South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Complaints Annual Report 2016 - 2017

Foreword

As the Director responsible for complaints, I am pleased to present the Complaints Annual Report for the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust for the year 1 April 2016 to 31 March 2017.

We welcome complaints and the opportunities they provide us with to learn lessons and improve our services. Whilst we aim to give the best service to all our patients and clients, we wish to know when things do not go well so that we can take the appropriate remedial action to prevent it happening again.

The Trust's has a Lessons Learnt Sub Committee, which is part of the Governance and Risk Management infrastructure. The role of this committee is to ensure that lessons learnt have been put into practice on an organisation wide basis.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Trust staff for their continued dedication to the resolution of complaints and for their sensitive handling of issues that are important to complainants.

Myra Weir
Director of Human Resources & Corporate Affairs

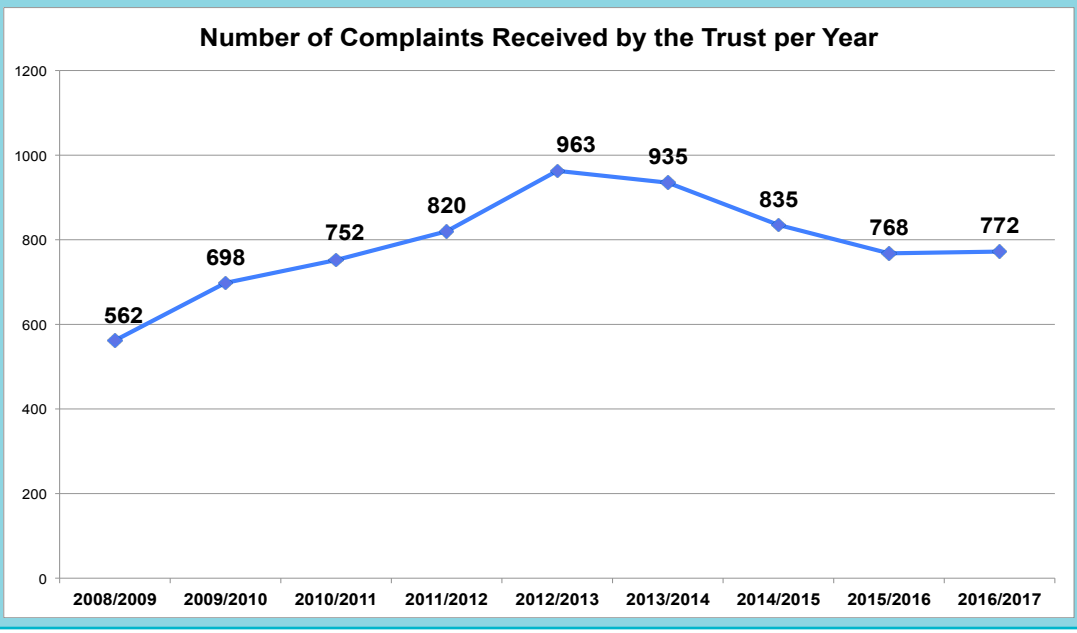
Facts & Figures

In the year 2016/2017:

- **772** complaints were received
- **99%** of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days
- **50%** of complaints were responded to within 20 working days
- The top **3** issues of complaint were Quality of Treatment & Care; Staff Attitude / Behaviour; Communication / Information
- **6605** compliments were received.

Complaints this year

During the past year (2016/2017), the Trust received **772** complaints, which is similar to last year (768), as shown in the graph below.



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:

