South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust

Complaints Annual Report 2014 - 2015

Foreword

This is the Complaints Annual Report for the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust covering the year 1 April 2014 to 31 March 2015 which I am presenting as the Director with responsibility for complaints.

The Trust has a Lessons Learnt Sub Committee, as 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 organisational wide basis.

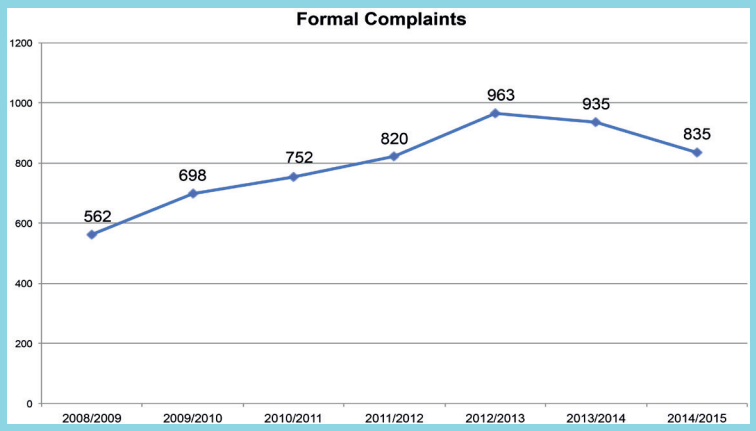
The overall number of complaints received has reduced slightly to 835 this year. Whilst we endeavour to ensure that our services fully meet the expectations of our patients and clients at all times, we wish to know when they do not and in these circumstances we welcome complaints to enable the Trust to take the appropriate remedial action to prevent a recurrence.

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.

Eamonn Molloy
Director of Human Resources & Corporate Affairs

Complaints this year

During the past year (2014 - 2015), the Trust received a total of **835** formal complaints. The chart below shows the number of complaints received over the past year in comparison with the 6 proceeding years.



There has been a **11%** decrease in formal complaints in the past year.

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 over 250 different health and social care services
- Serves a population of approximately 440,000
- Has almost 10,000 staff
- Provides services from the Ulster, Lagan Valley, Downe, Newtownards and Bangor Hospitals
- Saw about 150,000 people at our Emergency Departments during 2014/2015, 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.

