

Patient and Client Council

Annual Complaints Report 2015/16

Summary Report - September 2016

Introduction

The Patient and Client Council (PCC) Complaints Support Service (CSS) provides assistance to anyone in Northern Ireland who wishes to raise a complaint or concern about any Health and Social Care (HSC) service. It is independent of any HSC organisation that provides services in Northern Ireland about which a complaint might be made. The service is confidential and staffed by a team of Complaints Support Officers.

Complaint Support Service Activity

2,597 
new contacts to the PCC CSS in 2015/16

Complaints Cases

907 CSS provided specific help or advocacy

Helpline Queries

1,045 Advice and information provided

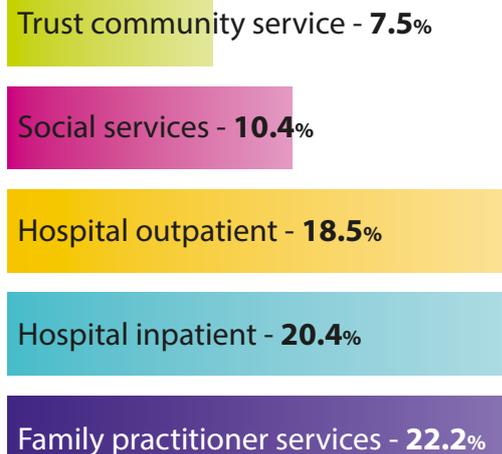
Downloads of CSS self-help pack

645 'How can we help? - Your guide to making a complaint'

What do people complain about?

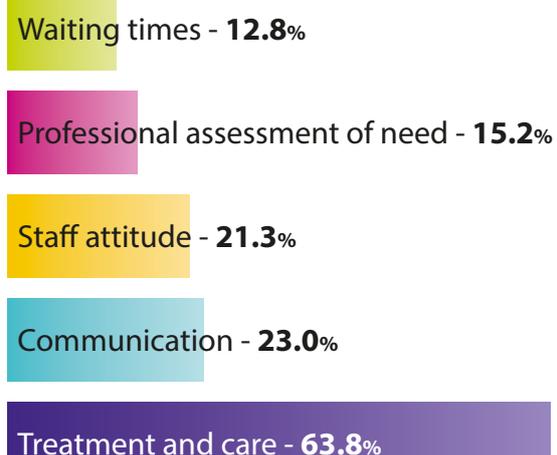
Over the past three years the six top service areas about which people complain have remained the same. However, in 2015/16 the CSS has seen a shift in the area of service attracting most complaints from 'hospital inpatient' to 'family practitioner services'. In 2015/2016 we saw a decrease in the percentage of complaints related to 'Trust community services'; and an increase in the percentage of complaints related to 'social services' moving it from being ranked 6th to the 4th most common issue which clients were contacting the CSS about (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Complaints by area of service 2015/16 - Top 5



Many complaints are complex with several different issues identified within each individual complaint. Figure 2 shows the main issues raised by people calling us in order of the frequency with which they are raised. The persistence of the themes of 'treatment and care', 'communication', 'staff attitude' and 'waiting times' as the primary causes of complaints is evident from our work in the last three years where these categories of complaint have not shifted or changed in any meaningful sense.

Figure 2: Nature of complaints 2015/16 - Top 5



Outcomes for clients

Most people who make a complaint want an apology, an explanation and an assurance of change where change is needed so that other patients have a better experience.

Of the 666 cases completed by the CSS in 2015/16, 29.7% of outcomes identified for clients were positive. It is the nature of our service that we do not know in all cases whether our client proceeded to make a complaint and what the outcome of that was. Positive outcomes that were recorded included: an apology or explanation; the re-establishment of good communication between the client and the provider; and retraining of staff around maintaining standards. A number of our clients had their treatment and care reviewed including securing new appointments.

Complaints can lead to changes in services and practices. This year such changes included: the threshold for referral to a consultant; introduction of named consultants on wards to answer questions from families; changes to answering systems for people seeking urgent assistance with community based care; and improved protocols for co-ordinating such care.

Service user evaluation

A total of 58 service user evaluations of the PCC CSS were undertaken in the year 2015/16. 84% of people who completed a service user evaluation rated the overall service they received as good or excellent.

Key messages

The PCC will use its CSS Annual report to:

- ▶ Promote learning from complaints
- ▶ Promote openness and timeliness in responding to complaints
- ▶ Ensure that the CSS continues to develop in response to the needs of clients

Promote learning from complaints

The PCC uses the evidence of patient and carer experience from its complaints support work to inform its priorities for engaging with HSC Trusts and others to promote service improvements based on patient experience. Key priorities emerging from our work with our clients this year are:

- ▶ Information for patients on waiting lists
- ▶ Support for families and carers when their loved one dies in hospital
- ▶ Managing discharges from hospitals to communities
- ▶ Understanding the role of social workers

Communication and information – particularly for carers and families - are a common theme of many of these complaints. The PCC will work with HSC Trusts and others to seek improvements based on the experiences of the people who contact us for help.

Promote openness and timeliness in responding to complaints

The PCC has in 2015/2016 worked to review and re-establish its links with HSC Trusts and others as they work to keep under review their management and learning from complaints. This work will include regular discussion with HSC Trusts and others on responding effectively to complaints.

Ensure the CSS continues to develop in response to the needs of clients

The PCC will continue to invest in its CSS and in the training and development of its officers to respond effectively to clients. This work will prioritise an increasingly pro-active approach to clients as requested by client feedback as well as work to ensure the service is effectively advertised and promoted to all who might benefit from it.

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