



**University Hospitals Bristol**  
NHS Foundation Trust

# **ANNUAL COMPLAINTS REPORT 2018/2019**

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## Executive Summary

In accordance with NHS Complaints Regulations (2009), this report sets out a detailed analysis of the number and nature of complaints received by University Hospitals Bristol NHS Foundation Trust (UH Bristol) in 2018/19. The report also records other support provided by the Trust's Patient Support and Complaints Team<sup>1</sup> during the year.

In summary:

- 1,845 complaints were received by the Trust in the year 2018/19, averaging 154 per month. Of these, 702 were managed via the formal investigation process and 1,143 through the informal investigation process. This compares with a total of 1,817 complaints received in 2017/18, an increase of 1.5%.
- In addition, the Patient Support and Complaints Team dealt with 965 other enquiries, including compliments, requests for support and requests for information and advice; this represents a 37.7% increase on the 701 enquiries dealt with in 2017/18. The team also received and recorded an additional 618 enquiries which did not proceed after being recorded. In total, the team received 3,428 separate enquiries into the service in 2018/19; an increase of 9.8% on the previous year.
- In 2018/19, the Trust had 31 complaints referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), representing a significant 182% increase on the number of cases referred the previous year. During the same period, a total of 22 cases were closed by the PHSO. Of these 22 cases, one was upheld, two were partly upheld, four were not upheld and 15 fell into a new category designated by the PHSO whereby they carried out an initial review but then decided not to investigate and closed their file, citing 'no further action'. At the end of the year 2018/19, four cases were still under investigation by the PHSO, in addition to the 31 new cases reported above.
- 779 complaints were responded to via the formal complaints process in 2018/19 and 87.0% of these (678) were responded to within the agreed timescale. This is an improvement on the 83.0% achieved in 2017/18, although still does not meet the Trust target of 95%. A total of 974 complaints were responded to in 2018/19 via the informal complaints process and 83.5% of these (813) were responded to within the agreed timescale.
- At the end of the reporting year, 9.5% of complainants had expressed dissatisfaction with the formal response they had received. This compares with 9.7% in 2017/18 and 11.8% in 2016/17. A concerted effort to improve performance against this metric, through delivery of training and review of the dissatisfied cases received, has resulted in an improvement in performance against this metric, particularly towards the end of the year.

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<sup>1</sup> i.e. UH Bristol's integrated 'PALS' and complaints team

## **1. Accountability for complaints management**

The Board of Directors has corporate responsibility for the quality of care and the management and monitoring of complaints. The Chief Executive delegates responsibility for the management of complaints to the Chief Nurse.

The Trust's Patient Support and Complaints Manager is responsible for ensuring that:

- All complaints are fully investigated in a manner appropriate to the seriousness and complexity of the complaint, in line with the complainant's wishes;
- All formal complaints receive a comprehensive written response from the Chief Executive or his nominated deputy, or a local resolution meeting with a senior clinician and senior member of the divisional management team;
- Complaints are resolved within the timescale agreed with each complainant at a local level wherever possible;
- Where a timescale cannot be met, an explanation is provided and an extension agreed with the complainant; and
- When a complainant requests a review by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, all enquiries received from the Ombudsman's office are responded to in a prompt, co-operative and open manner.

The Patient Support and Complaints Manager line manages a team which consists of one full time Band 6 Deputy Manager, five part-time complaints officers/caseworkers (Band 5) and three part-time administrators (Band 3). The total team resource, including the manager, is currently 7.46 WTE.

## **2. Complaints reporting**

Each month, the Patient Support and Complaints Manager reports the following information to the Trust Board:

- Total number of complaints received
- Percentage of complaints responded to within the agreed timescale
- Percentage of cases where the complainant is dissatisfied with the original response

In addition, the following information is reported to the Patient Experience Group, which meets every three months:

- Validated complaints data for the Trust as a whole and also for each Division
- Quarterly Complaints Report, identifying themes and trends
- Annual Complaints Report (which is also received by the Board).

The Quarterly Complaints Report provides an overview of the numbers and types of complaints received, including any trends or themes that may have arisen, including analysis by Division and information about how the Trust is responding. The Quarterly Complaints Report is also reported to the Trust Board and published on the Trust's web site.

