

# Compliments & Complaints Annual Report 2018 - 2019

## Foreword

As the Director responsible for compliments and complaints, I am pleased to present the Compliments and Complaints Annual Report for the South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust for the year 1 April 2018 to 31 March 2019.

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 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. The Trust appreciates the many compliments received that acknowledge the excellent services provided by our staff.



**Myra Weir**

Director of Human Resources & Corporate Affairs

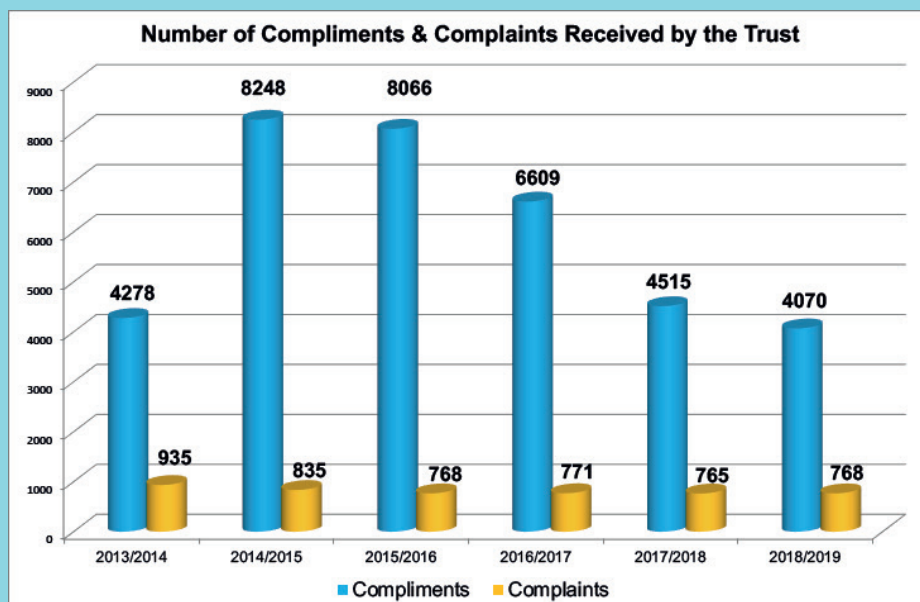
## Facts & Figures

*In the year 2018/2019*

- **4,070** compliments were received
- **768** complaints were received
- **99%** of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days
- **49%** 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.

## How did we do this year?

During the past year (2018/2019), the Trust received **4,070** compliments and **768** complaints, which is similar to the previous year (4,515 compliments / 765 complaints), as shown in the graph below.



## 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 2018/2019 the Trust received **4,070** compliments (includes formal verbal) (see below for some examples).

The graph on page 1 shows the number of compliments received per year in comparison to the number of complaints.

*"I just wanted to say thanks to the male cleaner at front of the hospital building who showed us where the (department) was on Sunday morning. He was very mannerly, friendly and checked when he saw me walking past again that we had found our way. Great experience."*

*"I have been a foster carer for (many) years and in this time I can honestly say my social worker is the best I have had. She shows great dedication and rapport with the young people in her care, she notes down all concerns from children and carers and gets back very quickly, resolving them or speaking to someone who can. She really goes that extra mile and shows compassion and concern for all."*

*"I do want to say that throughout the last few years, I have had an absolutely horrendous time through a myriad of personal tragedies, all the while suffering from anxiety & depression. I am now, after a course of counselling, engaged in a course of CBT, administered by my counsellor, who has been great. Thank you."*

*"I had a need for a (scope) this morning, my first such experience. As you'd appreciate, I was quite apprehensive regarding this, however, every single person I interacted with was excellent, professional, reassuring, a credit to themselves, their teams, the health service itself, and a jewel in Northern Ireland. I can't thank them enough, well done."*