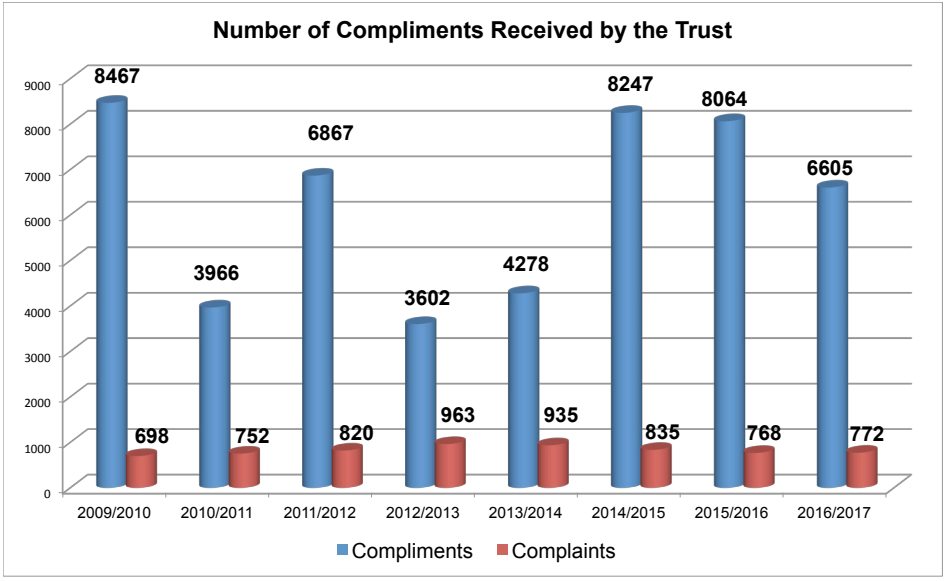
- Provides over 250 different health and social care services
- Serves a population of approximately 440,000
- Has almost 10,000 staff
- Provides services in peoples own homes and from the Ulster, Lagan Valley, Downe, Newtownards and Bangor Hospitals
- Saw about 150,000 people at our Emergency Departments during the year, treated about 31,000 people in hospital as daycases and admitted about 36,600 people to our 3 main hospitals
- Spends in excess of 50% of its resources on community based and personal social services, supporting people in their homes.

Compliments

Whilst the Trust recognises that sometimes things go wrong, each year the Trust receives thousands of letters of appreciation and expressions of 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 2016/2017 the Trust received **6605** compliments. The graph below shows the number of compliments received per year in comparison to the number of complaints.



"The service was fantastic and staff extremely pleasant and helpful. Aids supplied have been an enormous success and extremely helpful. We are very appreciative of this wonderful service."

"Everyone I came in contact with was cheery, professional and extremely helpful and the experience a pleasure. Thank you to all the staff for their great work."

"I would like to thank the staff for their help and support during my difficult mental health period…I can rebuild my life with the confidence and I can lead a happy and fulfilled life."

"They made his final days on this earth as peaceful as humanly possible…I cannot thank all the staff enough for the respect, compassion and dignity they showed him and our family during this difficult time."

"The social worker, from the start was great...listened intently to us and formed a great relationship with the child, immediately putting him at ease which resulted in trust and him being listened to…has always behaved in the most courteous and professional manner to us all especially during very difficult times."

What people complained about

The chart below shows the number of complaints by subject for the past year (2016/2017) in comparison to the previous year (2015/2016).

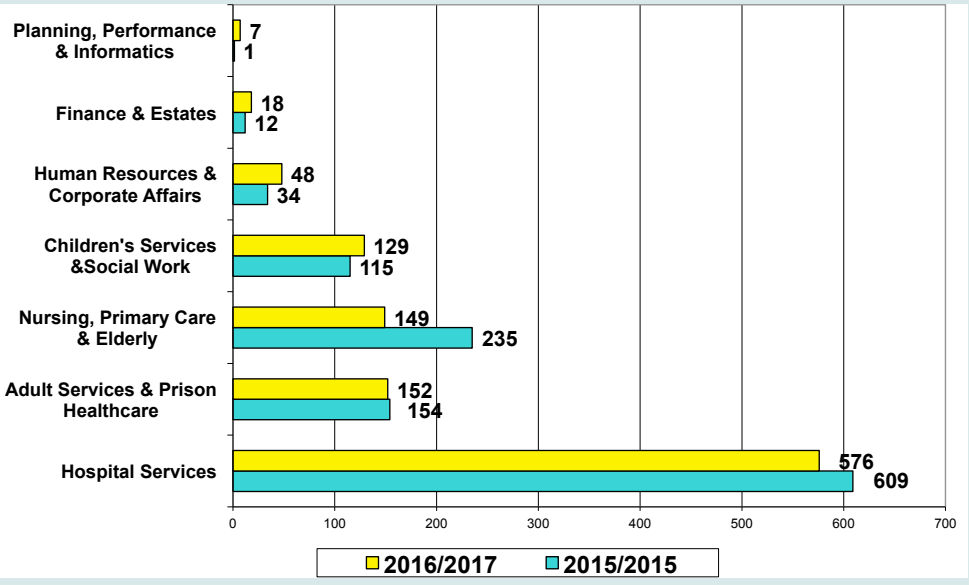
The figures are per issue of complaint, as a complaint can have more than one issue. For 2016/2017 we had complaints made by **772** complainants and these raised **1079** issues, compared with 2015/2016 figures of **768** complainants and **1160** issues.

The top three subjects of complaint in the past year were: Quality of Treatment & Care, Staff Attitude / Behaviour and Communication / Information.

