

# Patient and client feedback - an overview



**2015-16**

# COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT

## 2015-16

LISTENING

LEARNING

IMPROVING

### Introduction

This report gives an overview of complaints and feedback received from Patients, their carers and family members by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust from 1st April 2015 to 31 March 2016.

The Trust provided treatment and care for a significant number of people during this year including **597,773** outpatient appointments; **62,804** day cases, **172,832** Emergency Department attendances, **6500** births, and **35,851** elective inpatient procedures.

The vast majority of these people had positive healthcare experiences, however, we are committed to listening to and learning from **all** of our patients and clients, particularly when the standard of our care has not been at an optimum level, so that we can continually improve the quality of our services.

*“All feedback, including complaints, offers valuable information which can lead to improvements...”*

*...there has to be the right organisational ethos to enable this to happen, so that patients, their friends or relatives, and the staff involved feel supported”*

*Putting Patients Back in the Picture (A Review of the NHS Hospitals Complaints System, 2013)*

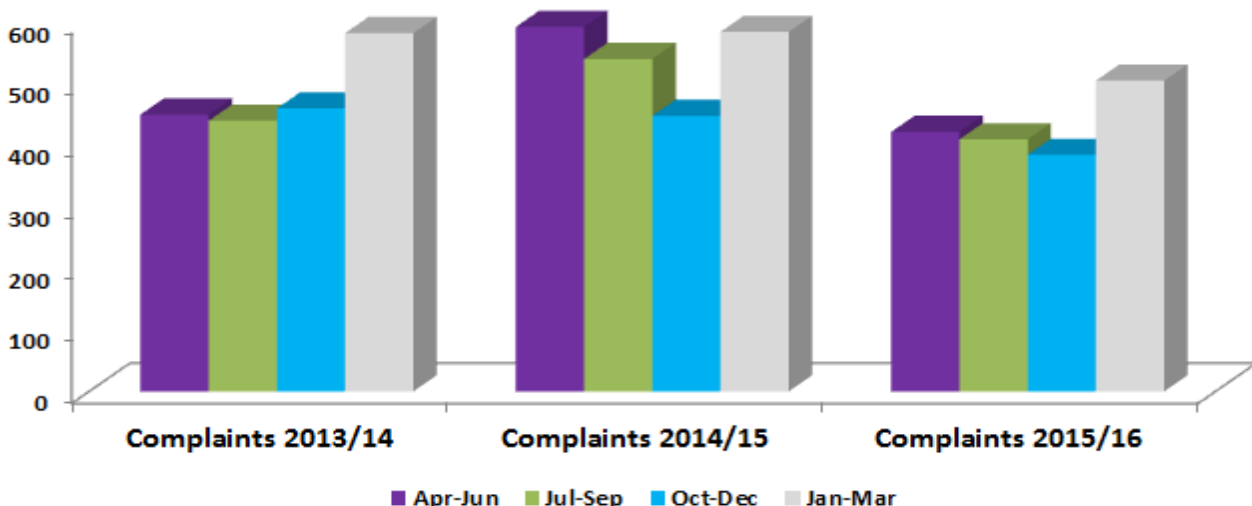
*“Complaints are to be viewed as a friend to the organisation and an opportunity to improve what you do and how you do it”*

*P Lotich*

The number of formal complaints received by the Trust has reduced by 21% in the last year to **1713**