*"Our parents were in hospital (but 2 different hospitals) at the same time. We wish to express our gratitude to your staff, firstly who went way beyond the call of duty to make our mother's last days on this earth as comfortable as possible. But it wasn't just our mother who they helped, our father was assisted to come to say goodbye to our mother in her last days, and this was so valued to us as a family."*

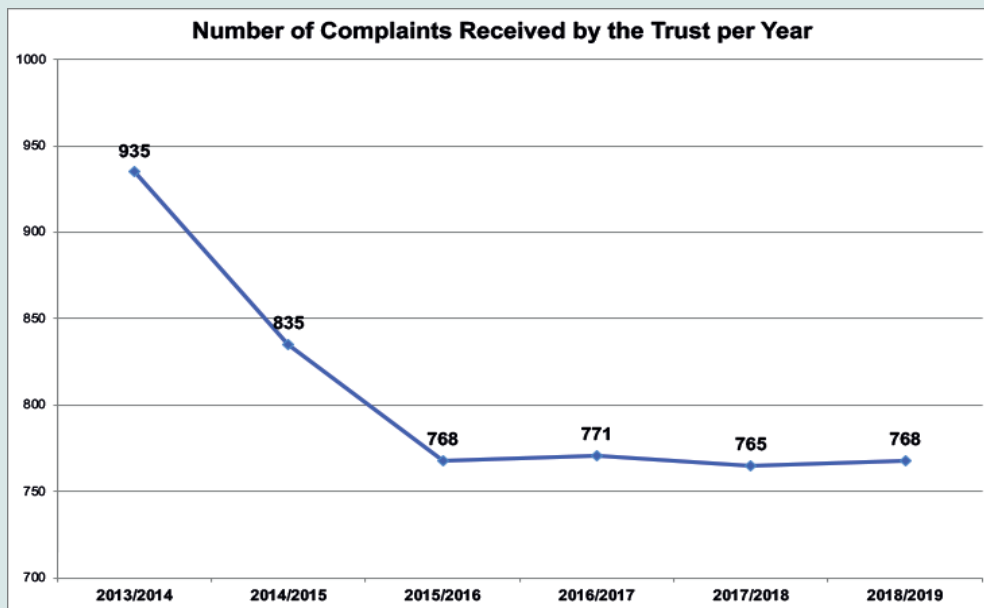
*"Most excellent service I have ever attended. Physiotherapist so professional, reassuring and positive. Excellent explanation of exercises required, very empathetic and encouraging. With thanks."*

*"The lady, who took the details when I first rang, was very understanding about our situation and I really appreciated her being so calm. I also really appreciated the doctor ringing me back so quickly. (He) is used to being a patient – the doctor understood this and made sure he was involved in all conversations when we got to the hospital. The GP out of hours service is brilliant and I have nothing but praise for the team."*

