received continues to increase - see the graph below denoting a significant increase since 2020/2021.



This graph below shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2023/2024 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 (2023/2024) in comparison to the previous year.

The figures are per issue of complaint, as a complaint can have more than one issue. For 2023/2024 we had complaints made by **1,056** complainants and these raised **2,194** issues, compared with 2022/2023 figures of **867** complainants and **1,664** 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)	2022/2023		2023/2024	
Quality of Treatment & Care	416	25%	586	27%
Communication / Information	378	23%	489	22%
Staff Attitude / Behaviour	264	16%	289	13%
Clinical Diagnosis	65	4%	84	4%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Outpatients Appointments	70	4%	84	4%
Professional Assessment of Need	34	2%	58	3%
Privacy / Dignity	23	1%	55	3%
Access to Premises	11	1%	52	2%
Waiting Times, A&E Departments	21	1%	46	2%
Discharge / Transfer Arrangements	21	1%	44	2%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Community Based Appointments	47	3%	44	2%
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments	23	1%	43	2%
Confidentiality	24	1%	41	2%
Quantity of Treatment & Care	24	1%	31	1%
Property / Expenses / Finances	27	2%	30	1%
Records / Record Keeping	23	1%	29	1%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Planned Admission to Hospital	24	1%	28	1%
Other	88	5%	69	3%
Environmental	17	1%	25	1%
Policy / Commercial Decisions	27	2%	24	1%
Hotel / Support / Security Services	22	1%	22	1%
Discrimination	15	1%	21	1%
Totals:	1664	100%	2194	100%

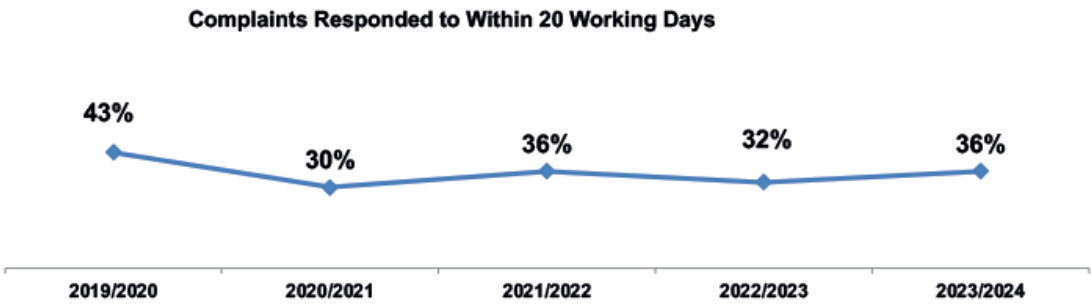
## Response Times to Complaints

96% of complaints were acknowledged within the target of 2 working days which is similar to last year.

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

Following the launch of Encompass, the new digital healthcare record, on 9 November 2023, Trust staff have been getting used to working with the new system. 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 in addressing 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.



## 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 **17%** 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 **2023/2024** there were **16** complainants (1.5%), who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint, which is a decrease from last year (26). Of these 16, 1 was not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman, 5 were settled without investigation and 10 others are ongoing. Sixteen other complaints, received by the Ombudsman prior to 1 April 2023, were closed during the past year, while 11 others remain ongoing.

A total of 22 complaints were closed by the Ombudsman during 2023/2024:

- 6 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman
- In 3 cases the Ombudsman did not uphold any of the complaint
- In 5 cases a settlement was reached without investigation
- 7 had some areas of failings identified and recommendations made by the Ombudsman for remedy / improvement to services.

## Trends in Ombudsman cases

Continuing trend to settle cases without further investigation by Ombudsman.

2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
4	5

Examples of actions taken to settle cases:

- Apologise for lack of apology in Trust response to the complaint
- Provide letter of apology identifying the service improvements that have been made
- Parents comments have been added to the restricted section of the case file.

Examples of Recommendations made as a result of failings:

- Ensure patients are assessed in the right area, and if necessary, moved to facilitate access to necessary equipment
- Provide update of mapping for the arrangement of unallocated cases in Children's Disability Service
- Keep a full Datix (risk management information system) report that includes details on a patient's fall so that colleagues who use the records have all the information they need
- Carry out random sampling audit of Residential Home placements to ensure they are appropriate and suitable risk assessments have been completed
- Conduct an audit of patient food / fluid records in the wards in terms of their accuracy and completeness
- Develop a policy and process for the internal transfer of cases including where there is a perceived conflict of interest.

Increase in cases where failings identified by Ombudsman.

2021 - 2022	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
9	3	7

Themes in the failings identified continue to relate to:

- 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 2023/2024, a total of 175 were reported by the Independent Sector (informal and formal). These were generated from the following areas; 74 Domiciliary Care, 96 Care Homes and 3 Supported Living and 2 Community Services.



## 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 **11** complaints dealt with at the informal 'problem-solving' stage. Ten were resolved with 1 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 may be completed, where appropriate, allowing us to use this information to feedback 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 2023/2024 following complaints.

### You said, We did

There were many of service improvements as a result of complaints in 2023/2024 and a few examples are listed below:

#### You Said:

Contact about potential care package was made with patient's daughter instead of patient.

#### We Did:

Making contact with patient directly to discuss care needs has been reinforced with the wider team.

#### You Said:

Patient attended hospital alone. Family unable to get and update. Patient suffers from dementia.

#### We Did:

The Next Of Kin service which provide updates now has two dedicated members of staff and aim to recruit an additional member of staff.

#### You Said:

Telephone call to cancel outpatient appointment was not recorded. Patient was discharged from waiting list.

#### We Did:

Secretarial Team have been reminded of the importance of ensuring all interactions with patients, in particular phone calls, are documented.

#### You Said:

Patient with urostomy was required to lie on stomach for MRI of hand resulting in leakage from urostomy, soaking clothes and causing pain.

#### We Did:

Communication circulated showing how to position for a wrist scan with the patient lying on their back and demonstrating the attachment which must be used. Poster display also completed.

#### You Said:

Cancer Patient mistakenly called for face to face appointment and believed there was something seriously wrong.

#### We Did:

Staff are learning new ways of working following introduction of Encompass. Tip sheets have been circulated to all staff to assist with administration around appointments.

#### You Said:

Delay in referral to Respiratory Hub because doctor accidentally sent referral to wrong department.

#### We Did:

Encompass (new electronic patient record) had just been introduced. Doctors have now received extra training on how to access different departments efficiently.

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