

# Compliments & Complaints Annual Report 2020 - 2021

## Foreword

As the interim Director responsible for the positive and negative feedback received into the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust, I am very pleased to present the Compliments & Complaints Annual Report for 2020/2021.

It has been an enormously challenging year due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the biggest challenge we have ever faced in health and social care. Staff and services in the Trust have risen to this challenge in such an incredible way. I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our staff for their continued dedication to the resolution of complaints and for their sensitive handling of issues that are important to complainants.

I am delighted to report that the Trust received 2,842 compliments throughout the year and I appreciate the time that people have taken to acknowledge the services provided by our staff and teams.

As a Trust, we welcome the complaints received as this information is used to learn lessons and improve our services. We are committed to achieving the best outcomes for all of our patients and clients, and when things do not go well, we wish to know so that the appropriate remedial action can be taken 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.



**Claire Smyth**

Interim Director of Human Resources & Corporate Affairs

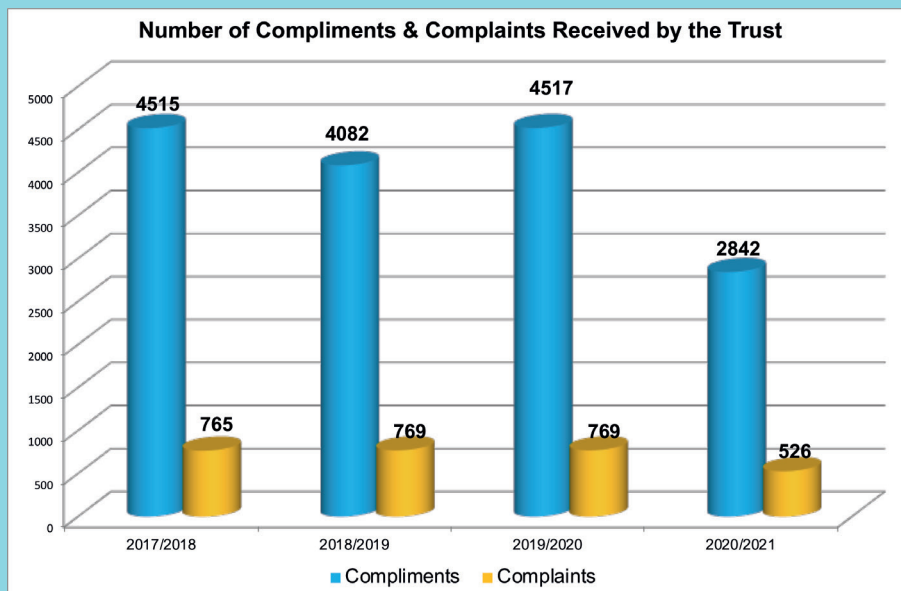
## Facts & Figures

*In the year 2020/2021:*

- **2,842** compliments were received
- **526** complaints were received
- **99%** of complaints were acknowledged within 2 working days
- **31%** 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 (2020/2021), the Trust received **2,842** compliments and **526** (includes COVID-19 related) complaints, which is a reduction from the previous year (4,517 compliments / 769 complaints), as shown in the graph below.



# Care Opinion

A new regional Health & Social Care Online User Feedback System was launched in August 2020, Care Opinion, and it supports service users to share their experience stories with the Trust and have direct response made by a service.



From its launch to 31 March 2021, the Trust has had 400 stories shared by our service users. It is great to see our staff being recognised for providing great care through Care Opinion stories. We use the stories to make improvements in response to service user stories in order to widen and accelerate learning.

## Compliments

Whilst the Trust recognises that sometimes things go wrong, each year the Trust receives thousands of expressions of appreciation and 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 2021/2021 the Trust received **2,842** compliments (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.

*"A massive thank you to my physio. I never thought I would feel this strong again!! Even through the 1<sup>st</sup> lockdown, she contacted me with advice & support. She is such an asset to the NHS. Her dedication & expertise are outstanding. Thank you so much."*

*"I would like to pass on my deepest and sincerest gratitude to the Doctors and Nurses who in the most difficult of circumstances looked after my welfare in the knowledge that I was a very infectious Covid patient. Their professionalism was admirable, always courteous and attentive to the ongoing situation, they made me feel safe and in good hands."*

*"I would like to thank each & everyone from the top ranking to the cleaners for making my month long stay as comfortable, peaceful, caring and as happy as was possible. You are all an incredible bunch of people I have ever met in my life – you are amazing."*

