



COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT

2012 — 2013

FOREWORD

I am pleased to present the forth Complaints Annual Report for the Northern Ireland Ambulance Service Health & Social Care Trust for the past year, 1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013.

Complaints and compliments continue to be 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 again 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.

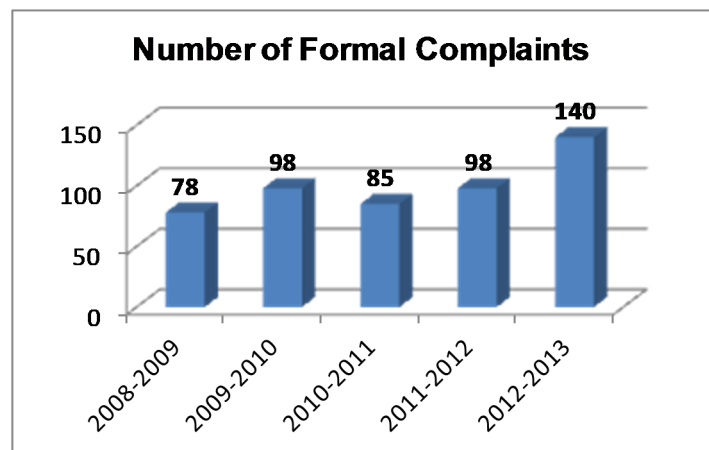


Ms Roisin O'Hara
Director of Human Resources & Corporate Services

Annual Comparison of Complaints

During 2012/13 NIAS received **140** complaints, an increase on the previous year's total of 98. In the same period we received **162** compliments, an increase of 17 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.



What our service users complained about

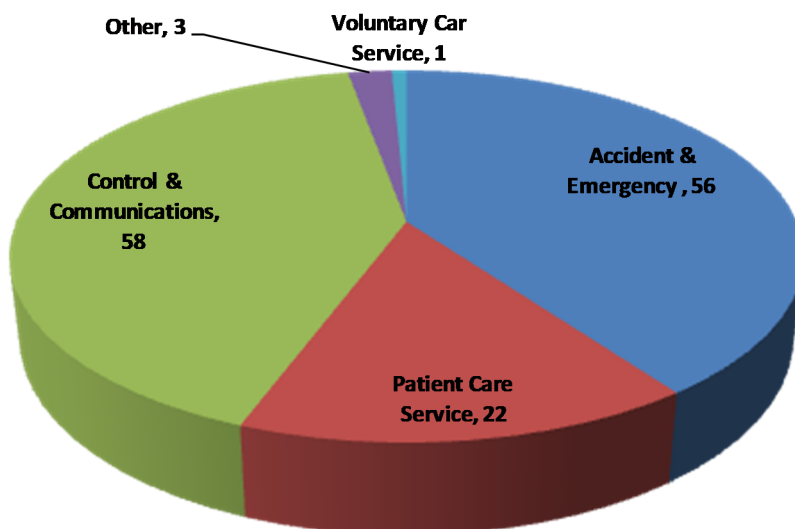
Subject	Count	Percentage

The majority of all formal complaints received (51%) relate to a delay or no arrival of an ambulance. 31% of the complaints received related to the behaviour or attitude of staff. 10% of complaints related to concerns about the clinical care and treatment provide by ambulance staff. 2% of complaints were made relating to the suitability of the ambulance vehicle.

Area of Complaints

Of the 140 formal complaints received by the Trust 41% (58) related to the Ambulance Control (Emergency & Non-Emergency Ambulance Control. 40% (56) of complaints related to the frontline Accident & Emergency Service. 16% (22) of complaints concerned the non-emergency Patient Care Service, while the remainder of complaints concerned the Voluntary Car Service and support services.

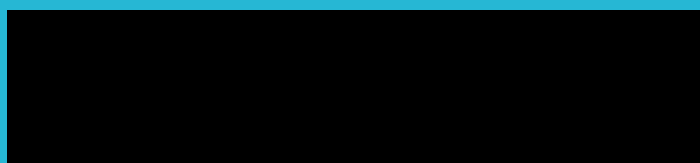
Breakdown by Area of Complaint



RESPONSE TIMES TO COMPLAINTS

Of the 140 complaints received 98% of the total complaints received were acknowledged within 2 working days.

30% of the complaints received were fully responded to within 20 working days, a slight decrease 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. The Trust is committed to improving the responsiveness of its complaint handling processes and will seek to improve the response times for complaints in the coming year.



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 carriage of walking aids and personal belongings during non-emergency transfers
- Update and upgrade of software for Satellite Navigation System
- Airport Security Protocols reissued to staff to minimise delays at security checkpoints
- Patient Care Service vehicle suspension to be monitored and manufacturer notified of complaints and to provide redress
- Non-Emergency Ambulance Control Staff reminded of the need for accurate recording of information onto the Ambulance Control dispatch system
- Senior Management in Emergency Ambulance Control to review of cover arrangements during staff breaks to ensure adequate cover
- Ongoing review of the management of GP Urgent Calls
- Training plan for all operational frontline staff amended to include training on dealing with patients with mental health concerns

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 162 compliments, an increase of 17 on the previous year.

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

- *The paramedics went far beyond the call of duty and although delivering me to hospital was the last call of their shift they waited for me to be seen and brought me back home. What a wonderful gesture!*
- *Thank you for your skill and compassion that you showed whilst treating my Father and the kindness shown to us, his family. Sadly my father passed peacefully. We took great comfort in knowing that Dad's life was in your skilful hands. You are a credit to the medical profession and as a family we thank you again.*
- *I am writing to commend to you the actions of your staff involved in providing assistance to me for a hypoglycaemic episode at my home. The 999 call was made by my wife who has spoken very highly of the re-assuring manner of your operator who remained on the line with her until the ambulance arrived*
- *My husband suffered a heart attack. I spoke to a lady who was fantastic in her approach and at putting me at my ease. The ambulance crew arrived promptly and were the best you could get. They helped my husband so much and had him taken to hospital. He remains under the care of the Coronary Care Unit.*
- *The paramedics were wonderful, they dealt with my husband so professionally putting, my daughter, son and I at ease. I wanted to write and praise them and say that your service is excellent and we as a family appreciated it so much.*
- *A note of thanks and appreciation to the staff at Ambulance Control and the A&E crew who attended to me when I had taken an anaphylactic reaction to prescribed medication.*
- *I believe the paramedics that attended to my brother in law saved his life and I would like to pass on my thanks as they did a great job.*
- *On behalf of my family I would be indebted if you pass on our genuine and profound gratitude to the two members of your ambulance staff who attended my home and conveyed me to Hospital. They were professional, efficient and caring throughout. As an organisation the NIAS should be extremely proud of these two individuals. As long as these two individuals are within your employment the highest standards of excellence will prevail and our community will be better served.*