### 3. Total complaints received in 2018/2019

The total number of complaints received during the year was 1,845, and increase of 1.5% on the 1,817 complaints received the previous year. Of these, 702 (38%) were managed through the formal investigation process and 1,143 (62%) through the informal investigation process; this compares with 674 (37%) complaints managed formally in 2017/18 and 1,388 (63%) managed informally.

A formal complaint is classed as one where an investigation by the Division is required in order to respond to the complaint. A senior manager is appointed to carry out the investigation and gather statements from the appropriate staff. These statements are then used as the basis for either a written response to, or a meeting with, the complainant (or sometimes a telephone call from the manager). The method of feedback is agreed with the complainant and is their choice. The Trust’s target is that this process should take no more than 30 working days in total.

An informal complaint is one where the issues raised can usually be addressed quickly by means of an investigation by the divisional management team and a telephone call to the complainant. The Trust’s target is that this process should take no more than 10 working days in total.

Figure 1 provides a long-term view of complaints received per month that were dealt with via the formal investigation process compared to those dealt with via the informal investigation process, over the same period. The figures below do not include informal concerns which are dealt with directly by staff in our Divisions.

**Figure 1 – Numbers of formal v informal complaints**

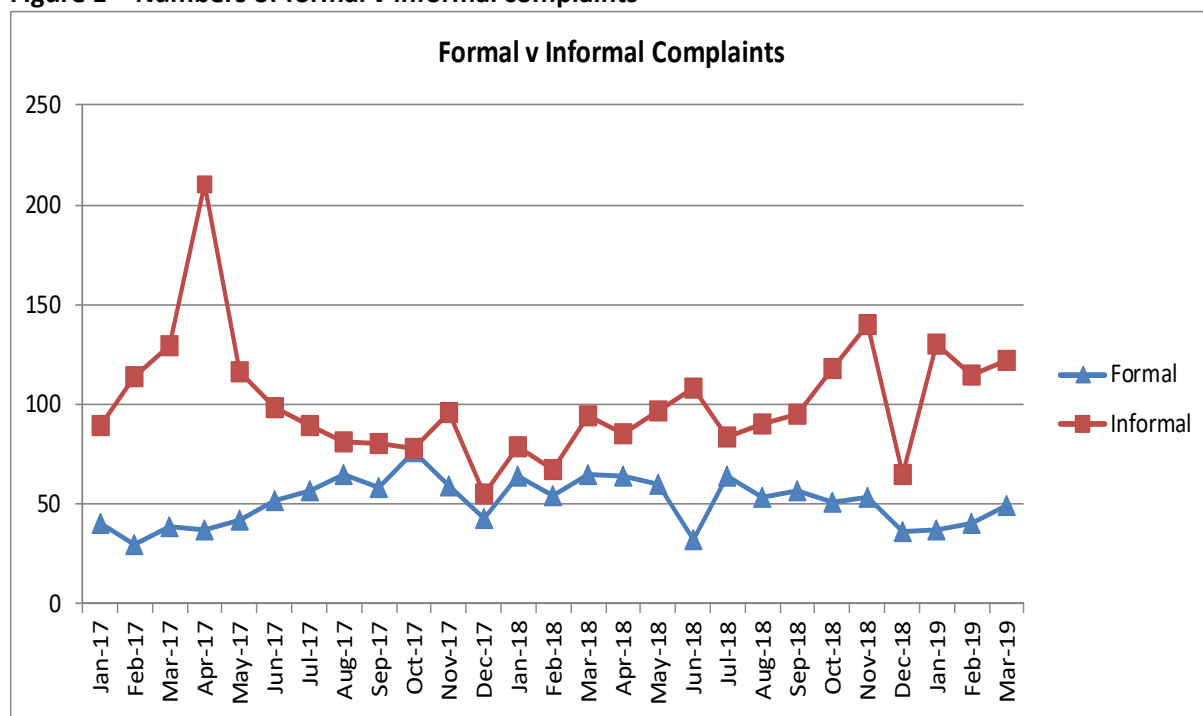


Table 1 below shows the number of complaints received by each of the Trust's divisions compared with the previous year. Directional arrows indicate change compared to the previous financial year.