*"Right from the beginning all of the staff encountered were so helpful; a member of the domestic staff stopped her work to find a wheelchair and the receptionist was very friendly and welcoming. Even though my mother is 90 years old, they demonstrated patient centred care by directing their conversation to her rather than to me, as her carer."*

*"My health visitor has literally gone above and beyond for me after my birth. Both myself and my husband are amazed at how much she has cared and she really has gone the extra mile."*

*"Pass my thanks on to the trainee. I appreciated not only her technical skill, but also her empathetic approach and her excellent communication skills, which put me at ease and ensured I was well informed."*

*"It was reassuring they took the time to explain in simple terms my problem. I thank them for their kindness and patience and the undoubted friendliness of all the hospital staff I met. It's nice to be met by a pleasant word and a cheery face."*

*"The care he received was brilliant and as we couldn't even see him, the nurses kept us informed of his progress. Thank you from the bottom of my heart."*

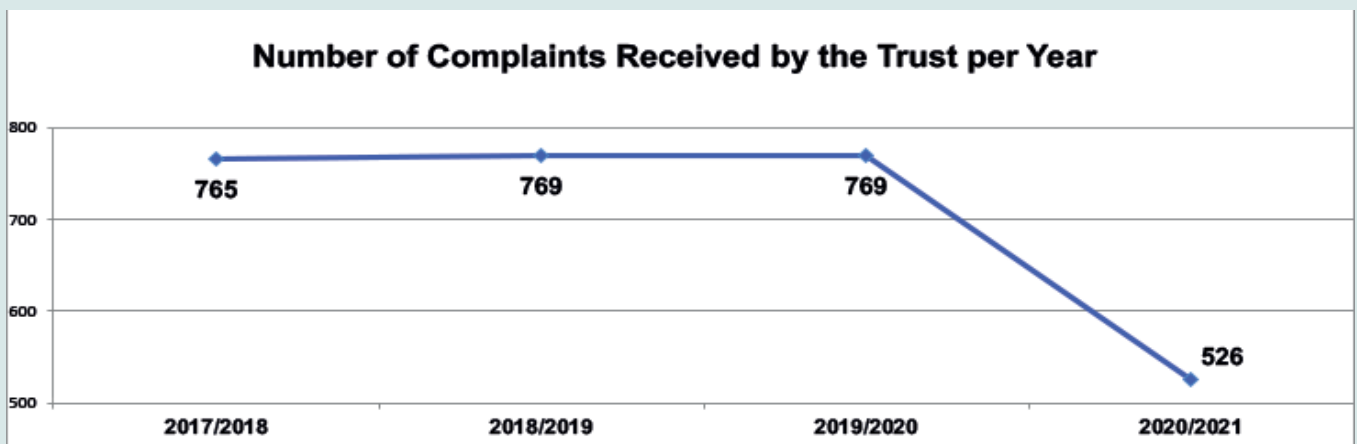
*"The care and compassion shown to our mother and family by all staff was heart-warming and compassionate and was a comfort to the family during this difficult time."*