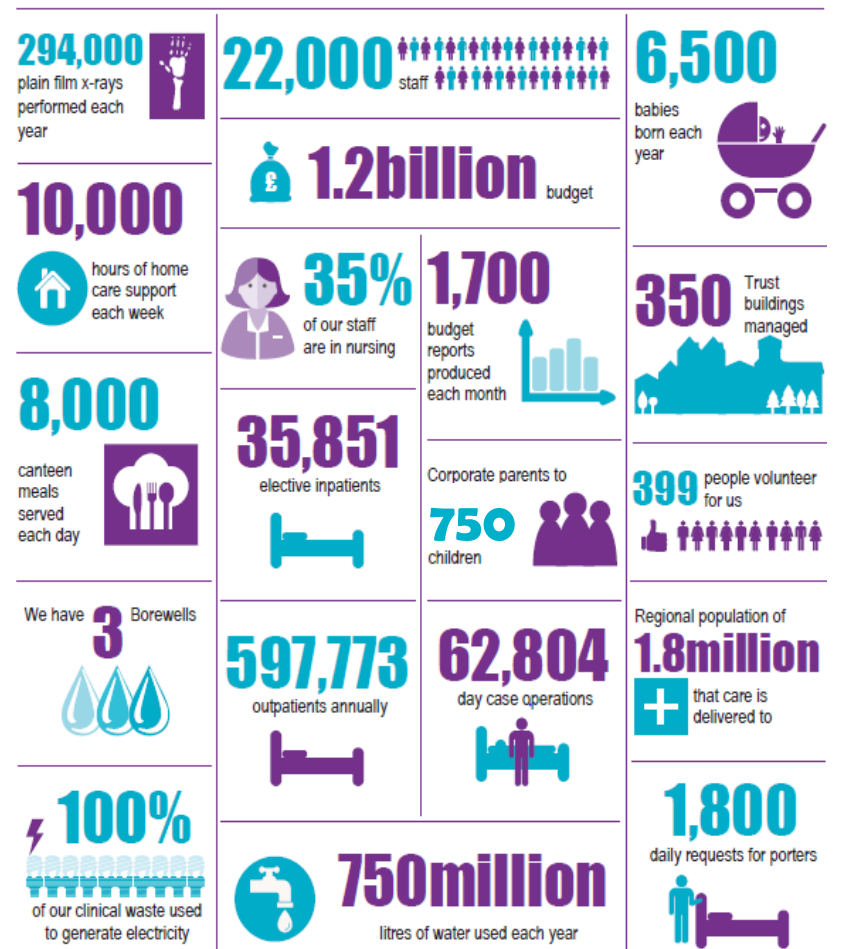
The number of general enquiries received during the year increased by 3% to **590**

### Formal Complaints received 2013 - 2016



# What we do

We are one of the largest NHS Trusts in the United Kingdom. Last year was another very busy period for our staff - delivering services and providing care for some 340,000 residents of Belfast and the Borough of Castlereagh, as well as delivering a variety of specialist services to the greater Northern Ireland population of 1.8 million.



**1,713** formal complaints

## How we listen

**IF YOU HAVE A COMPLAINT**

**ABOUT OUR SERVICES, WE WANT TO HEAR FROM YOU!**

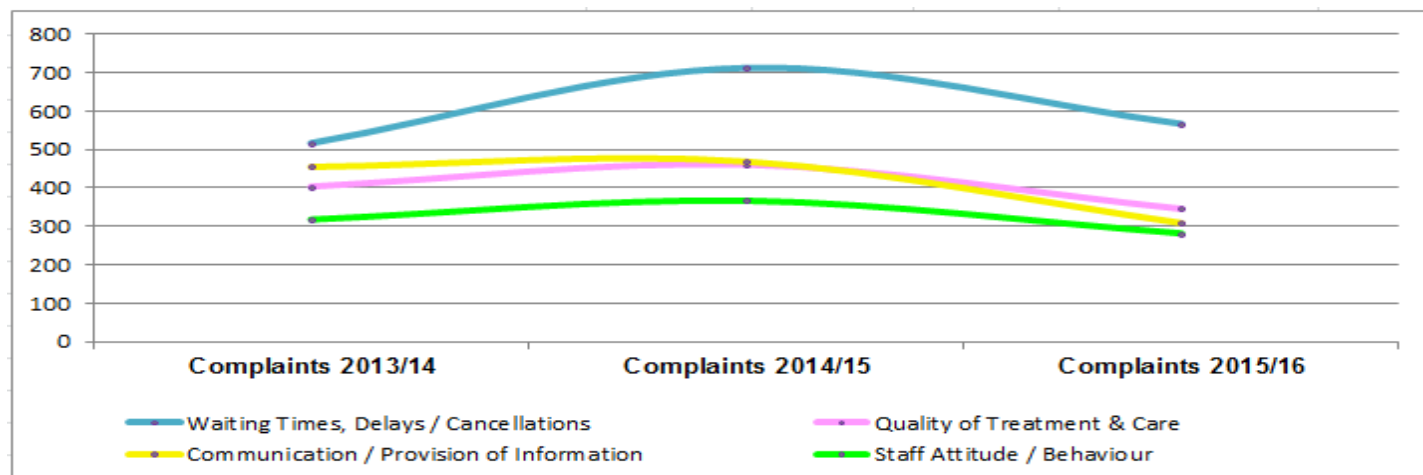
Anyone who uses any of our services can complain. You can also complain on someone else's behalf (you will generally need their written consent to do so).