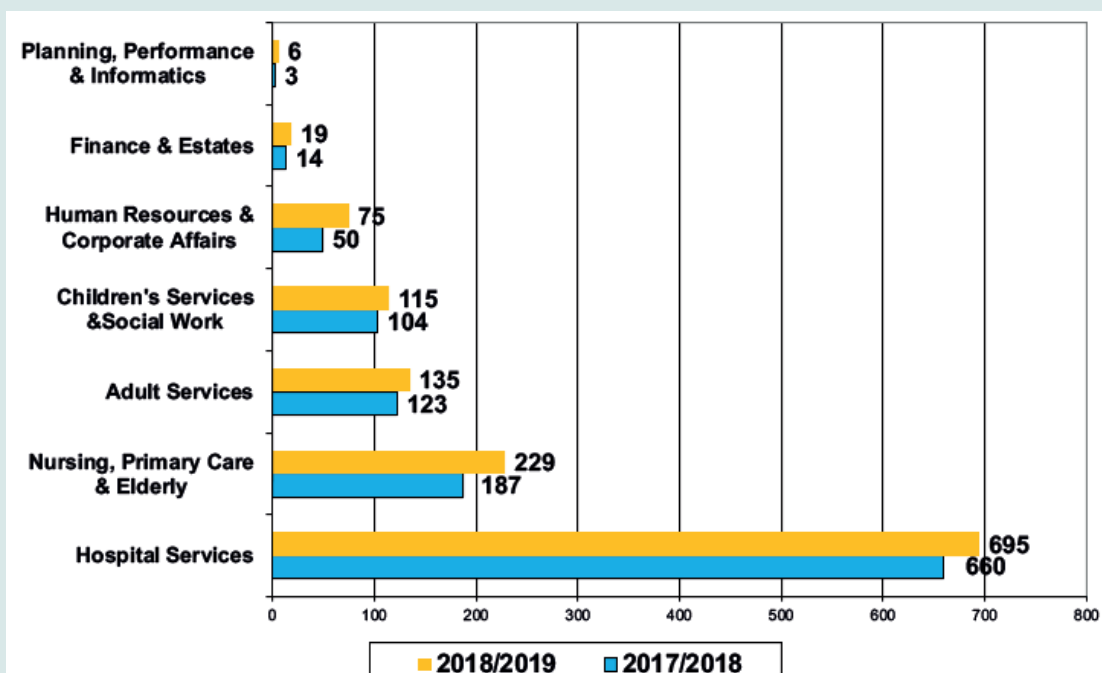
# Complaints

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.



This graph below shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2018/2019 in comparison to the previous year (per issue - a complaint can have more than one issue).



# What people complained about

The chart below shows the number of complaints by subject for the past year (2018/2019) in comparison to the previous year.

The figures are per issue of complaint, as a complaint can have more than one issue. For 2018/2019 we had complaints made by **768** complainants and these raised **1,274** issues, compared with 2017/2018 figures of **765** complainants and **1141** issues.

The top three subjects of complaint in the past year were: Quality of Treatment & Care, Communication / Information and Staff Attitude / Behaviour. These are the same top subjects as last year, and this is similar across other Health & Social Care Trusts.

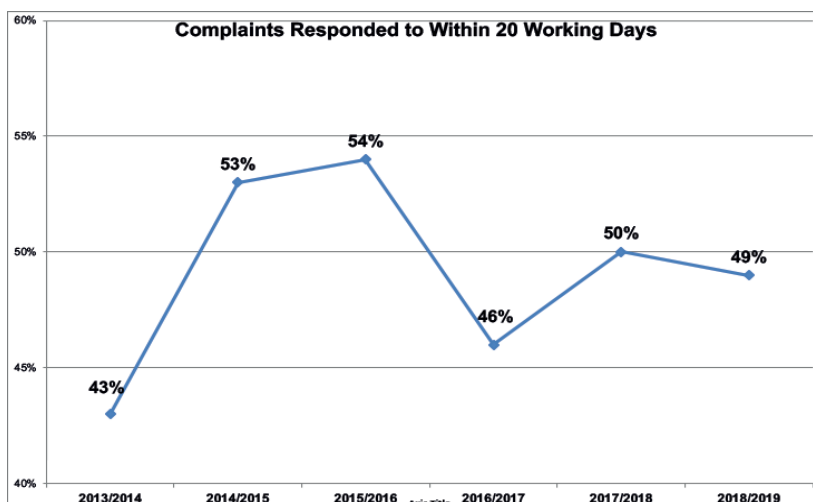
| Subjects (per issue)                                       | 2017/2018   |            | 2018/2019   |            |
|--|-------------|------------|-------------|------------|
|  | Count       | Percentage | Count       | Percentage |
| Quality of Treatment & Care                                | 300         | 26%        | 300         | 24%        |
| Communication / Information                                | 191         | 17%        | 246         | 19%        |
| Staff Attitude / Behaviour                                 | 229         | 20%        | 196         | 15%        |
| Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Outpatients Appointments      | 53          | 5%         | 63          | 5%         |
| Clinical Diagnosis   | 38          | 3%         | 58          | 5%         |
| Access to Premises   | 20          | 2%         | 42          | 3%         |
| Records / Record Keeping                                   | 30          | 3%         | 28          | 2%         |
| Environmental  | 20          | 2%         | 25          | 2%         |
| Policy / Commercial Decisions                              | 22          | 2%         | 22          | 2%         |
| Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Community Appointments        | 17          | 1%         | 22          | 2%         |
| Waiting Times, Community Services                          | 3           | <1%        | 21          | 2%         |
| Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Planned Admission to Hospital | 22          | 2%         | 20          | 2%         |
| Discharge / Transfer Arrangements                          | 18          | 2%         | 19          | 2%         |
| Privacy & Dignity  | 4           | <1%        | 18          | 1%         |
| Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments                      | 24          | 2%         | 17          | 1%         |
| Waiting Times, A&E Departments                             | 10          | 1%         | 18          | 1%         |
| Professional Assessment of Need                            | 7           | 1%         | 17          | 1%         |
| Quantity of Treatment & Care                               | 17          | 2%         | 14          | 1%         |
| Other  | 116         | 10%        | 128         | 10%        |
| <b>Totals:</b>   | <b>1141</b> |            | <b>1274</b> |            |

