



Northern Health and Social Care Trust

COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 1 APRIL 2012 - 31 MARCH 2013

Foreword

The Northern Health and Social Care Trust provides a broad range of health and social care services for people across the local council areas of Antrim, Ballymena, Ballymoney, Carrickfergus, Coleraine, Cookstown, Larne, Magherafelt, Moyle and Newtownabbey. The Northern Trust provides services for a population of approximately 460,000 which is the largest resident population in Northern Ireland.

The majority of health and social care services are provided in peoples' own homes. Community based health and social care services are provided in over 200 locations including day centres, health centres, respite units and residential care homes.

Acute and emergency hospital services are based in two main sites at Antrim Area Hospital and Causeway Hospital in Coleraine. Services are also provided from Whiteabbey Hospital, Mid Ulster Hospital, Dalriada Hospital, Robinson Hospital, Moyle Hospital and Braid Valley Hospital. Holywell Hospital in Antrim is the base for a wide range of mental health and addiction services and mental health services are also provided from the Ross Thomson Unit in Coleraine.

We actively encourage feedback from our service users including complaints, compliments or enquiries. Such feedback helps identify areas where high quality care is being provided and where this is not the case use these as an opportunity for learning and improving services.

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. We will continue to do our utmost to resolve complaints, however this may not be possible in all cases.

Compliments and suggestions/comments made by service users are acknowledged and shared with relevant staff/teams.

Inside this issue

Annual comparison of complaints

What our service users complained about

Which Directorates received complaints?

Response times

Learning from complaints

Children Order complaints

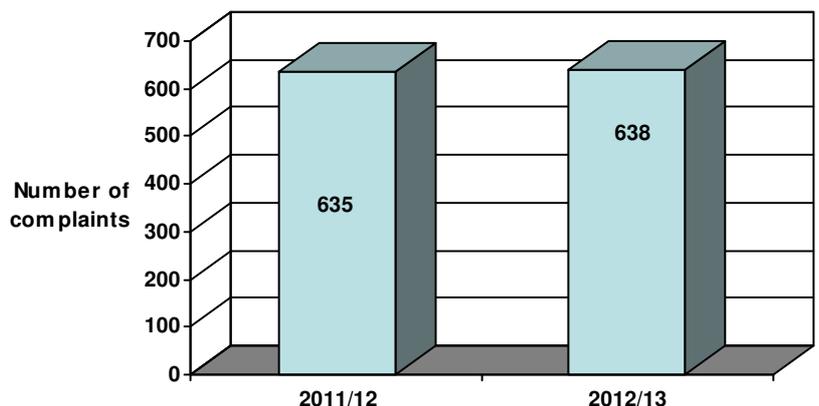
Compliments

Additional /Other information

Annual comparison of complaints

The total number of complaints received in the financial year, 1 April 2012 - 31 March 2013, was 638 compared with 635 received during the previous financial year (1 April 2011 - 31 March 2012).

Most complaints during 2012/13 were received by letter (36%) or on the Trust's service user feedback form (36%). Another 25% were received by email. The remainder (3%) were received by telephone, in person or through Trust staff.