**Table 1 - Breakdown of complaints by Division**

Division	Informal complaints 2018/19	Informal complaints 2017/2018	Formal complaints 2018/19	Formal complaints 2017/2018	Divisional total 2018/19	Divisional total 2017/18
Surgery	428 ↓	429 ↓	188 ↓	199 ↑	616 ↓	628 ↓
Medicine	258 ↑	203 ↓	128 ↓	202 ↑	386 ↓	405 ↓
Specialised Services	187 ↑	166 ↓	84 ↑	77 ↓	271 ↑	243 ↓
Women and Children	148 ↑	119 ↓	143	154 ↑	291 ↑	273 ↓
Diagnostics and Therapies	53 ↓	59 ↑	28 ↑	19 ↑	81 ↑	78 ↑
Trust Services (including Facilities & Estates)	175 ↑	167 ↑	25 ↑	23 ↑	200 ↑	190 ↑
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1249 ↑</b>	<b>1143 ↓</b>	<b>596 ↓</b>	<b>674 ↑</b>	<b>1845 ↑</b>	<b>1817 ↓</b>

Table 1 shows an increase in informal complaints received by all Divisions, with the exception of the Divisions of Surgery and Diagnostics & Therapies, who both recorded slight decreases. The overall number of complaints managed via the formal complaint process decreased by 11.6% in 2018/19, whilst the number managed informally increased by 9.3%.

#### 4. Complaint themes

The Trust records all complaints under one or more of eight high-level reporting themes, depending upon the nature and complexity of the complaint. This data helps us to identify whether any trends or themes are developing when matched against hospital sites, departments, clinics and wards.

Table 2 and Figure 2 show complaints received in 2018/19 by theme, compared with 2017/18 and 2016/17.

**Table 2 - Complaint themes – Trust totals**

Complaint Theme	Total Complaints 2018/19	Total Complaints 2017/18	Total Complaints 2016/17
Access	11 ↓	12 ↓	16 ↓
Appointments and Admissions	571 ↑	519 ↓	589 ↓
Attitude and Communication	384 ↓	492 ↑	454 ↓
Clinical Care	519 ↑	491 ↑	490
Facilities and Environment	176 ↑	82 ↓	89 ↓
Discharge/Transfer/Transport	36 ↓	73 ↓	89 ↑
Documentation	41 ↑	31 ↑	12 ↑
Information and Support	107 ↓	116 ↓	136
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>1845 ↑</b>	<b>1817 ↓</b>	<b>1875 ↓</b>

In 2018/19, there were increases in five of the eight categories when compared with the previous year. The largest increase was in complaints categorised as 'facilities and environment'. The majority of complaints in this category were about parking problems at South Bristol Community Hospital. Action was taken to rectify these problems and complaints about this matter trailed off towards the end of the year.

There were notable reductions in the number of complaints received about ‘attitude and communication’ (a 22% reduction) and ‘discharge/transfer/transport’ (a 50% reduction).

## 5. Performance in responding to complaints

In addition to monitoring the volume of complaints received, the Trust also measures its performance in responding to complainants within agreed timescales, and the number of complainants who are dissatisfied with responses.

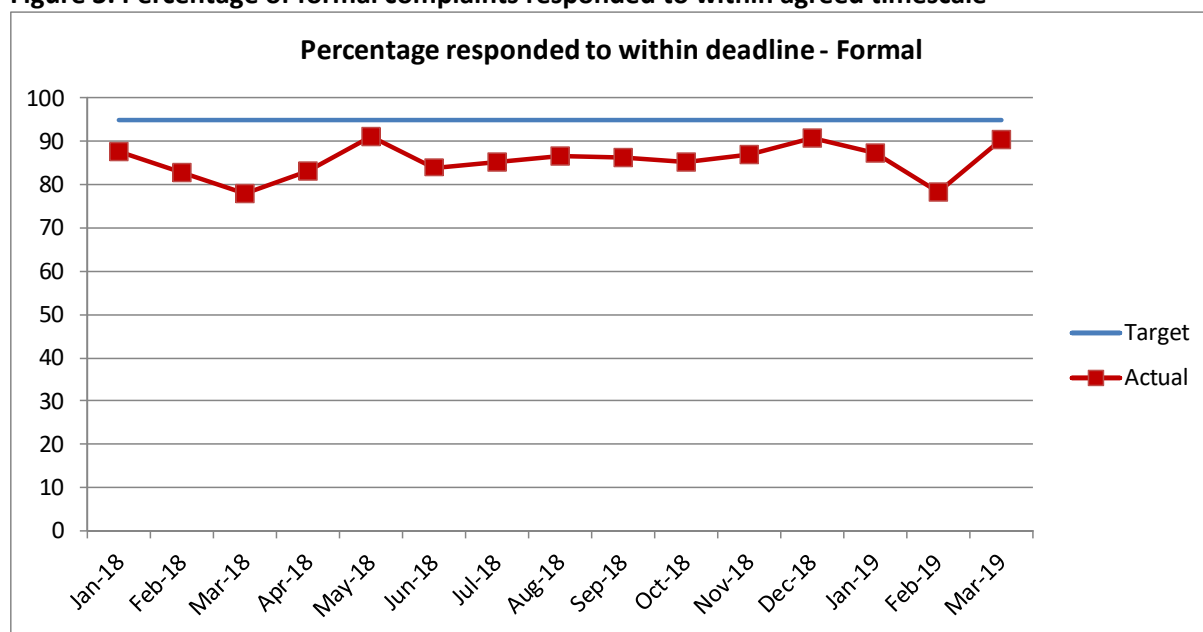
### 5.1 Percentage of complaints responded to within timescale