These are the same top subjects as last year, and this is similar across other Health & Social Care Trusts.

Subjects (per issue)	2015/2016		2016/2017	
Quality of Treatment & Care	293	25.3%	236	21.9%
Staff Attitude / Behaviour	224	19.3%	216	20.1%
Communication / Information	160	13.8%	155	14.4%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Outpatients Appointments	72	6.2%	87	8.1%
Records / Record Keeping	26	2.3%	32	3.0%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Community Based Appointments	11	0.9%	27	2.5%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancellation Planned Admission to Hospital	27	2.3%	26	2.4%
Clinical Diagnosis	42	3.6%	25	2.3%
Policy / Commerical Decisions	33	2.8%	24	2.2%
Access to Premises	9	0.8%	21	1.9%
Property / Expenses / Finances	14	1.2%	21	1.9%
Quantity of Treatment & Care	14	1.2%	21	1.9%
Aids / Adaptions / Appliances	15	1.3%	15	1.4%
Discharge / Transfer Arrangements	21	1.8%	15	1.4%
Contracted Independent Hospital Services	3	0.3%	14	1.3%
Environmental	13	1.1%	14	1.3%
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments	17	1.5%	11	1.0%
Confidentiality	13	1.1%	10	0.9%
Hotel / Support / Security Services	12	1.0%	10	0.9%
Waiting Times, A&E Departments	10	0.9%	10	0.9%
Other	131	11.3%	89	8.3%
Totals:	**1160**	**100%**	**1079**	**100%**

This graph opposite shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2016/2017 in comparison to the previous year (per issue).

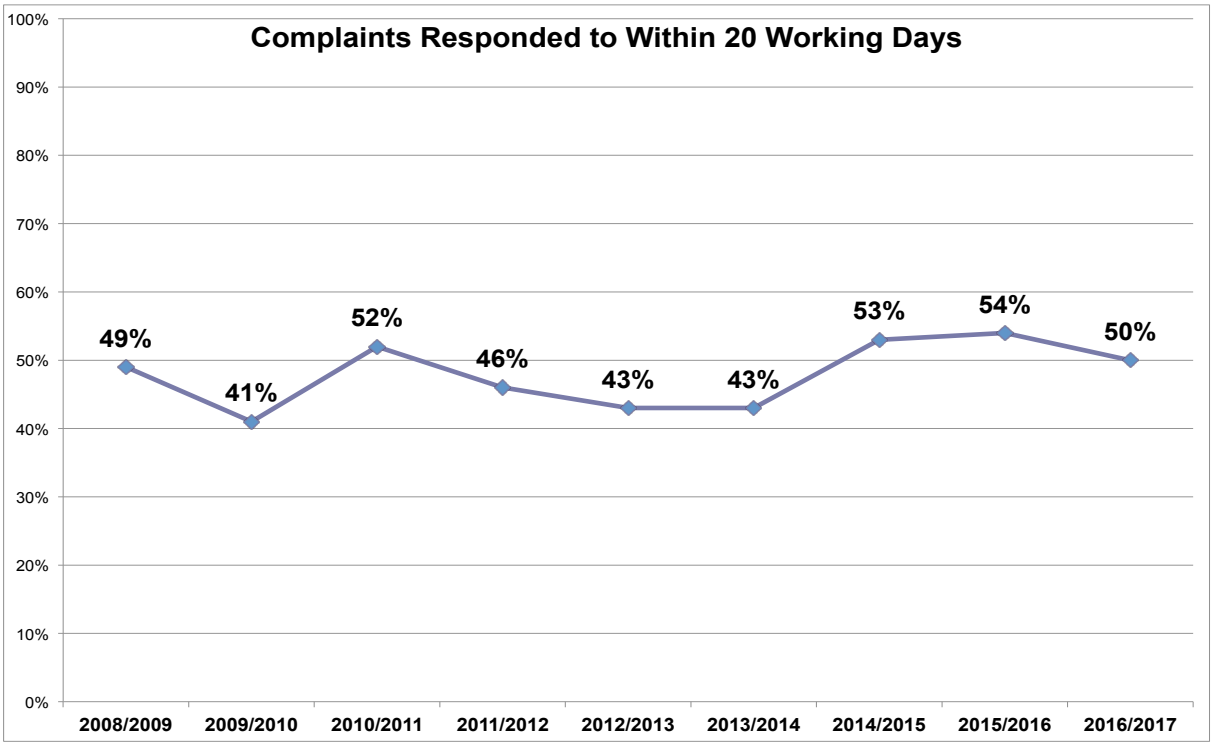


Response Times to Complaints

99% of complaints were acknowledged within the target of 2 working days which is the same as last year.