Your complaint will be investigated thoroughly and confidentially. We aim to respond to your complaint in full within 20 working days, to address your concerns and let you know of any actions taken as a result.

Some complaints may however take longer to resolve than others. We will contact you to explain if this is the case with your complaint, and we will continue to keep in touch with you while we work to provide you with a response.

# What you said

The most frequent reasons for complaints about our services this year were - **length of wait** for treatment / appointments; **quality** of treatment & care; **communication**/provision of information; and staff **attitude**/behavior.



## How we learn

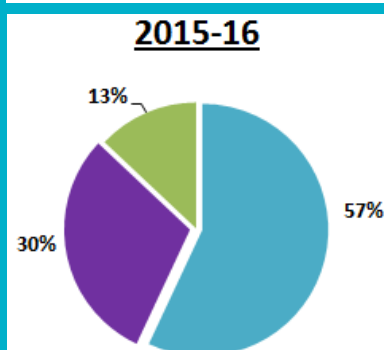
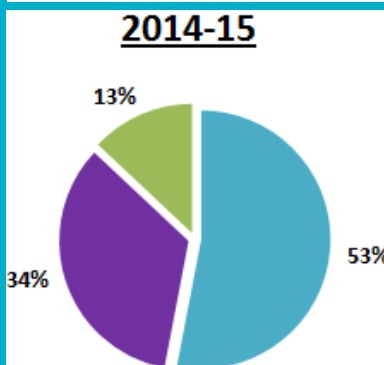
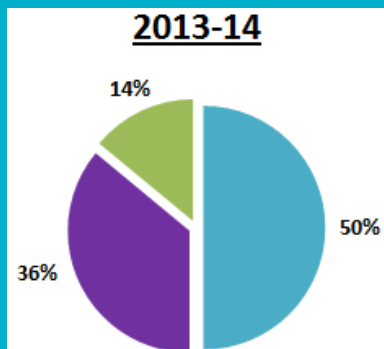
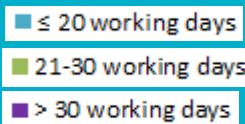
The Trust's response to feedback about our services is based on



principles of good complaint handling:

- Getting it right
- Being customer-focused
- Being open and accountable
- Acting fairly and proportionately
- Putting things right
- Seeking continuous improvement

