



## COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT

1 APRIL 2013 - 31 MARCH 2014

### Introduction

This is the seventh Complaints Annual Report for the Northern Health and Social Care Trust (NHSCT) covering the year 1 April 2013 to 31 March 2014. The NHSCT 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 Newtown-abbey. The Northern Trust provides services for a population of approximately 460,000 which is the largest resident population in Northern Ireland.

The report sets out a detailed analysis of the nature and number of complaints and concerns received by the Trust. The overall number of complaints received has increased from 638 to 783 this year. During the year we have continued to encourage more meaningful engagement and involvement with our patients and service users, ensuring that appropriate remedial action is taken and that lessons are continually learned to prevent a recurrence.

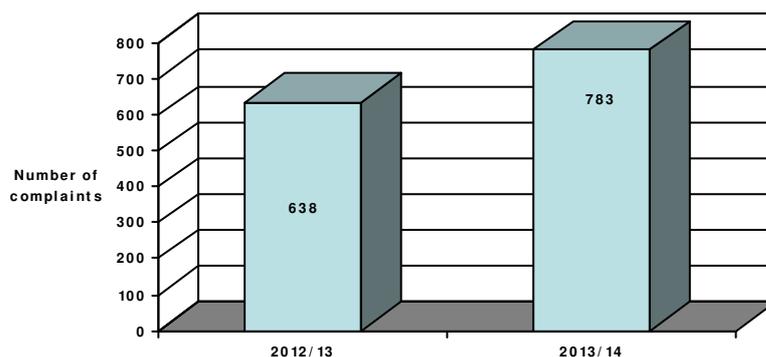
We aim to respond to complaints within 20 working days, where possible and strive to ensure that there is a full, fair and objective investigation of the issues and concerns raised and that an effective response/outcome is provided. The Trust must offer every opportunity to exhaust local resolution and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

Many of the complaints during 2013/14 were received by letter (39%) or through the Trust's service user feedback form (31%). Another 27% were received by email. The remainder (3%) were received by telephone, in person or through Trust staff.

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

### Annual comparison of complaints

The total number of complaints received in the financial year, 1 April 2013 - 31 March 2014, was 783 compared with 638 received during the previous financial year (1 April 2012- 31 March 2013).



