



# COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT

## 2011 — 2012

### FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the 3rd Complaints Annual Report for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust for the past year, 1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012.

Complaints and compliments remain an extremely valuable feedback to the Trust and its staff on the delivery of health care to patients and service users. It is very important that we continue to welcome and acknowledge both complaints and compliments and that we have processes in place to learn from them and apply that learning positively to improve the service we provide to people throughout NI.

I would take this opportunity to thank all those who took the time to contact us to enable us to address their concerns. May I also thank all staff who have spent time listening to and dealing with complaints whether raised formally or informally and for their approach and commitment to achieving a satisfactory outcome for the person complaining.



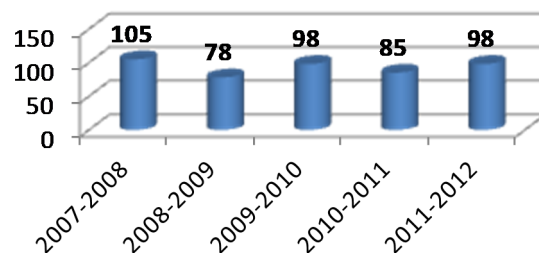
**Ms Roisin O'Hara**  
*Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services*

### Annual Comparison of Complaints

During 2011/12 NIAS received **98** complaints, a slight increase on the previous year's total of 85. In the same period we received **145** compliments, an increase of 33 on the previous year.

This year NIAS received an average of 389 emergency 999 calls per day. During the year we transported 351,997 patients – equivalent to one person in five of the population of Northern Ireland. The number of complaints received represents 0.02% of patient interaction by our staff.

#### Number of Formal Complaints



## What our service users complained about

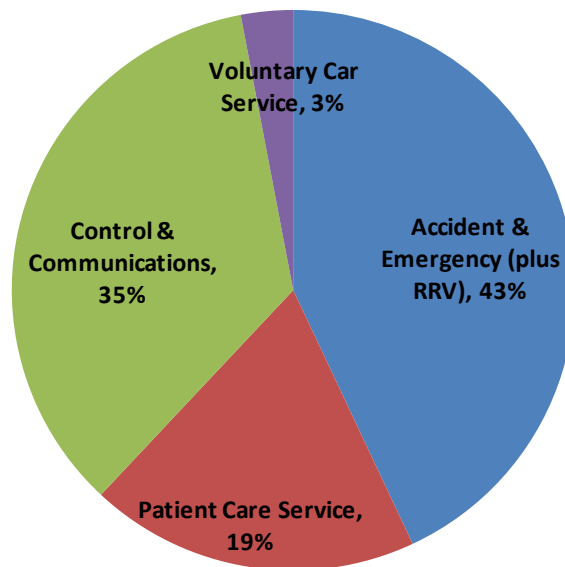
Subject	Count	Percentage

The majority of all formal complaints received (40%) relate to a delay or no arrival of an ambulance. 38% of the complaints received related to the behaviour or attitude of staff. 17% of complaints related to care or treatment provided. The remaining 5% of complaints received related to driving of ambulance vehicles.

## Area of Complaints

Of the 98 formal complaints received by the Trust 43% (42) related to the Accident & Emergency Service. 19% (19) of the complaints concerned the non-emergency Patient Care Service. 35% (34) of complaints received related to Ambulance Control, while 3% (3) of complaints concerned the Voluntary Car Service.

Area of Complaints Received



## RESPONSE TIMES TO COMPLAINTS

Of the 98 complaints received 98% of the total complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days.

35% of the complaints received were fully responded to within 20 working days, an increase of 20% on the previous year. The main reason for the delay in responding to complaints is the competing priorities of the Investigating Officers who are also frontline Managers with responsibility to ensure service delivery is maintained on a 24/7 basis. This year the Trust has revised its complaint handling processes to help improve the timeliness of responses to complainants and investigating Officers received training in undertaking complaints investigations.



## Learning from Complaints

Monitoring

Reporting

Learning

We welcome complaints and the opportunities they provide us with to learn lessons and improve our services. Complaints are discussed with the staff concerned to review how our services can be improved.

The outcomes and recommendations from complaints are reviewed by the Executive Directors on a quarterly basis to identify learning and to introduce service improvements.

A number of improvements have been put in place over the year following complaints being received. Here are some examples:

- Review of the management of Doctors Urgent Calls within Ambulance Control to improve ambulance response times for non-life threatening calls.
- Audit of ambulance vehicles undertaken to ensure toileting equipment is available for patients during transfers.
- Review of travel arrangements for Renal patients in Northern HSC Trust Area to help reduce delays in transport.
- Review of staffing levels of non-emergency Patient Care Service on Bank Holidays within Southern Ambulance Area.
- Revision of training to staff regarding communicating with patients to provide clear guidelines on introductions on first contact with patients/service users.

## COMPLIMENTS

While we accept that sometimes things go wrong, numerous letters of appreciation and expressions of thanks are received to acknowledge the excellent services provided to patients by our staff. Our staff certainly appreciate knowing when things go well. In the last year NIAS received 145 compliments, an increase of 33 on the previous year.

Here are some examples of the compliments received during the year:

*“On behalf of all our family it is belatedly that I write to say a very big thank-you to your paramedic team. When I had reason to call for an ambulance the relief I felt on seeing the lights of the paramedic car which had been only 3 minutes away was beyond price. The paramedic was definitely our “Hovering Angel” on that day and took a very professional and reassuring command of our extremely stressful situation. Thank you and God Bless you all.”*

*“To the ambulance crew who saved my life a very very belated thank you for all you did for me and your expertise and kindness.”*

*“I would like to write a letter of appreciation in relation to the service provided by your Control office and your ambulance crew. The Control operator gave me immediate advice as to what action to take and stayed on the line with me until the crew arrived within 3-4 minutes. The crew took immediate control and were confident and professional. They kept me informed at all stages. There is no doubt in my mind that if it had not been for their professionalism the patient could have died. I would appreciate if you could pass on our sincere thanks to all concerned and this letter also passed to their superiors.!”*

*“Please pass on the enclosed note to the ambulance crew who attended a member of my family. The crew were very good and were extremely supportive. We appreciated their expertise and compassion at such a difficult time. Your service is very fortunate to have such committed staff. Their job is certainly not easy.”*

*“I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the paramedics who saved my son’s life. I will be forever indebted to them.”*

*“On behalf of my family I wish to express our very sincere appreciation for all that the Ambulance Crew did. They were very professional and sympathetic in all that they did and this was greatly appreciated by all of the family. Words will never be enough to express just how much we appreciate all that you did. Thank you again.”*

*“I write this letter to praise and express deep gratitude to the Ambulance Crew to tended our daughter. They saved her life. Your staff behaved in the most wonderful and professional manner from beginning to end. They showed such compassion. This family could never repay the debt to you.”*