The Trust’s expectation is that all complaints will be acknowledged within two working days for telephone enquiries and within three working days for written enquiries. The complainant’s concerns are confirmed and the most appropriate way in which to address their complaint is agreed. A realistic timescale in which the complaint is to be resolved is agreed, based on the complexity of the complaint whilst responding in a timely manner. In 2018/19, 98.1% of complaints (1,810 of 1,845) were acknowledged within the agreed timescale.

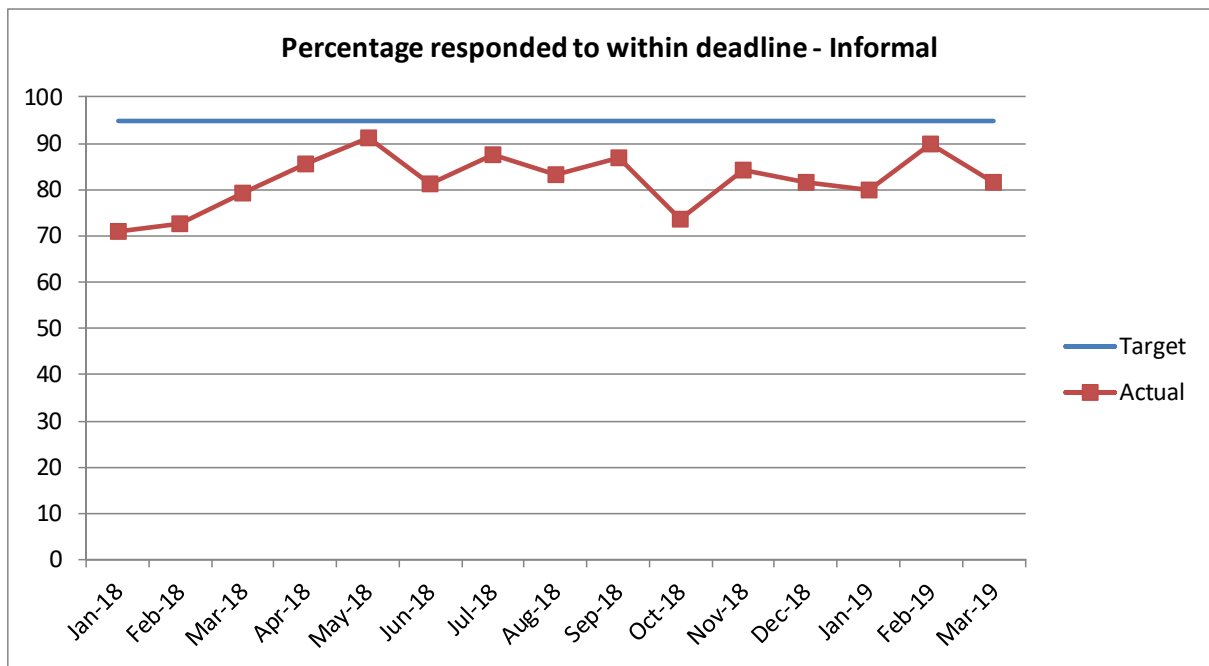
The Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009, together with guidance from the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, indicate that the Trust must investigate a complaint ‘in a manner appropriate to resolve it speedily and efficiently and keep the complainant informed.’ When a response is not possible within the agreed timescale, the Trust must inform the complainant of the reason for the delay and agree a new date by which the response will be sent.