# Complaints

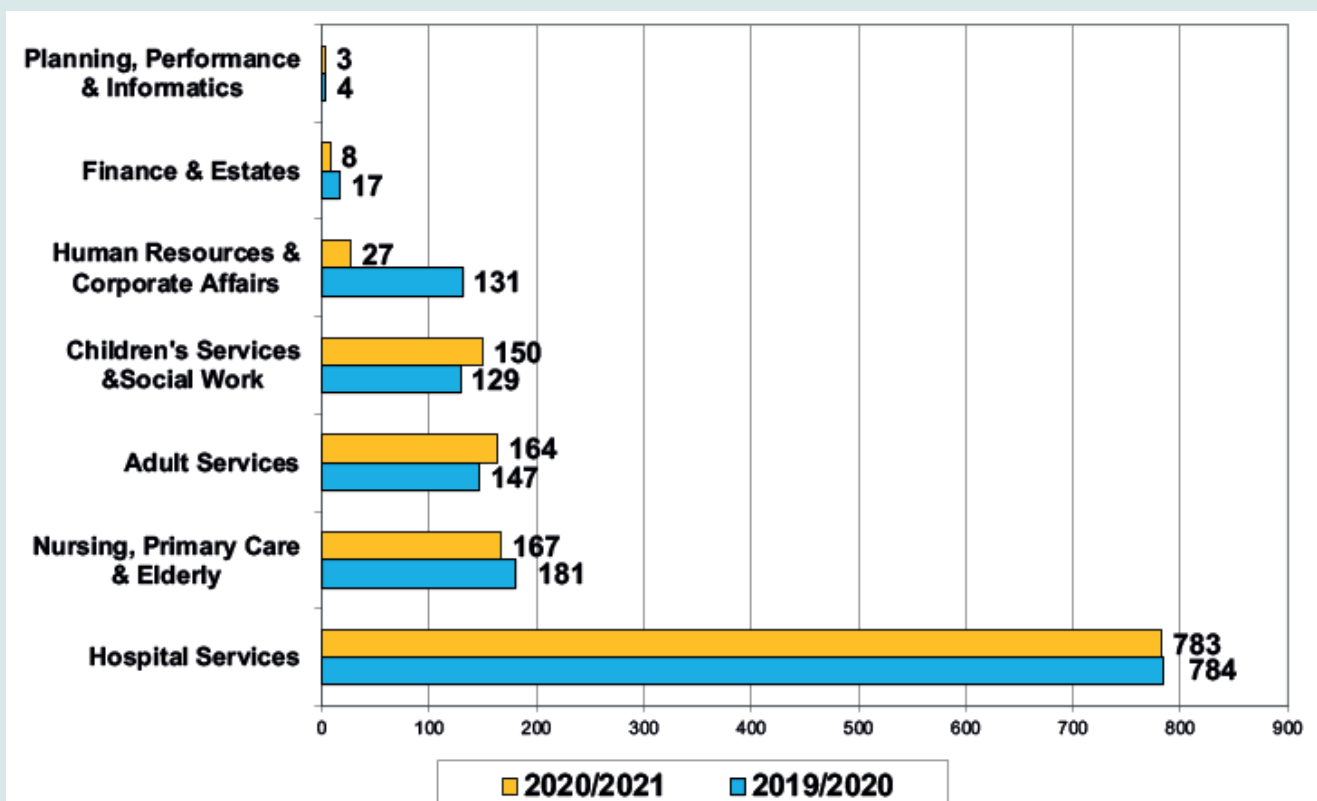
The number of complaints continues to be low considering the large geographical area the Trust covers and the number of contacts Trust staff have with patients and clients. The Trust:

- Provides a wide range of health and social care services
- Serves a population of approximately 364,000
- Has over 12,000 staff
- Provides services to support people's own homes, in community settings and in the Ulster, Lagan Valley, Downe, Newtownards and Bangor Hospitals
- Saw about 125,000 people at our Emergency Departments during the year, treated about 26,000 people in hospital as daycases and admitted about 41,500 people to our 3 main hospitals.

The number of complaints received remained similar over the 3 previous years, but there has been a drop in numbers in 2020/2021 - see the graph below:



This graph below shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints for 2020/2021 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 (2020/2021) in comparison to the previous year.

The figures are per issue of complaint, as a complaint can have more than one issue. For 2020/2021 we had complaints made by **526** complainants and these raised **1,302** issues, compared with 2019/2020 figures of **769** complainants and **1,394** issues. Of the 526, 39 of these were COVID-19 related. This shows an increase in the number of issues per complaint 1:2.5 ratio 2020/2021 and previous year, 1:1.8. This highlights the increase of complexity of cases.

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)	2019/2020		2020/2021	
	Count	Percentage	Count	Percentage
Quality of Treatment & Care	345	25%	369	28%
Communication / Information	268	19%	311	24%
Staff Attitude / Behaviour	223	16%	203	16%
Clinical Diagnosis	72	5%	72	6%
Records / Record Keeping	29	2%	42	3%
Policy / Commercial Decisions	13	1%	30	2%
Discharge / Transfer Arrangements	15	1%	27	2%
Privacy / Dignity	34	2%	25	2%
Infection Control	5	<1%	22	2%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Community Based Appointments	18	1%	22	2%
Waiting List, Delay / Cancel Outpatients Appointments	54	4%	19	1%
Quantity of Treatment & Care	16	1%	18	1%
Confidentiality	13	1%	17	1%
Access to Premises	106	8%	13	1%
Professional Assessment of Need	8	1%	11	1%
Property / Expenses / Finances	11	1%	11	1%
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments	8	1%	10	1%
Other	156	11%	80	6%
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>1394</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>1302</b>	<b>100%</b>