## How we respond - timeliness\*



## How we improve

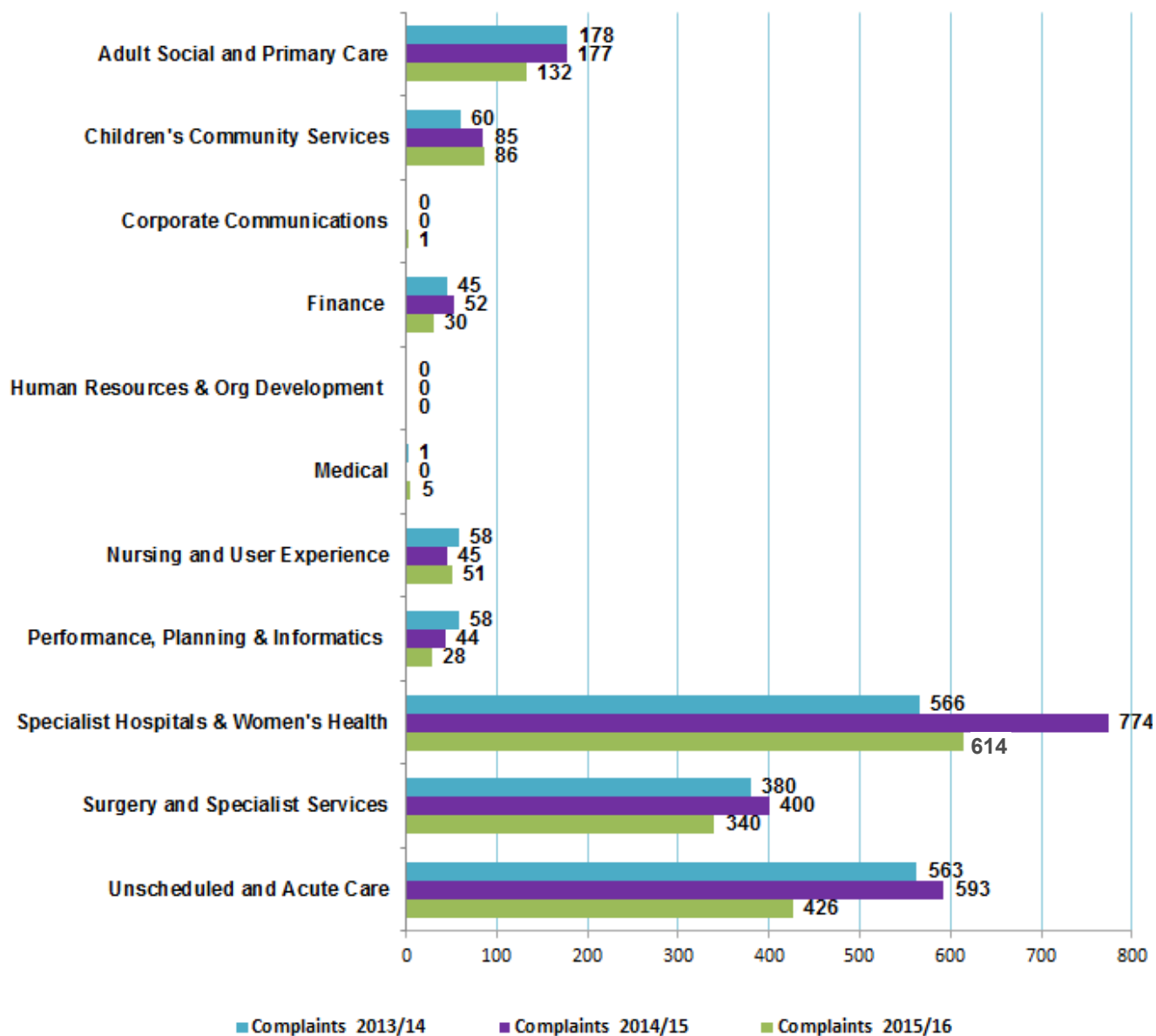
Information is produced by the Trust's Complaints Team throughout the year to inform others about issues identified in patient feedback:

- Trust **Governance Managers** receive regular reports for sharing and discussing with managers and staff in their local service areas.
- Our **Complaints Review Group** (whose membership includes Non-Executive Directors, Medical Director, patient / carer representative, and representatives from service areas) meets 4 times a year to review and monitor complaints and identify lessons / learning for sharing across the Trust and beyond.
- Complaints case studies are provided to the Trust's **Learning from Experience Steering Group** and provide assurance to the Trust Board that concerns and criticisms raised by patients are leading to changes in the way we deliver treatment and care.
- Internal **Performance Reports** are provided to our Trust Board 4 times a year. These reports include details of key themes in reasons for complaints; distribution of complaints across service areas and clinical specialties; and statistics about the timeframes within which our responses are provided.
- Monthly reports containing (anonymised) details of all Formal Complaints received by the Trust are shared with the **Health and Social Care Board** for reviewing and monitoring.
- "Complaint Subject and Programme of Care" data reports are provided 4 times a year to the **Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety** also for reviewing and monitoring.

*\*Although the Trust aims to respond to complaints within 20 working days, complex complaints (particularly those that involve a range of services / departments / organisations, or where independent expert opinions are sought) can require additional time to investigate. While we continue to seek improvement in the timeliness of our replies, we feel that this must not be at the cost of providing a **quality** response to complainants.*

# What you said - the detail

The services provided by Belfast Health and Social Care Trust are organised into 11 Directorates, each of which responds to Complaints received about the clinical specialties and departments within their remit. The graph below shows the distribution of **complaints across** these **Directorates** over the past 3 years.