## Response Times to Complaints

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

**49%** of complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days, which is a decrease of 1% from the previous year (50%), as shown in the graph below. This is due to a number of reasons such as resource issues and the complexity of cases

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 **19%** 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 **2018/2019**, there were **25** complainants who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint.

Of these, 8 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman and 17 others are ongoing.

13 other complaints, received by the Ombudsman prior to 1 April 2018, were closed during the past year, while 8 others remain ongoing.

Of the 13 closed during 2018/2019:

- 3 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman
- In 1 case the Ombudsman was satisfied the care the appropriate
- In 2 cases a settlement was reached without investigation
- 7 had some areas of failings identified and recommendations made by the Ombudsman for remedy / improvement to services.

## 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 **24** 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 and have now been resolved.

## Complaints Training

The Trust commissioned bespoke training on Effective Written Responses to Complaints and one day took place in May 2018 and 2 days in March 2019. Further dates are being planned for 2019/2020.

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 and professionals to leave the day with the techniques and the confidence to respond effectively and efficiently to complaints through letters.

The training was very well received by the participants. They were very positive about the trainer's knowledge, presentation and facilitation skills, the course content and of their personal learning from the event. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 = low & 5 = high), the participants' scores of the course were a very high overall average of **4.93 out of 5**.

# 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 main 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 2018/2019 following complaints.

### You said, We did

#### You Said:

*Staff did not adhere to recommendations to assist the patient's swallow.*

#### We Did:

*Issue brought to attention of nursing staff for reflective learning. Further training provided for staff regarding swallow assessment.*

#### You Said:

*Intravenous fluids not put back up.*

#### We Did:

*Medical staff now have a meeting about all patients with senior nurse at end of shift to ensure all plans of care are clearly communicated.*

#### You Said:

*Family were not aware of the 'do not resuscitate' order on their relative.*

#### We Did:

*The importance of communication with families has been added as part of the Junior Doctors Induction Programme.*

#### You Said:

*Issues raised by residents about the range and standard of food on menus in a home*

#### We Did:

*Met with residents to review menus, and closer monitoring and communication now taking place between home and catering staff*

#### You Said:

*Patients not taken to theatre in order they arrive to the ward*

#### We Did:

*Patients are allocated a particular slot on the theatre list, which is agreed before surgery commences and patients are taken in that order. The information leaflet has been updated to explain this clearly to patients.*

### Plans for the incoming year (2019/2020)

In the incoming year, we plan to undertake a staff survey to audit staff's knowledge and compliance with the Trust's Complaints Procedures.

We also have an ongoing survey asking people who have complained to tell us about their experiences of using the complaints process. The results will be shared with staff for any learning and used as part of our training programme.

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