

Complaints Annual Report 2009 - 2010

Foreword

This is the third complaints Annual Report for the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust covering the year 1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010 which I am presenting as Chairman of the Complaints Review Sub Committee.

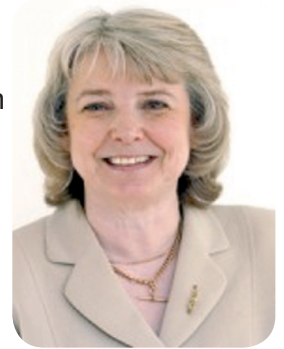
In the forthcoming year, the Complaints Review Sub Committee will be stood down. The work of the sub committee will be carried out by a new Lessons Learnt Sub Committee, as part of the new Governance and Risk Management infrastructure.

The overall number of complaints received has risen sharply by 24% this year. This in part has been as a result of the introduction of the new HSC Complaints Procedure and also raised awareness with the public of how to complain.

The Trust certainly welcomes receipt of complaints as we want to know when people are not satisfied with the care we provide so that we can review practices and continue to improve our performance. We are grateful to those who have contacted us with complaints as this has allowed us to take action to deal with issues that matter to people in the community we serve.

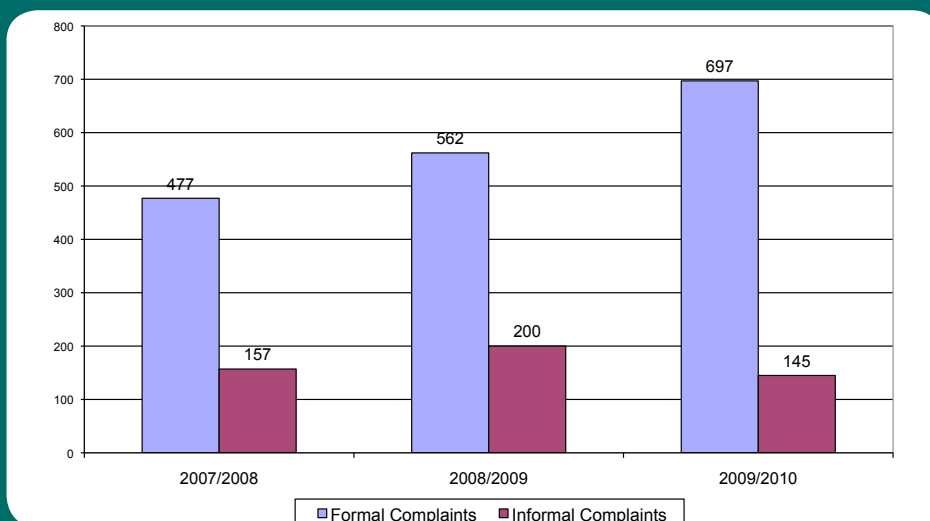
I would like to express my gratitude to Trust staff for their continued dedication to the resolution of complaints and for their sensitive handling of issues that are important to complainants.

Miss Francesca Graham
Chairman of Complaints Review Sub-Committee



Complaints this year

During the past year, the Trust received a total of **697** formal complaints. The chart below shows the number of formal and informal complaints received over the past year in comparison with 2008/2009 and 2007/2008.



There has been a **24%** increase in formal complaints in the past year. However, the number of complaints continues to be low, considering the large geographical area the Trust covers and the volume of contacts Trust staff have with patients and clients.

- The Trust Provides services from the Ulster, Lagan Valley, Downe, Newtownards, and Bangor Hospitals
- Applies 60% of resources to community based services, supporting people in their homes
- Serves a population of 440,000
- Has approximately 11,500 staff
- Provides over 250 different health and social care services.