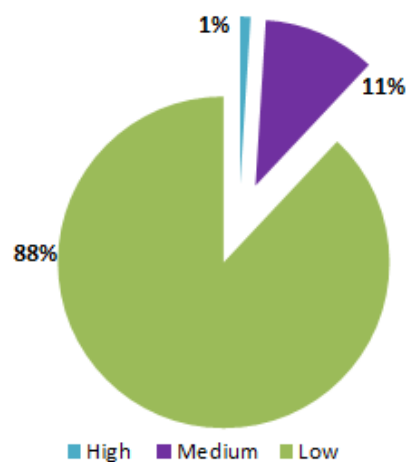


The numbers of complaints shown against each area are typically proportionate to the size, activity levels, and nature and complexity of the services provided, with the larger clinical Directorates receiving greater numbers of complaints than for example smaller Corporate functions.

All complaints received by the Trust are assessed against the Trust's risk evaluation matrix and are **graded** as either Low, Medium or High by the Complaints Team.

This grading determines the most appropriate action to be taken in response to the complaint, including the type of investigation to be undertaken, and notification of senior staff to the issues identified.

The chart opposite shows an overview of the complaints received during 2015-16 by their grade.

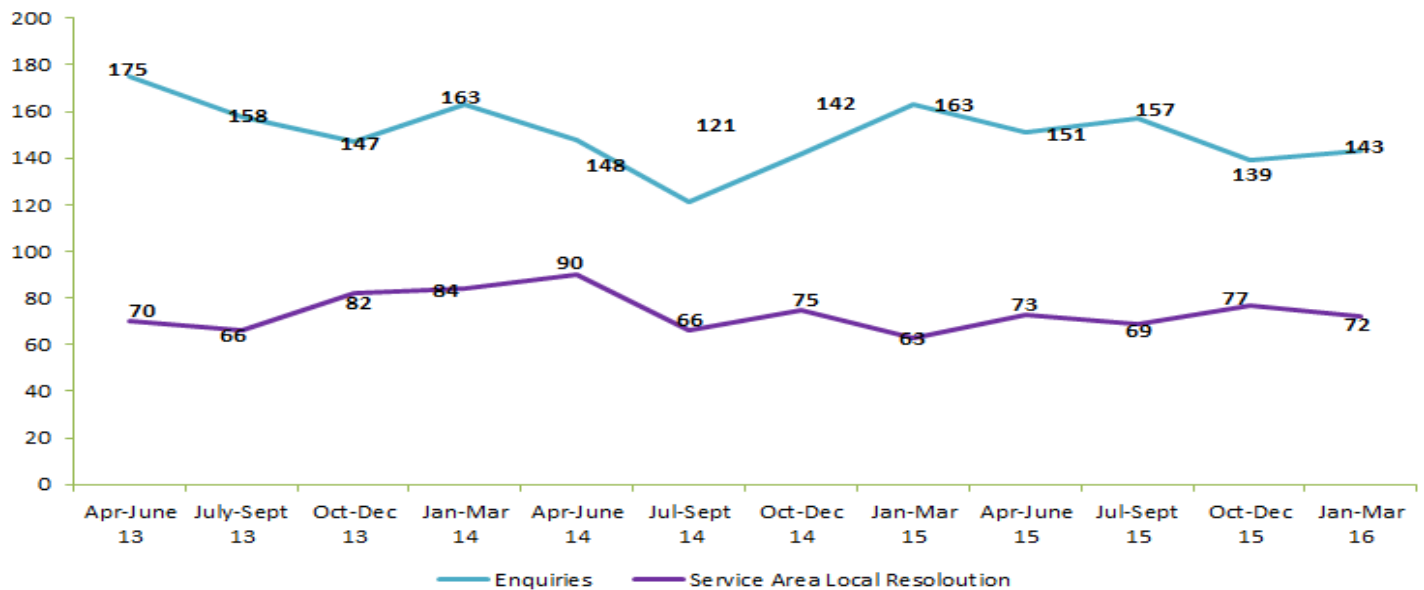


## General Enquiries & Local Resolutions

“General Enquiries” are mainly received by the Complaints Team via telephone. Queries and concerns raised in this way are not subject to the HSC Formal Complaint Procedure, and can generally be resolved relatively quickly. Examples include; enquiries about position on the waiting list, clients unable to contact specific wards/departments, or clients who request that their concerns are not raised as a formal complaint.