What our service users complained about

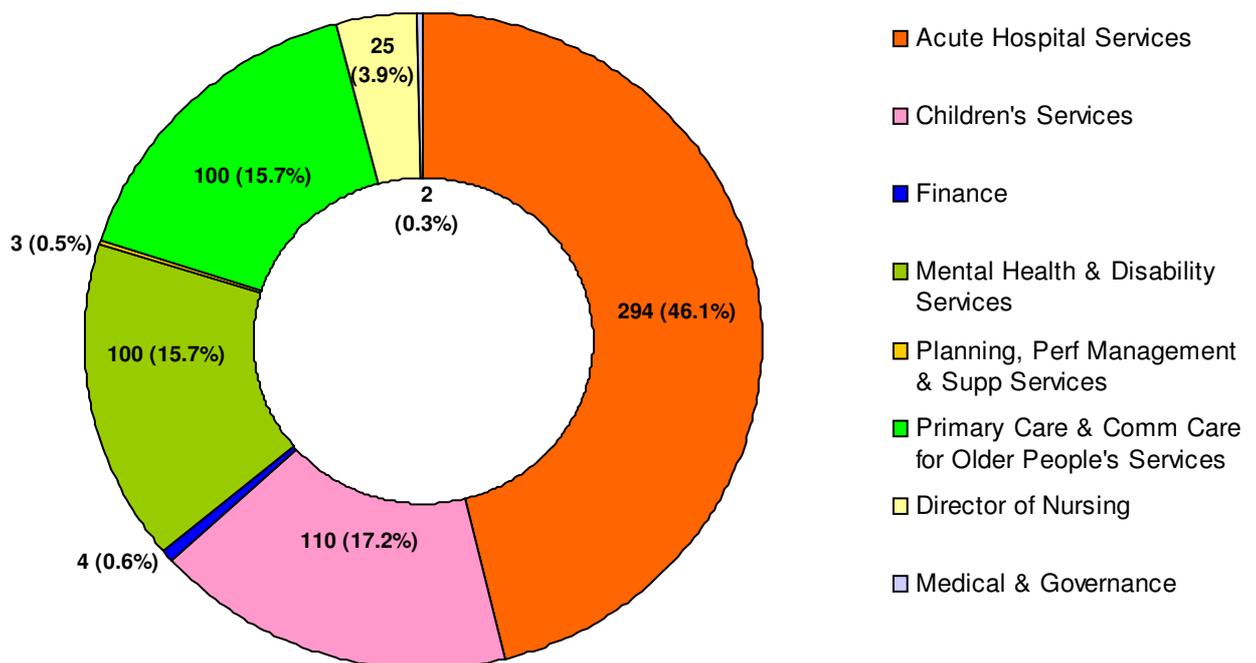
Subject	Number	Percentage
Treatment & Care, Quality	237	27.7%
Staff Attitude/Behaviour	127	14.8%
Communication/Information to Patients	91	10.6%
Policy/Commercial Decisions	62	7.2%
Professional Assessment of Need	54	6.3%
Clinical Diagnosis	39	4.6%
Appointments (Delay/Cancellation) Outpatients	35	4.1%
Waiting Times (A&E Departments)	27	3.2%
Hotel/Support/Security Services	25	2.9%
Discharge/Transfer Arrangements	23	2.7%
Other	136	15.9%

638 complaints were received in total. This equates to 856 issues.

Of the 638 complaints received, 69 were re-opened during the 2012/13 financial year (10.8%).

Which Directorates received complaints?

46.1% of the complaints received during 2012/13 were in relation to services within the Acute Hospital Services Directorate. Specialties across the whole Trust receiving the highest number of complaints included Community/Primary Care, Emergency Medicine, General Medicine, Mental Health Services, Family & Child Care, Outpatients and Acute Facilities.



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 Trust's ability to meet response times - investigations into complex complaints can be time consuming, staff may be on annual leave or sick leave or information may be awaited from other agencies.

66% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days in the 2012/13 financial year compared to 72% in the 2011/12 financial year.

	Number of complaints	Percentage
Acknowledged < 2 days	633	99%
Response < 20 days	419	66%

Monitoring, Reporting, Learning

Performance management reports pertaining to complaints response times were produced monthly by Directorate. Quarterly complaints reports were produced which were considered by various Committees within the Governance Accountability Framework including Governance Management Board and the User Feedback & Involvement Committee. Such information is also cascaded within Directorates and shared with the Patient and Client Council.

Learning from complaints is an important element within the Trust's Complaints and Service User Feedback Policy and Procedure. From 1 June 2012 onwards a Learning Alert from Complaints Form was introduced. Some examples of learning/action identified in completed Learning Alert Forms are as follows:

- Patient attended hospital after an ankle injury. X-ray of ankle requested by referrer. Film reported by Radiologist. X-ray taken did not demonstrate the site of the fracture. **Learning Point:** Referrers to be made aware to request proper investigation. Radiographers to include lower third of tib and fib on ankle x-rays. **Action:** Memo issued to Radiographers to include lower tib and fib on all ankle views. Action taken by Emergency Department regarding appropriateness of examinations requested.
- Waiting times at Haematology Clinic for patients requiring treatment. Patients all seem to be given appointment for the same time. Patient seen by 3 different doctors as consultant under who he is registered has retired. Letters informing patient of appointment are sent out very late. **Learning Point:** Appointment scheduling for treatment reviewed and adjusted to accommodate treatment mix at clinic. Communication improved – patients informed if waiting times exceed 30 minutes. **Action:** Clinic template reviewed. Nurse allocated to deal with a specific group of patients requiring a specific treatment on the day. Booking of appointments reviewed and actions needed agreed. Continue to try to recruit Haematology Consultant
- Parent expressed concern that she had not received copy of social worker's UNOCINI report, prior to commencement of review Child Protection Case Conference within the timeframe as per regional child protection procedures. Social worker had very recently assumed case responsibility and although did provide UNOCINI within reasonable period, it transpired that the UNOCINI provided was in respect of a previous conference. **Learning Point:** Social worker acknowledged error and will ensure that more care will be taken in the future to ensure that the appropriate UNOCINI version is made available. **Action:** Chairperson apologised to parent in respect of the oversight. Additional time was facilitated before start of Child Protection Case Conference to enable parent to read report which she agreed. However parent later was of the view that this arrangement did not allow sufficient time to read and comment on the report. Child Protection Case Conference was adjourned for 2 weeks in order to facilitate time as per the parent's concern.
- The night time support service for a client was changed from an independent provider to the Trust's Homecare Service however appropriate documentation was not completed in a timely way which resulted in a lack of night time service. The family were unable to source out of hours support as contact numbers left in client's home appeared to be out of date. **Learning Point:** Social work staff reminded to complete all documentation in a timely way to ensure that there are no gaps in service provision. Documentation to start homecare services should be completed in advance or at the same time as documentation to cease service provision where a change in service provider is being facilitated. **Action:** Learning shared across all social work teams