## What our service users complained about

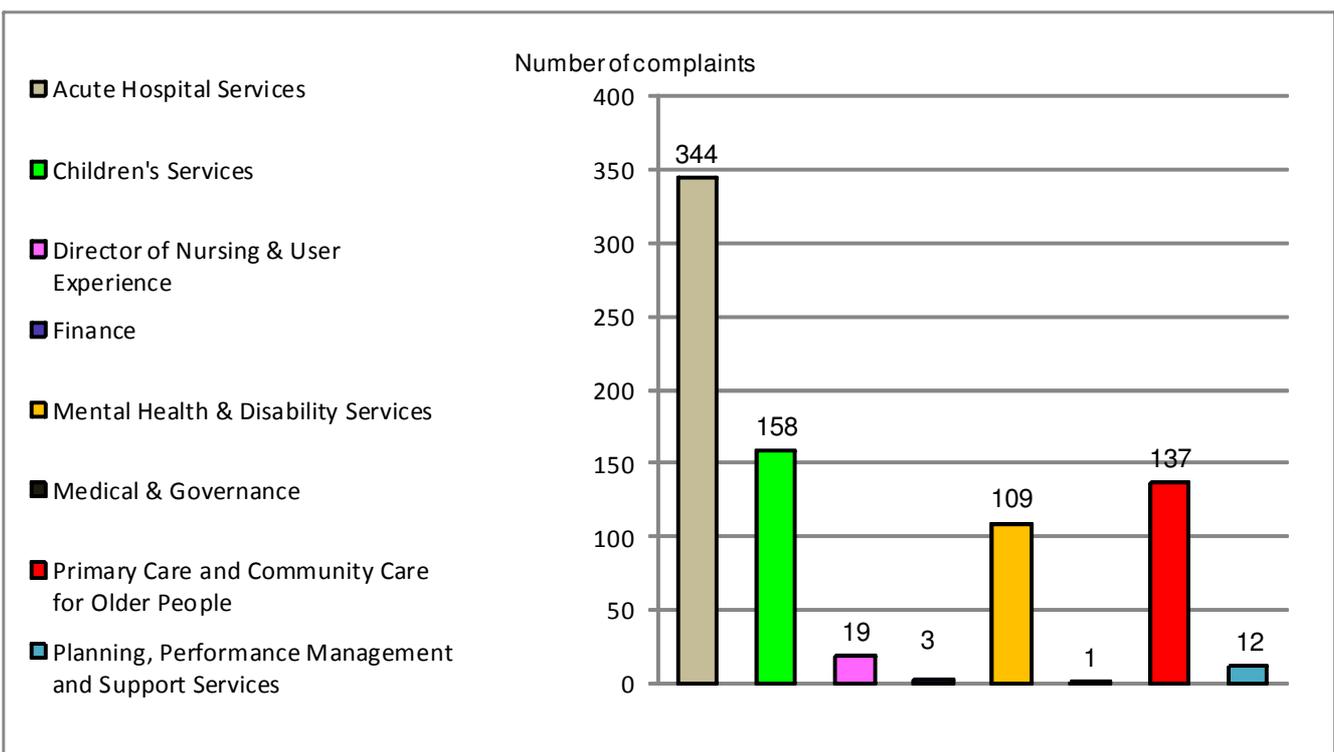
Subject	Number	Percentage
Treatment & Care, Quality	231	27.8%
Staff Attitude/Behaviour	139	16.7%
Communication/Information to Patients	89	10.7%
Professional Assessment of Need	40	4.8%
Clinical Diagnosis	34	4%
Policy/Commercial Decisions	33	3.9%
Waiting Lists, Community Services	33	3.9%
Appointments, Delay/Cancellation (Outpatient)	31	3.7%
Discharge/Transfer Arrangements	30	3.6%
Contracted Regulated Establishment and Agencies	28	3.3%
Other	142	17%

783 complaints were received in total. This equates to 830 issues.

Of the 783 complaints received, 58 were re-opened during the 2013/14 financial year (7.4%).

## Which Directorates received complaints?

43.9% of the complaints received during 2013/14 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 time taken to investigate a complaint such as information may be awaited from other agencies or due to the complexity of the complaint investigation.

58% of complaints were responded to within 20 working days in 2013/14 compared to 66% in 2012/13.

	Number of complaints	Percentage
Acknowledged < 2 days	783	100%
Response < 20 days	457	58%

## 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 will take 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 Governance Accountability Framework including the User Feedback & Involvement Committee. 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 2013/14 following complaints. Listed below are some examples of learning across directorates:

- A complainant was dissatisfied that when staying with her child she had to sleep on a small upright chair. In response to this complaint a number of reclining chairs were ordered for the ward.
- A complaint was received in relation to catering and the quality of the food provided. The learning from this complaint has now offered patients the opportunity to sample meals and they can be also offered a tour of the kitchen.
- A complaint was received about the lack of communication between the District Nursing Team and General Practitioners. The learning from this complaint resulted in the district nursing team developing and implementing a communication protocol to help improve partnership working between all parties.
- A complaint related to a patient receiving medication late and as a result had an effect on the control of his condition. The learning from this complaint was shared with staff and a Specialist Nurse provided specific training to ward staff to prevent any future recurrences.

## 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 and directly to service areas. Between 1 April 2013 and 31 March 2014, 644 compliments were received through the Chief Executive's Office relating to a wide range of different service areas. Directorates/services also monitor the compliments they receive locally. Staff are greatly encouraged by the positive comments/feedback.

## 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 fourteen 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. Twelve of these were responded to within 20 days with the exception of two, which were very complex cases.

## Additional information

There were 166 formal enquiries and 265 informal enquiries/complaints received during 2013/14 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.

During 2013/14 complaints 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.

### 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

For those who remain dissatisfied they may approach the NI Commissioner for Complaints (Ombudsman Office) directly.

In 2013/14, there were ten requests for information received from the Ombudsman. Three cases were closed following initial contact.

The complaint was upheld in four settled Ombudsman cases.