The Trust also continues to promote the resolving and recording of queries and concerns at service level e.g. in wards and departments. These cases are also monitored by the Complaints Team under a heading of “Local Resolution”.

Complaints Awareness Training is made available to all staff to encourage and facilitate the resolution of patients’ concerns at this local level. However all service users may subsequently request that their concerns are further investigated formally under the HSC Complaints Procedure.



## Ombudsman Cases

When patients are not fully satisfied with the outcome from the Trust’s investigation into their complaint they can raise their concerns with the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Complaints (also known as the Ombudsman).

During 2015-16, eight new cases were opened by the Ombudsman regarding complaints previously raised with the Trust, and we continued to work with the Ombudsman on cases raised during previous years:

Breakdown of Ombudsman Cases	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16
Request for information / Consideration Stage	22	7	8
Proceed to Investigation	9	5	8
Not Upheld	4	1	2
Upheld / partially upheld	4	9	3
Transferred to Litigation	1	0	0
Referred for Independent Review	0	1	0



respect & dignity



openness & trust



leading edge



learning & development



accountability

## Compliments



The Complaints Team were formally notified of **5,665** compliments by wards and departments during 2015/16.

Compliments are always appreciated as they allow patients' positive experiences to be shared with our staff members, as well as identifying good working practices that can potentially be shared and expanded into other services.

Not all compliments given by patients are reported through to the Complaints Team to be included in the annual figures however, and so we continue to:

- encourage staff to report all compliments received
- encourage patients to forward all compliments to our dedicated inbox: [complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net)

## Improving how we Listen, Learn and Improve

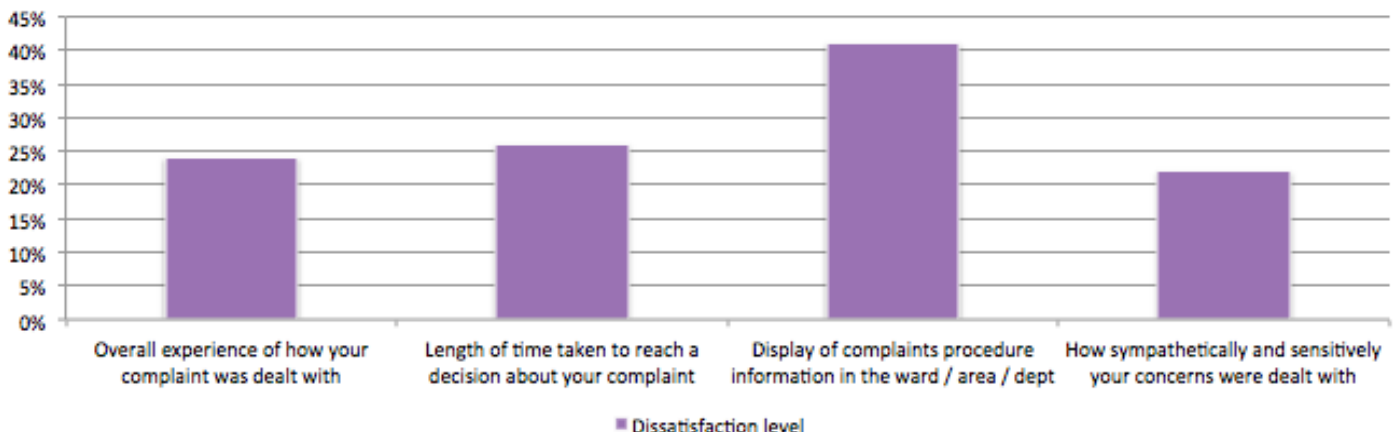
We continually work to make sure that where concerns or criticisms are raised by patients, these are dealt with in an effective way by the Trust. In particular we aim to ensure that:

- the process of making a complaint is **easy** for patients
- patients' issues are investigated in a **fair, thorough** and **timely** manner
- appropriate **actions** are taken to address the investigation findings in a way that fully resolves the matter for the complainant.

In order to assess how well our current Complaints procedures meet these aims, we undertook a **satisfaction survey** during 2015-16 where 100 people who had previously raised complaints with the Trust talked through their experiences with us.