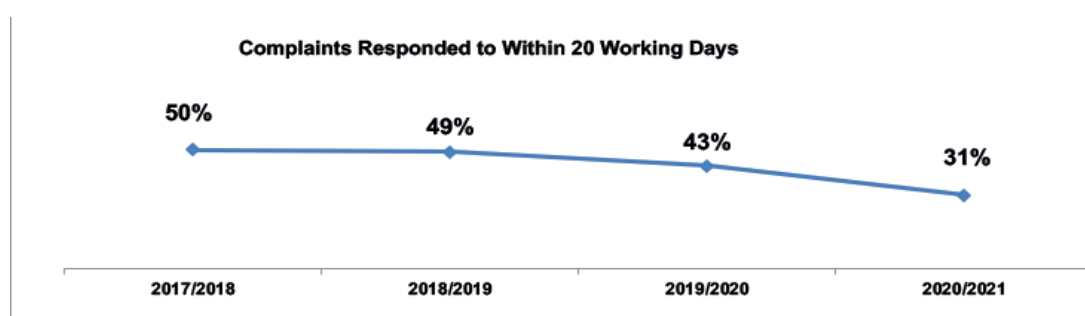
## Response Times to Complaints

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

31% of complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days, which is a marked decrease of 12% from the previous year (43%), as shown in the graph below.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Trust staff had to focus on their duties as front line health and social care workers to respond to the health crisis. Many services were suspended or reduced (including the complaints service) and staff were redeployed to support our front line staff. Duties, such as investigating and responding to complaints, were therefore significantly impacted on, which led to delays in responding to our complainants.

The Trust continues to monitor timescales to ensure complainants are provided with timely responses and is actively working to address the backlog as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 have continued to offer meetings with complainants, as this allows the opportunity for more detailed discussions, either virtually or face-to-face when able to facilitate safely.

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 **2020/2021** there were **15** complainants who approached the Ombudsman for investigation of their complaint, which is a reduction from last year (21). Of these, 4 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman, 1 was settled without investigation and 10 others are ongoing. 11 other complaints, received by the Ombudsman prior to 1 April 2020, were closed during the past year, while 11 others remain ongoing.

Of the total of 16 closed during 2020/2021:

- 7 were not accepted for investigation by the Ombudsman
- In 2 cases the Ombudsman did not uphold any of the complaint
- In 1 case a settlement was reached without investigation
- 6 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 **14** complaints dealt with at the informal 'problem-solving' stage. They were all resolved at this point, and none progressed to Stage 1 of the procedure.

## COVID-19 related complaints

The Trust received 39 COVID-19 related complaints during 2020/2021.

The issues raised were about such things as:

- Social distancing, wearing masks, PPE
- Visiting restrictions
- Cancelled appointments and not getting face to face appointments
- Closure of services
- Covid positive patient on non-Covid ward and vice versa
- Getting through to staff on phones.

In a lot of cases, the key issues were communication and peoples' fears and concerns.

During this time, staff more often phoned the person or arranged a meeting virtually, provided explanations, rationale and reassurance, which has been very effective in resolving matters on the spot. Issues about social distancing, wearing masks, PPE, Scrubs these issues were highlighted to staff and communicated widely via the Covid-19 weekly update emails.

## Independent Sector Complaints

Social care providers in the Independent Sector, who hold a contract with the Trust, are required to report all complaints to the Trust to comply with the terms and conditions of their contract and other relevant regulations and legislation. In the year 2020/2021, a total of 76 complaints were received (informal and formal) – 43 Domiciliary Care, 31 Care Homes and 2 Supported Living.

# 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 (except in April 2020 due to COVID-19 pandemic).

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 2020/2021 following complaints.

### You said, We did

#### You Said:

*A number of complaints around communication, care and behaviour.*

#### We Did:

*A number of areas now include learning in their daily safety briefing with staff, eg. reminders around communication, professionalism, interactions, compassionate care.*

#### You Said:

*Patient developed pressure sore; delay in receiving appropriate air mattress.*

#### We Did:

*Staff have undertaken further training in relation to pressure management; a bespoke pathway for prevention and management of pressure development within the department is being designed.*

#### You Said:

*Medication incorrectly labelled.*

#### We Did:

*Introduced a 2 stage check to ensure names on prescription match the medication chart. Reinforced to wider teams via huddles, team meetings, about the importance of identity confirmation check.*

#### You Said:

*Method of payment for car parking.*

#### We Did:

*Trust to move to have contactless card as means of payment made available.*

#### You Said:

*Issues re communication and explanations provided.*

#### We Did:

*Staff reminded of 'Hello my name is ...' initiative  
Teams reminded of gaining informed consent regarding all aspects of care.  
Ongoing training in relation to verbal & written communication styles.*

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