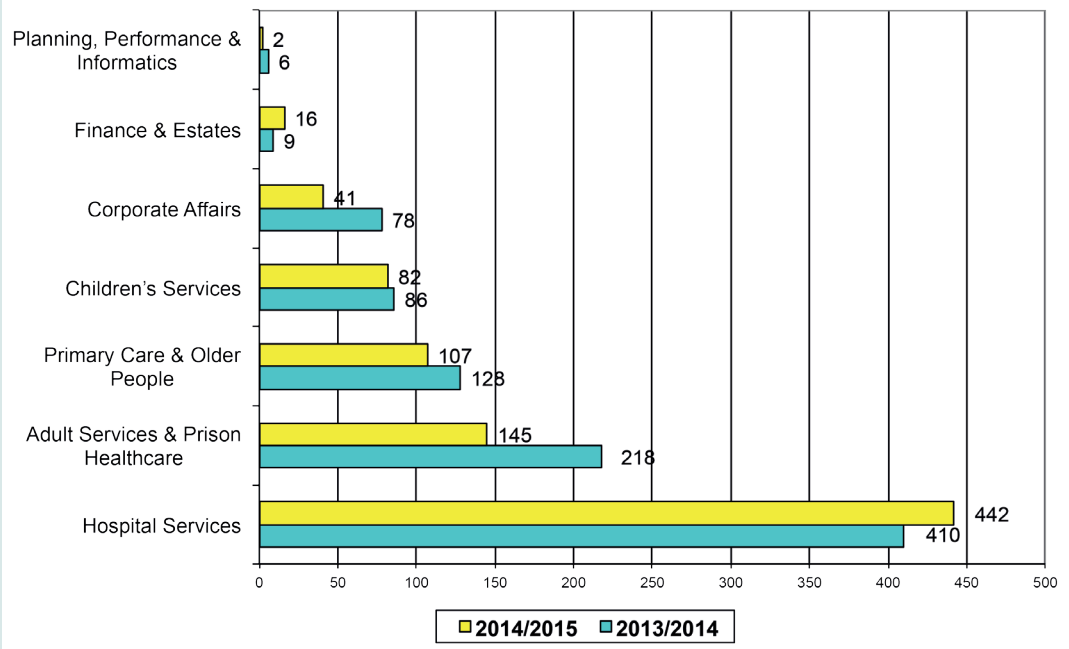
What people complained about

The chart below shows the number of formal complaints by subject for the past year (2014/2015) in comparison to the previous year (2013/2014). The figures are per issue of complaint, as complaints can have more than one issue each. For 2014/2015 we had complaints made by **835** complainants and these raised **1331** issues, compared to 2013/2014 figures of **935** complainants and **1345** 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	2013/2014		2014/2015	
Quality of Treatment & Care	382	28.4%	337	25.3%
Staff Attitude / Behaviour	213	15.8%	256	19.2%
Communication / Information	174	12.9%	151	11.3%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Outpatients Appointments	69	5.1%	82	6.2%
Clinical Diagnosis	50	3.7%	45	3.4%
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments	20	1.5%	36	2.7%
Policy / Commerical Decisions	33	2.5%	34	2.6%
Discharge / Transfer Arrangements	23	1.7%	32	2.4%
Records / Record Keeping	26	1.9%	31	2.3%
Environmental	23	1.7%	25	1.9%
Quantity of Treatment & Care	24	1.8%	23	1.7%
Access to Premises	38	2.8%	23	1.7%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Planned Admission to Hospital	21	1.6%	22	1.7%
Waiting Times, A&E Departments	22	1.6%	22	1.7%
Property / Expenses / Finances	26	1.9%	20	1.5%
Privacy / Dignity	6	0.4%	19	1.4%
Professional Assessment of Need	23	1.7%	17	1.3%
Aids / Adaptions / Appliances	18	1.3%	16	1.2%
Confidentiality	18	1.3%	16	1.2%
Hotel / Support / Security Services	24	1.8%	16	1.2%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Community Appointments	13	1.0%	13	1.0%
Other	99	7.4%	95	7.1%
Totals:	1345	100%	1331	100%

This graph below shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2014/2015 in comparison to the previous year (per complaint).



Response Times

All 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, **2014/2015**, **53%** of complaints were responded to within the timescale. This is an improvement of 10% from the previous year (43%). Response times will continue to be closely monitored during the forthcoming year to ensure complainants are provided with timely responses.

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 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, on a face-to-face basis.

In the last year **16%** of complainants contacted us to tell us they were not entirely satisfied.

Ombudsman

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

In **2014/2015**, there were **15** complainants who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint.

Of these, 6 were not taken on by the Ombudsman, 8 are ongoing and one was partially upheld and the Trust issued a formal apology to the complainant.

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 **2014/2015** there have been **304** informal complaints, ie. dealt with by healthcare staff. There were **76** formal complaints made. The majority were resolved at that point, however, two approached the Ombudsman to investigate the complaint and are ongoing.

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 **38** complaints dealt with at the informal 'problem-solving' stage. All were resolved at this point and none progressed to Stage 1 of the procedure.

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 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 organisational wide basis.

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 2014/2015 following complaints. Here are some examples in some departments:-

Hospital Services:

- Following a complaint about palliative care on a ward, twice daily safety briefs were introduced, which are attended by both nursing and medical staff. Also the 'Productive Ward' programme was undertaken by the ward to identify improvements to the ways of working.

- When a deaf patient highlighted to us that the only method noted on the letter for contacting the hospital to make an appointment was via phone, we amended our documentation to include a text phone option.

Adult Services:

- When a patient told us they were unhappy with some general issues on the ward around communal areas and lack of privacy, office space was changed to allow it to be used as quiet or visitor rooms. We have changed the way checks are carried out, to help ensure privacy. We also introduced a new system for dispensing of medication to allow for patients' privacy
- A patient raised concern that their information was passed to an outside agency. Although appropriate information sharing was part of the admission and was to ensure patient's ongoing safety, this was not communicated clearly to the patient. As a result the content of the admission pathway and admission pack was reviewed and wording amended. Also a specific section was added to ensure it clearly explains about sharing of information and that confidentiality is provided to patients.

Primary Care & Elderly Services:

- A complainant raised concerns about care provided by domiciliary care. As a result, refresher training was provided for staff on reporting, including procedures to be followed when a message is received outside office hours and to ensure that follow up contact is made immediately with the service user's family when a report of an incident is made by staff

- When a patient highlighted to us about being given an injection into an area that caused skin staining, nursing staff were advised that in future treatment to be administered only as per manufacturer's guidelines and if a patient requests anything outside these guidelines, staff are not to proceed but refer the patient back to GP.

Children's Services:

- Following a complaint about communication around the adoption processes, joint training between teams took place to include enhancing communication, greater understanding of each other's roles and responsibilities, and agreeing a clear process of how and who communicates statutory decisions to foster carers. Information leaflets for service users were developed to explain the different processes and each social work role within these.

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 2014/2015 the Trust received **8247** formal compliments.

"He arrived on the dot for our visit. We had full opportunity of discussing all problems. I cannot imagine a more thorough, caring or well-informed practitioner of his profession. It was an extremely helpful visit and we look forward to his follow-up visit in due course. How fortunate we are to have such a service."

"Up to my wife's death I had the help of the nurses, who were dedicated and gave us the feeling that my wife was there only patient. In our home they gave us a lovely feeling and when they arrived my wife's face changed for the better. I never thought such good capable people existed. I do not know what I would have done without them. The team was wonderful. Every staff the same – thank you all."

"The A&E and ward teams were fabulous – continually checking on her and keeping her pain at bay. Nothing was too much trouble and we were continually reassured. I can't thank the teams enough."

"My complaint was resolved very quickly. Thank you for the quick and thorough investigation to resolve all of my issues. It is refreshing that the manager has such a positive 'hands on' and 'can do approach' – a credit to the Trust."

"I have recently been in contact with a social worker due to problems I have been experiencing. He was very understanding and supportive and he has helped me access additional support services. I would like to commend him for his help at this time."

Plans for the incoming year (2015/2016)

In the incoming year we plan to run a survey to ask our staff their views of our complaints process and how we may improve this service.

We also have an ongoing user survey asking complainants to tell us about their experiences of using the complaints process. The results will be analysed to see where improvements can be made.

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