We would like to thank all our patients and their relatives who gave up their time to help us with this important work to identify how we can improve our complaints service.

Although a lot of positive feedback was given, we want to improve our performance further and as such we have highlighted aspects of the complaints process where dissatisfaction was found to be above 20%:



Work will be undertaken during 2016-17 to address these areas, and a further survey will subsequently be carried out to re-assess satisfaction levels.

# Learning from Complaints

The Trust continues to investigate complaints in an open and transparent way, and we consider complaints to be an important source of learning. Discussing and sharing the outcome of complaints investigations is one of the ways we improve the experience of people using our services, and ultimately the safety and quality of the treatment and care we provide.

Below are some examples of how learning from complaints has changed working practices in the Trust during 2015-16, reducing the likelihood of recurrence, and improving patient experience.

## Summary of Event

*A number of complaints were received in relation to changes to staff providing services to older people at home. The service was undergoing modernisation and this included changes in staff rotas and allocation.*

*Following these changes, service users were not receiving home visits as per their care plans, and were also upset about changes in personnel who visited them.*

*The Service area was not prepared for the impact this would have on the clients receiving the service.*

## Learning Points

- *Better preparedness when changing services so that the impact to service users is minimal.*
- *Communicate with all service users well in advance of changes to prepare them for what it will mean for services to them.*
- *Inform families of changes in a timely manner.*

## Summary of Event

*A 69 year old man was noted to have a low magnesium following complex surgery.*

*Following this, IV magnesium was prescribed and recorded both in the clinical notes and on the fluid balance chart but was not documented on the HSC Medicine Prescription and Administration Record (commonly known as the Kardex).*

*The patient did not receive the magnesium that day nor the following day. Two days later when the gentleman became unwell this was detected. Magnesium was then prescribed and given.*

## Learning Points

- **All** medicines must be prescribed on the Kardex.
- *Where intravenous infusions containing medicines are prescribed on the fluid prescription and balance chart, they must be referenced on the injectable section of the Kardex with the instruction 'see fluid prescription'. Dose and frequency are not documented on the Kardex in this instance but are included on the fluid prescription and balance chart.*
- *The availability of further information on ['How to prescribe intravenous medicine infusions'](#) was also highlighted.*

## What we will be doing in 2016-17

- Learning from Complaints remains a high priority for the Trust and so we will continue in 2016-17 to review and improve how we share and respond to lessons identified by your concerns and feedback.

We will continue to work with our colleagues across the other Northern Ireland Health and Social Care Trusts to develop our use of complaints data and enable improved complaints trends analysis across the region.

- We value all feedback provided to us about how we handle your complaints. As such, a programme of work will be undertaken in 2016-17 to take forward actions identified by some important studies of our working practices during 2015-16:
  - ◇ Complaints Service Satisfaction Survey
  - ◇ Audit of re-visited / re-opened complaints
  - ◇ Internal audit of Complaints management processes
- Staff across all of our wards / departments / hospitals have an important role to play in assisting our patients and their families with any concerns or queries they may have. To help our staff undertake this role, we are updating our Trust Policy for the Management of Complaints. An E- Learning package will also be made available to ensure awareness of complaints processes and to equip staff with the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to any concerns and criticisms raised.

- We recognise that highlighting difficulties or issues following the loss of a loved one can be exceptionally difficult for families and we are keen to provide all the support that we can to make this process easier.

As such, the Complaints Team and Service Areas will continue to work with the Trust's Bereavement Co-ordinator to improve the experience of the complaints process for bereaved families when concerns have been raised regarding any aspect of care.

- We continually strive to ensure that our complaints systems are working effectively. Development of the IT system for processing complaints will continue in 2016-17. This work will enhance and optimise our working practices, in particular by:
  - ◇ improving the efficiency of processes within the Complaints department
  - ◇ enabling managers in service areas to
    - directly view information related to complaints in their wards / departments
    - record any developments or actions taken in relation to their complaints
    - produce statistics and reports for their particular service areas.

## The Complaints Team can be contacted at:

Complaints Department  
Musgrave Park Hospital  
6th Floor McKinney House  
Stockman's Lane  
Belfast BT9 7JB

Tel: (028) 9504 8000

Email: [complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net](mailto:complaints@belfasttrust.hscni.net)