

**WESTERN HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE TRUST**

# COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT 2017/18

## Introduction:

The Complaints Annual Report reviews the complaints received by the Western Health and Social Care Trust for the period 1 April 2017 to 31 March 2018.

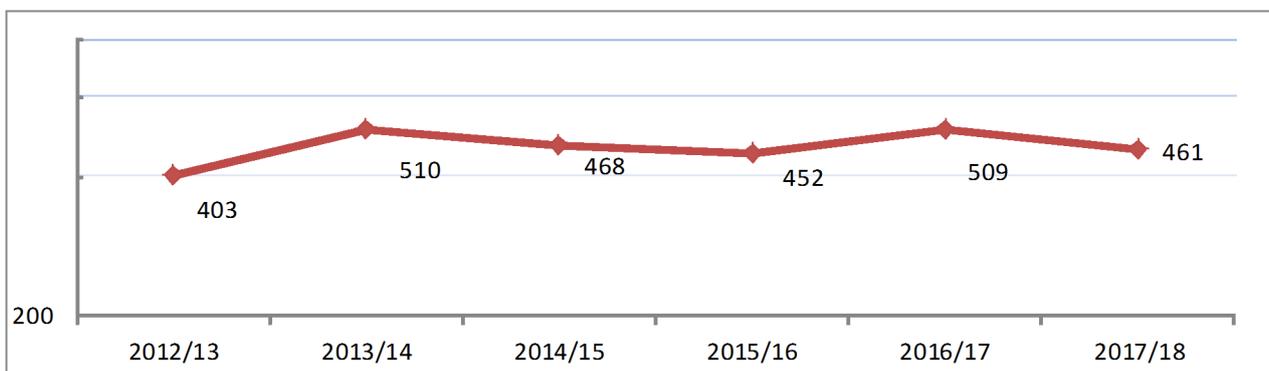
The Trust welcomes and actively encourages complaints and compliments about our services. From time to time individuals or families may feel dissatisfied with some aspect of their dealings with the Trust and when this happens it is important that the issue is dealt with as quickly as possible. We recognise that everyone has a right to make a complaint and we can learn valuable lessons from them – a complaint may well improve things for others. Complaints provide us with lessons to learn 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.

We also like to know when users have been impressed or pleased with our service. We can use these examples to share best practice amongst our staff. In addition, **compliments** can help boost morale.

## Complaints this year:

During 2017/2018 a total of 461 formal complaints which includes 2 Children Order Complaints were received by the Trust. This compares with 509 complaints during the previous financial year of 2016/2017.

The continued awareness training provided to staff on the Health & Social Care Complaints Procedure highlights the emphasis around enhanced local resolution, encouraging staff to resolve complaints at a local level.



## Facts & Figures 2017/18

461 formal complaints were received by the Trust

99% of the formal complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days

52% of the formal complaints received were responded to within 20 working days

**6287** recorded compliments were received during 2017/18 compared to 3843 for the previous year - an increase of **39%**

## 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 different health and social care services from a number of hospitals, community facilities and peoples own homes;
- Serves a population of approximately 300,000, 16% of Northern Ireland, in a catchment area of over 4842km;
- Has approximately 12,500 staff.

## Compliments:

Whilst the Trust recognises that sometimes things go wrong, each year it receives thousands of letters and emails of appreciation and expression of thanks to acknowledge the excellent services provided.

We are proud of our staff and ensure that positive feed back is shared and celebrated. Our staff certainly appreciate feedback from their patients and clients, and knowing when things go well.

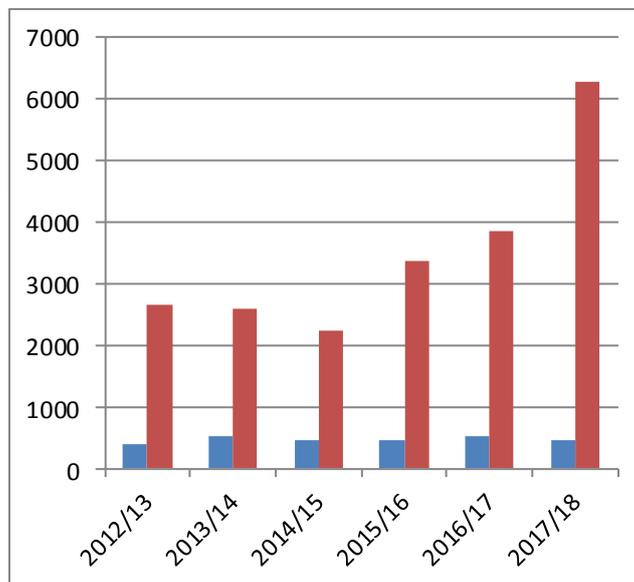
As part of a pilot exercise which ran for the quarter January – March 2018 initially, quarterly statistics reports were provided to the Permanent Secretary with regard to the number and types of compliments received by all of the Health and Social Care Trusts. The Department of Health will establish a process to record and report these. There is a new Compliment Return Form and Definitions of Subjects for the recording of Trust compliments. This form can be found on the Trust's intranet site under useful documents. This return will provide more detail around the categorization of compliments received, i.e. Quality of Treatment and Care, Staff Attitude and Behaviour, Information and Communication, Environment, Other.