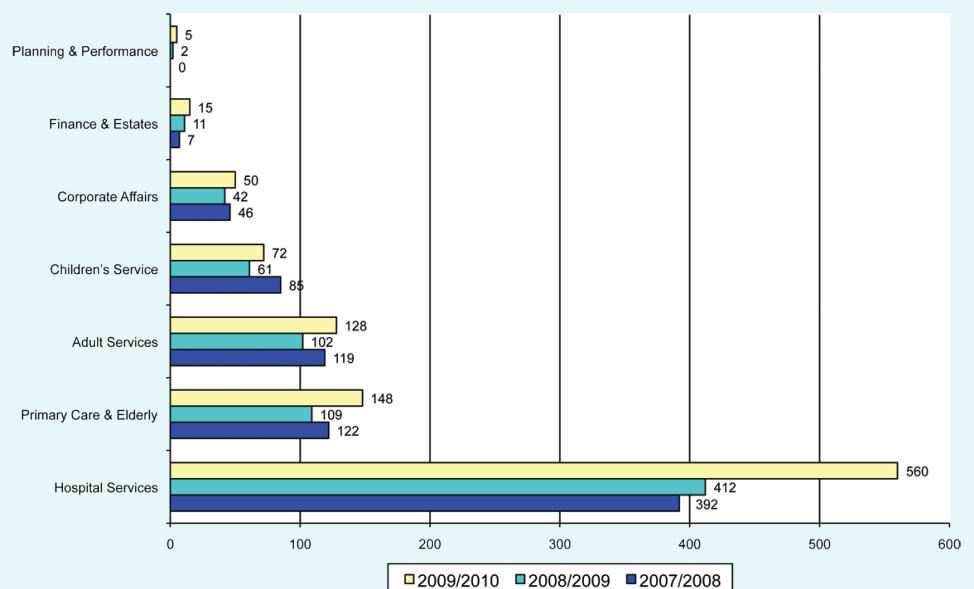
What people complained about

The chart below shows the number of formal complaints by subject for the past year (**2009/2010**) in comparison to the previous year (**2008/2009**). The figures are per issue of complaint, as complaints can have more than one issue each. For **2009/2010** we had complaints made by **697** complainants and these raised **978** issues, compared to 2008/2009 figures of 562 complainants and 739 issues.

The top three subjects of complaint this year again were about quality of care, communication and staff attitudes. This is similar across all the Health & Social Care Trusts.

Subjects	2008/2009		2009/2010	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Treatment & Care, Quality	182	24.6%	200	20.4%
Staff Attitude/Behaviour	98	13.3%	153	15.6%
Communication/Information to Patients	110	14.9%	143	14.6%
Appointments, Delay/Cancel (Outpatient)	53	7.2%	63	6.5%
Prison Healthcare	21	2.8%	55	5.6%
Clinical Diagnosis	28	3.8%	31	3.2%
Other Contracted Services	15	2.0%	27	2.8%
Policy/Commercial Decisions	39	5.3%	23	2.4%
Waiting Times, A&E Departments	10	1.4%	21	2.2%
Treatment & Care, Quantity	19	2.6%	16	1.7%
Patients' Property/Expenses/Finance	11	1.5%	16	1.7%
Environmental	11	1.5%	16	1.7%
Contracted Regulated Establishments/Agencies	8	1.0%	16	1.7%
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments	20	2.7%	15	1.5%
Confidentiality	7	0.9%	14	1.4%
Discharge/Transfer Arrangements	13	1.7%	12	1.2%
Admission into Hospital, Delay/Cancel	5	0.7%	12	1.2%
Access to Premises	5	0.7%	11	1.1%
Aids/Adaptations/Appliances	4	0.5%	11	1.1%
Hotel/Support/Security Services	10	1.4%	10	1.0%
Infection Control	6	0.8%	10	1.0%
Theatre/Operation/Procedure, Delay/Cancel	2	0.3%	10	1.0%
Professional Assessment of Need	13	1.7%	9	0.9%
Records/Records Keeping	5	0.7%	9	0.9%
Waiting Lists, Community Services	4	0.5%	9	0.9%
Waiting Times, Community Services	2	0.3%	9	0.9%
Patients' Privacy/Dignity	5	0.7%	5	0.5%
Other	33	4.5%	52	5.3%
TOTALS	739	100.0%	978	100.0%

This chart shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2009/2010 in comparison to the previous two years.



Response Times

The majority of complaints which we received were acknowledged within 2 working days. We strive to investigate and respond to complaints within the target of 20 working days. However, due to the complexity of some complaints, this is not always possible.