Children Order complaints

Four Children Order complaints were received between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013 which were investigated as per the Children Order Complaints Procedure. The timescale for responding to Children Order complaints is 28 days. In all cases this timescale was met. These complaints were responded to within 7 (2 complaints), 19 and 20 days.

Compliments

Services across the Trust receive many compliments on a frequent basis be this in the form of written thank-you letters or cards or verbal feedback. A number of compliments are received directly by the Chief Executive which are forwarded on to relevant services by complaints and service user experience staff. Between 1 April 2012 and 31 March 2013, 829 such compliments were received relating to a wide range of different service areas. A few excerpts from such compliments are outlined below.

- “My mother was in Ward A1 Antrim Hospital following a severe stroke. I was most impressed with the quality of care towards the patient and the comprehensive information given to myself and my family. I would especially like to commend the Stroke Nurse and the Speech Therapist. Their devotion to duty and interaction with my mother were truly professional. I hope they are all encouraged by these comments”
- “My wife recently attended the Mid Ulster Hospital as an outpatient. She received nothing but very friendly, professional treatment from the Consultant to the receptionist. In these days of constant criticism of Health Service care we have nothing but praise for the Mid”
- “Child in hospital for removal of teeth, the staff were all extremely helpful and friendly. They made her so much at ease for what seemed quite a daunting task for her. The playroom was also great for taking her mind off what she was in for!”
- “My wife and I would like to say that the Occupational Therapist when she called to see us was very friendly and understanding to our situation. She has the most caring and listening manner which I’m sure is most important in the position that she holds as the occupational therapist. She very quickly put us at ease”
- “My father received IV antibiotics via hospital diversion team. Absolutely wonderful service, great to have such a choice which would normally be offered in hospital. These nurses were professionals at their best”
- “My wife died in the Macmillan Cancer Support Unit at the Antrim Area Hospital, after being nursed and treated there, for the previous three weeks or so. On behalf of my family and I please accept our grateful thanks for the excellent palliative treatment and the outstanding care and attention that she received during that time. The dedication of the medical, nursing and ancillary staff; led by Consultant and their team, was such that my wife’s every need was met in the most dignified, personal and where appropriate, private manner, allowing her to spend the last period of her illness in a comfortable and pain-free condition”
- “I want to commend the excellent facility provided by the Trust at The Base, Peoples Park, Ballymena. This is an invaluable service for adults – providing a safe environment, where this man has found fun, and which has already helped with his independence and improved his social skills. I cannot emphasise enough how important this facility is – the staff always provide a varied programme of events which are both enjoyable and educational. The Base gives him a chance to go somewhere on days when he would just be sitting at home in front of a television. Please pass on my thanks to all the staff involved”
- “Just to say I had a rehab team from Whiteabbey out with me for six weeks after being in hospital. I cannot say how good they were. I felt very supported by all the team who helped me get back to normal in my own home. Each member of the Team was caring and sensitive. They saw to my every need”
- “I wish to express my sincere gratitude to A&E staff who diligently took care of my 4 month old grandson when he had stopped breathing. My daughter was overwhelmed by the kindness shown to her and her baby”

Additional/Other information

167 enquiries in total were received during 2012/13 with most being received from MLAs, MPs or local Councillors. A number of these were also received from service users, carers or other third parties.

The Commissioner for Complaints (the Ombudsman) contacted the Trust with regard to 6 complaints where the complainant was not satisfied with how their complaint was handled by the Trust. A response and/or a report were produced by the Commissioner for Complaints following the completion of either an initial or detailed investigation in relation to 7 complaints.

During 2012/13 complaints awareness training was provided to Trust staff working in a number of different services and departments across the Trust. Complaints training was also included in a number of other courses delivered during the financial year including corporate induction, managers’ induction and NVQ training. A complaints master class training session on complaints investigation and learning was also held for senior staff/managers within the Trust.