The Trust captures data about the numbers of complaints responded to within the agreed timescale. The Trust’s performance target continues to be 95% compliance. Over the course of the year 2018/19, 87.0% of formal responses were responded to within the agreed timescale, an improvement on the 83.0% achieved in 2017/18 and 86.1% 2016/17. Of the 974 complaints responded to via the informal complaint process, 83.5% were responded to within the agreed timescale.

**Figure 3. Percentage of formal complaints responded to within agreed timescale**



**Figure 4. Percentage of informal complaints responded to within agreed timescale**



### 5.2 Numbers of complainants who are dissatisfied with our response

The Trust also measures performance in respect of the number of complainants who are dissatisfied with the response provided to their complaint due to the original investigation being incomplete or inaccurate (which we differentiate from follow-up enquiries where a complainant raises additional questions).

At the time of writing, 9.5% of complainants have expressed dissatisfaction with complaints responses sent out during 2018/19. This compares with 9.7% measured at the corresponding point in 2017/18 and 11.5% for 2016/17.

## 6. Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO)

If a complainant is unhappy with the way in which their complaint has been dealt with by the Trust and feels that local resolution of their complaint has not been satisfactory, they have the option of asking the PHSO to carry out an independent review of their complaint.

In 2018/19, the Trust had 31 complaints referred to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (PHSO), compared with 11 in 2017/18. During the same period, a total of 22 cases were closed by the PHSO. Of these 22 cases, one was upheld, two were partly upheld, four were not upheld and 15 fell into a new category designated by the PHSO whereby they carried out an initial review but then decided not to investigate and closed their file, citing 'no further action'. At the end of the year 2018/19, four cases were still under investigation by the PHSO, in addition to the 31 new cases reported above.

## 7. Information, advice and support

In addition to managing complaints, the Patient Support and Complaints Team also deal with information, advice and support requests. The total number of enquiries received during 2018/19 is shown below, together with figures from 2017/18 and 2016/17 for comparative purposes:



**Table 3:**

Type of enquiry	Total Number 2018/19	Total Number 2017/18	Total Number 2016/17
Request for advice / information/support	780	576	524
Compliments	185	125	290
<b>Total</b>	<b>965</b>	<b>701</b>	<b>814</b>

## 8. Looking back and ahead

UH Bristol continues to be proactive in its management of complaints and enquiries, recognising that the way we respond to concerns and complaints is part of our commitment to excellence in customer service and acknowledging that all complaints are a valuable source of learning.

In 2018/19, for example:

- Actions implemented as a result of complaints are now reported in the quarterly complaints reports under the heading of 'learning from complaints' for review Trustwide.
- Monthly reviews of dissatisfied complaints were carried out for each Division, by the Head of Quality (Patient Experience & Clinical Effectiveness) and Heads of Nursing in order to identify learning in respect of how formal written responses can be improved.
- Significant work was completed in the drafting of a Complaints Toolkit, jointly developed with the Patients Association. Roll out of a UH Bristol version will be completed in 2019/20.
- A system for the rapid response 'real time feedback' of complaints and enquiries has been successfully implemented with all enquiries received so far being either resolved or taken forward to the enquirer's satisfaction on the day of receipt.
- PSCT Manager and three PSCT Complaints Officers attended pilot sessions of Medical Mediation Foundation training with the Division of Children's Services. Division to provide feedback on training so that a decision can be made as to whether to roll out to all Divisions.
- Complaints training has been provided to a large number of staff across all Divisions in respect of handling complaints with confidence and investigating and responding to formal complaints.
- Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) have been updated in respect of extensions to complaint response deadlines and 'high risk' complaints that may require escalation to Executives.

Looking ahead to 2019/20, our focus will be on ensuring that we significantly improve performance in responding to complaints within the timescale agreed with complainants, reducing the number of complainants who are dissatisfied with our response to their concerns and sharing learning from complaints with staff Trustwide. We will also ensure that this learning is shared with the complainant who raises the issue, in order to reassure them that changes have been made as a result of their complaint.

Our detailed complaints work plan for 2019/20 is available upon request.