In the past year, 2009/2010, **41%** of complaints were responded to within the timescale. This is a marked drop from the previous year (**49%**). This was due to a range of factors such as RPA (Review of Public Administration), implementation of new Complaints Procedure and staffing shortages within the Complaints Department alongside the **24%** increase in formal complaints. Response times will continue to be closely monitored during the forthcoming year and actions put in place to improve them.

If people 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 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.

In the last year **19%** of complainants contacted us to tell us they were not entirely satisfied.

For those people who remained dissatisfied, they are informed that they may approach the NI Commissioner for Complaints (Ombudsman) directly.

In 2009/2010, there were **14** complainants who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint. Of these, **3** were rejected, **1** received a consolatory payment and **10** are ongoing.

Prison Healthcare

The South Eastern Trust is responsible for Prison Healthcare in Northern Ireland. All complaints relating to health care in prisons or young offenders' centre are dealt with through the Trust's complaints process.

In 2009/2010 there have been **78** informal complaints, i.e. dealt with by healthcare staff. **28 (36%)** of these were resolved at that stage. However, **50 (64%)** progressed to formal complaints. The majority were able to be resolved at that point except one who has asked the Ombudsman to investigate the complaint; this is currently ongoing.

Implementation of HSC Complaints Procedure

On 1 April 2009, the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety introduced a new HSC Complaints Procedure, which has been implemented by the Trust.

It provides a streamlined process which aims to be simple and consistent for staff and those raising complaints. The new procedure allows for 'enhanced local resolution' which means the Trust's focus is to resolve complaints in an open, fair and flexible manner and as quickly as possible.

A Complaints Project Manager was seconded to the Trust for 16 months to implement the new procedure. This involved delivering an extensive training programme to various levels of staff, designing a new computer based learning package, producing a training DVD, updating leaflets, Trust policy, procedures and staff handbook, and carrying out staff and user audits.

Regional Complaints Handling Conference

The Trust recently led in the organisation of a Regional Complaints Conference in the Showgrounds, Ballymena. The theme of the day was '**listening, learning, improving**' and all speakers certainly encouraged this with very interesting and motivational presentations. We were pleased to have Dr Tom Frawley, NI Commissioner for Complaints as our keynote speaker.

100 delegates attended from the 6 HSC Trusts, Family Practitioner Services, DHSSPS, RQIA, the HSC Board and the Patient Client Council.



Jeannie Johnston (Head of Communications), Kathey Neill (Organisation and Workforce Development Training Advisor), Jennifer Hamilton (Complaints Project Manager), Laura Algie (Complaints Manager).

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 **31** complaints dealt with under this procedure and these were all resolved at the informal 'problem-solving' stage.

Compliments

While we accept that sometimes things go wrong, thousands of letters of appreciation and expressions of thanks are received to acknowledge the excellent services provided. Our staff certainly appreciate knowing when things go well and in 2009/2010 the Trust received **8465** formal compliments.

Monitoring

Complaints were reviewed quarterly by the Complaints Review Sub Committee, membership which includes, a Non-Executive Director (Chairman) and an independent representative from the Patient and Client Council.

The sub committee is part of the Trust's governance structure and is a sub committee of

the Risk Management Committee. The role of the sub committee is to act as the strategic committee on all matters relating to complaints management within the Trust.

In the coming year the sub committee will be stood down and the work carried out by a new Lessons Learnt Committee.

Lessons Learnt / Improvements from Complaints

We welcome complaints and the opportunities they provide us with to 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 2009/2010 following complaints. Here are some examples in some departments:

- Following some complaints about the lack of information regarding waiting times, one department has plans to install an information screen in the waiting area
- A protocol is being developed regarding solicitors attending their clients on wards.
- Following a complaint about cleaning in one area, 'spill kits' are located in an accessible area for all staff to access while awaiting relevant member of staff to clean spillages
- Several complainants found difficulty with the phone messaging system and this department has now changed the system including always using a female voice for consistency
- Following complaints about staff attitude in some areas, staff have attended customer care training and been encouraged to apply these skills to their practice
- Some complaints regarding the procedure for domiciliary visits has prompted a review of the system used by clerical staff
- Particular attention to record keeping and documentation to be applied in all areas following a complaint in which the Ombudsman became involved. Additional training was provided for staff
- When concerns were raised about a client not receiving adequate rest, a new chair was ordered to meet the client's needs more appropriately.