In 2017/18 the Trust received 6287 compliments:

I wanted to put on record my thanks for the first class treatment I received. Staff were very attentive, I was kept very well informed by the staff and they did everything possible to help me .

Would just like to say a very big 'Thank you' to the doctor who looked after me for her dedication to her work and her patients.

All the staff were very pleasant and informative and made me feel "looked after"

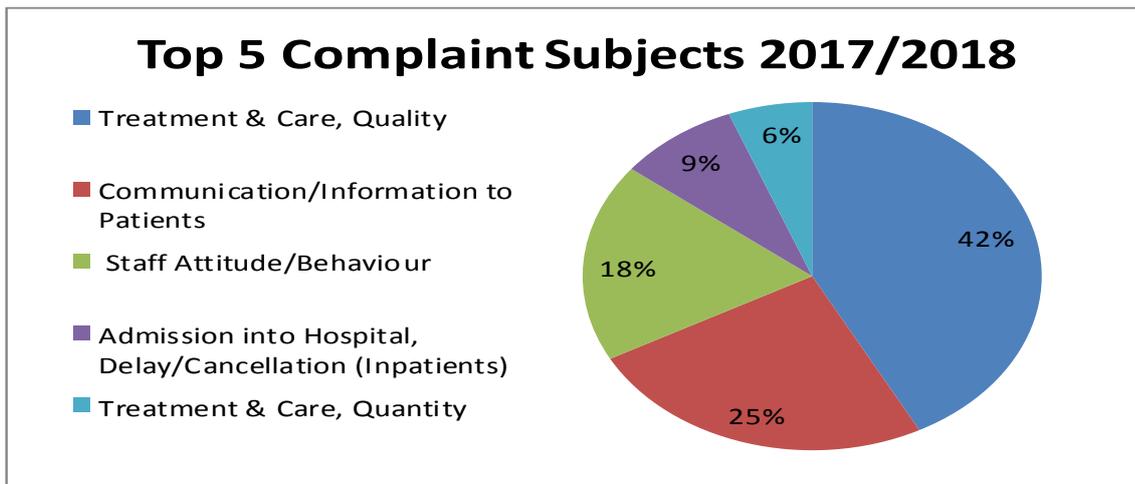


It was evident to all of us that visited him in hospital and made contact by telephone, that the doctors and staff looking after him did so with care and attention, and a level of professionalism which was second to none

Our recent experience with the health service in Northern Ireland has reaffirmed our views that we are very lucky to have people who are so committed to their profession, and to looking after the health of others

## Complaints by Subject—Top 5

The top 5 categories of complaints received during 2017/18 are set out below:



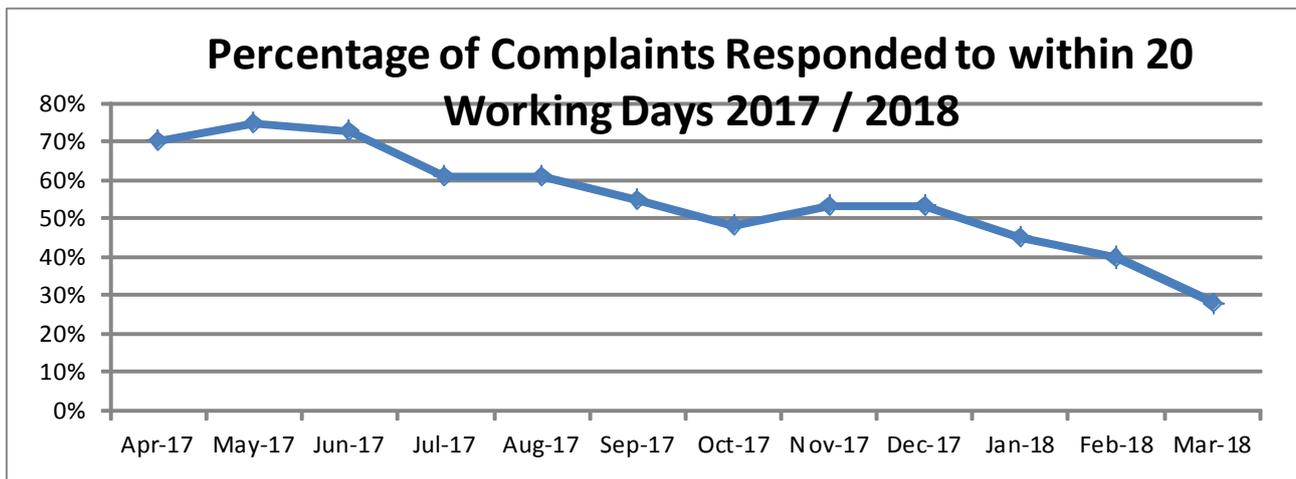
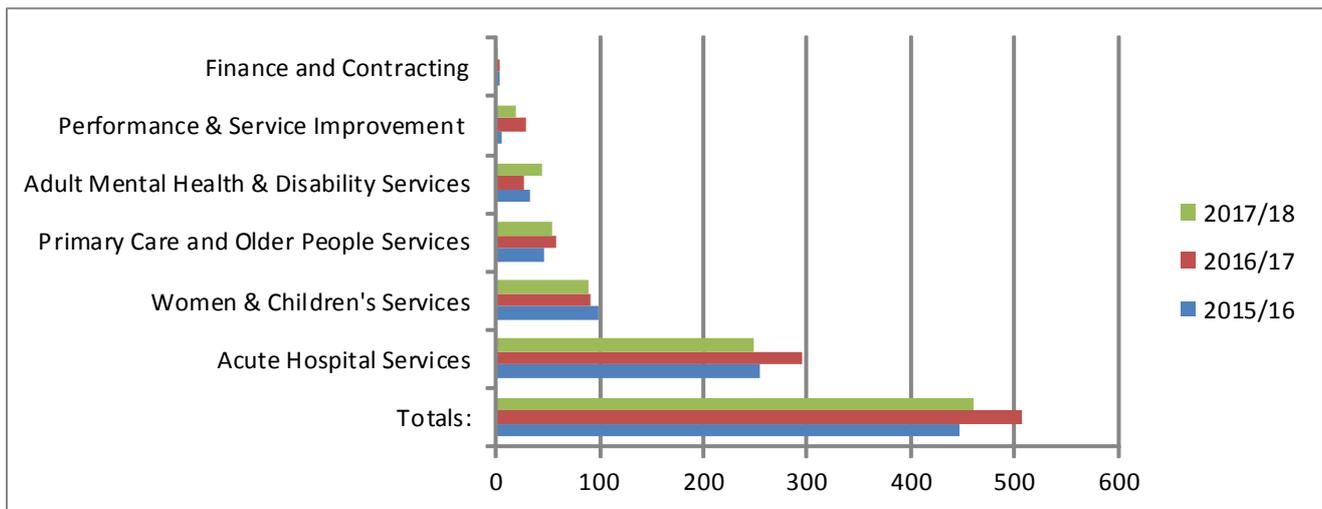
## What people complained about

The chart below shows ALL the complaints by subject for the past year (2017/18). The figures are per issue of complaint, as a complaint can have more than one issue. For 2017/18 461 complaints were received and these raised 740 issues, compared with 2016/17 509 complaints and 942 issues.

Treatment & Care, Quality (28)	243
Communication/Information to Patients (6)	143
Staff Attitude/Behaviour (24)	106
Admission into Hospital, Delay/Cancellation (Inpatients) (2)	49
Treatment & Care, Quantity (29)	34
Clinical Diagnosis (5)	31
Appointments, Delay/Cancellation (Outpatient) (4)	27
Professional Assessment of Need (22)	23
Other (35)	19
Waiting Times, Outpatient Departments (33)	14
Discharge/Transfer Arrangements (13)	11
Patients' Privacy/Dignity (18)	8
Confidentiality (8)	5
Environmental (14)	4
Aids/Adaptations/Appliances (3)	3
Other Contracted Services (11)	3
Records/Records Keeping (23)	3
Waiting Times, Accident & Emergency (32)	3
Infection Control (16)	2
Patient's Property/Expenses/Finance (19)	2
Policy/Commercial Decisions (21)	2
Waiting Times, Community Services (31)	2
Access to Premises (1)	1
Complaints Handling (7)	1
Theatre/Operation Procedure, Delay/Cancellation (25)	1
<b>Totals:</b>	<b>740</b>

## Complaints received by Directorate

This graph shows the breakdown by directorates of formal complaints 2016/17 in comparison to the previous year 2015/16 and 2014/15 (per issue)



## Response time to complaints

99% of complaints were acknowledged within the target of 2 working days and 52% of complaints were responded to within the target of 20 working days. The Trust continues to monitor timescales to ensure complainants are provided with timely responses. However our emphasis is on the quality of 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 9% of complainants contacted us to tell us they were not completely satisfied.

### Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman (NIPSO)

For those people who remain dissatisfied, they had the option to approach the NIPSO directly. In 2017/18, there were 11 complainants who approached the NIPSO for investigation of their complaint.

## 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 2 complaints dealt with at the informal “problem solving” stage. They were both resolved at this point by the service.

## Monitoring

The Complaints Department has and will continue to take action to increase the number of complaints responded to within 20 working days. This includes regular reports to management and relevant groups on the performance of each Directorate as well as increased follow-up with Investigating Officers. Summaries of outstanding complaints are also provided on a regular basis to Assistant Directors. Complaints staff encourage staff to meet with Complainants when it is felt that this will promote a more positive and timely outcome.

A complaints handling flowchart is in place to ensure that actions are taken to address any delays in receiving responses from the Investigating Officers. Complaints open for over 3 months are escalated to the Trust’s Chief Executive.

The Trust is committed to using complaints/concerns as an opportunity to learn and improve services and care. In order to record and monitor complaints activity, the Complaints Department is required to maintain a database of complaints and provide regular reports to the Complaints Forum, Directorates and other relevant Committees. These reports highlight themes and trends across the Trust to ensure learning takes place.

The Complaints Department also provides information on lessons learned as a standing item for the Share to Learn Quality and Safety Newsletter.

The Trust continues to provide a monthly monitoring return to the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) regarding lessons learned from all complaints closed within each month.

## Lessons Learned & Service 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 changes and improvements made.

Complaints are discussed with staff concerned and often the issues are brought to staff meetings for discussion as to how services can be improved.

In 2017/18, as a result of complaints received and investigated, a number of service improvements/learning has been implemented across the Trust such as:

### Communication

Issues raised in relation to communication continue to be prevalent throughout a number of wards and departments and continues to be a trend in relation to the number of complaints received. Following the investigation of a number of these complaints the following comments were captured as part of the learning:

- “staff will now ensure more detailed information is given to patients and families when waiting to be admitted and they will also be offered tea when waiting any length of time. Also raised awareness of the need to ensure staff are visible on the ward, particularly when the handover is taking place. There is a need to ensure better communication with patients and family members regarding their wait on the ward to be admitted”;
- “challenging and difficult conversations between the service user and members of the staff could be improved upon in order to ensure a positive impact on the relationship for all parties”;
- “Staff to take time to provide reassurance that patients are being listened to and staff need to ensure explanations are provided in full to the patients in order to help ease their anxieties and worries during the birthing process”

### Waiting Times

As a result of the increase in the number of such complaints in relation to increased waiting times, the Orthopaedic Department staff developed a leaflet to be given to patients when added to the waiting list. In addition, information regarding current longest waits was made available on the Trust’s website.

### Infection Control

Following a complaint in which concerns were raised regarding the fact there was no soap in the dispensers or hand sanitising gel available whilst attending Emergency Department, the Support Services Manager reminded domestic staff of the importance of infection control and essential hygiene provisions. The Team also introduced routine observational checks of toilet sanitary requisites in between the two hourly cleaning cycles in peak service times to reduce the risk of the situation recurring.

### Learning from an Ombudsman Case

If a complainant is not happy with the Trust’s final response to their complaint they can request a further review by the Ombudsman. A complaint investigated during the year was in relation to the sharing of the Complainant’s information with her employer following a domestic incident involving her daughter.

The following learning was taken forward as a result of the Ombudsman’s recommendations by the Trust:

- Training has been provided to staff in conjunction with the Information Commissioners Office (ICO) on the implications of the ICO statutory data sharing code of practice.;
- Insights and lessons learned from this investigation in relation to record keeping and communication with service users was shared with all relevant staff .

## Plans for the incoming year–2018/19

Work is ongoing within Directorates to improve complaints handling which includes encouraging more meetings with complainants for complex complaints and training will also be arranged to support staff in investigating and responding to complaints.

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