50% of complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days, which is a decrease of 4% from the previous year (54%), as shown in the graph below.

The Trust continues to monitor timescales to ensure complainants are provided with timely responses. However our emphasis is 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 routinely offer to meet complainants, as this allows the opportunity for more detailed discussions, face-to-face.

In the last year **14%** 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 **2016/2017**, there were **9** complainants who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint.

Of these, 1 was not rejected for investigation by the Ombudsman, 1 has been completed and 7 others are ongoing.

6 other complaints, received by the Ombudsman prior to 1 April 2016, were closed during the past year, while 3 others remain ongoing.

Prison Healthcare

The South Eastern Trust is responsible for Prison Healthcare in Northern Ireland. All complaints relating to healthcare in prisons or the secure college at Hydebank are dealt with through the Trust's complaints process.

In 2016/2017 there have been over **600** informal complaints, dealt with locally by healthcare staff.

There were **42** formal complaints made. The majority were resolved at that point, however, one approached the Ombudsman to investigate their complaint and is still ongoing.

During the past year, we have reviewed the complaints process for people in Prison. We have also linked with Patient Client Council (PCC) and the Independent Monitoring Board (IMB) to improve communication pathways.

Response times to complaints are now timely with a user focused approach. Where appropriate, senior managers meet with individuals to discuss their complaints and seek suggestions for improvements in services overall.

A service user engagement post is being trialed to establish forums in each Prison where people can present concerns and/or ideas.

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 **42** complaints dealt with at the informal 'problem-solving' stage. The majority were resolved at this point. Less than 3 progressed to stage 1 of the procedure.

Complaints Training

The Trust commissioned bespoke training on Effective Written Responses to Complaints and four days took place during September 2016 and one in March 2017.

The course focused on discussing and developing effective complaints letter writing skills through a combination of expert tutor input, group discussion and practical, supported exercises. The aim of the course was for managers to leave the day with the techniques and the confidence to respond effectively and efficiently to complaints through letters.

The feedback from the managers was extremely positive. Audits show improvements in attendees' skills and knowledge, as well as improvements in the quality of responses.

Monitoring

During this year, the Trust's Lessons Learnt Sub Committee, which reports to the Corporate Control Committee, chaired by the Chief Executive, met on a quarterly basis.

The primary role of the sub committee is to ensure that the Trust has in place the necessary controls to manage its risk in relation to complaints, incidents and litigation claims. Its role is also to ensure that the lessons learnt have been put into practice on an organisation wide basis.

Lessons Learnt / Improvements from Complaints

We welcome complaints so that we can learn lessons and improve our services. An action plan is completed, where appropriate, for complaints. We use this information to feed back 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 2016/2017 following complaints.

You said, We did

You Said:
Issues getting information in relation to children.

We Did:
Developed an information leaflet for parents to explain the boundaries of confidentiality and the importance of information sharing between professionals where there may be child protection concerns.

You Said:
Difficulty finding staff to get information or discuss concerns with.

We Did:
Member of medical team now dedicated to the ward every weekday morning; nursing staff actively available during visiting; improved information notices for patients and relatives.

You Said:
Timing of care provided.

We Did:
Introduced a new system to ensure staff are provided with clearer information, including task allocation cards detailing times that care has to be given to individual residents/clients.

You Said:
Measures required for learning disabled patients having elective procedures.

We Did:
Project undertaken to improve the knowledge of staff on caring for a person with learning disability. The plan is to continue the learning across each ward team in the Surgery Directorate and roll out to the Medical Directorate.

You Said:
Lack of activities for patients with Dementia.

We Did:
Purchased distraction aids and introduced 'break out' areas within the elderly care wards. Patients with a diagnosis of Dementia can now use doll therapy, music therapy, fidget aids, puzzle books, adult colouring books and reminiscence therapy.

Plans for the incoming year (2017/2018)

In the incoming year, we plan to review our complaints policy and procedure, and undertake a staff survey to audit staff's knowledge and compliance.

We have also revised our ongoing survey asking people who have complained to tell us about their experiences of using the complaints process. The results will be analysed to see where improvements can be made.

Complaints/Patient Liaison Department
Lough House
Ards Hospital
Church Street
Newtownards, BT23 4AS

T: (028) 9056 1427 F: (028) 9056 4815

E: complaints@setrust.hscni.net