



Your Service
Your Say

Managing Feedback within the Health Services

Your Service Your Say 2023

Foreword

I am pleased to present the data on complaints received by the health services during 2023 and provide an update on the work of the National Complaints Governance and Learning Team (NCGLT).

The health services handled 14,819 complaints in 2023. This was a decrease of 7.5% from 2022 in the numbers of complaints recorded and examined by Complaints Officers in both the HSE statutory and funded health services. The health services responded to 72% of these complaints within the legislative timeframe of 30 working days, slightly below the national key performance indicator (KPI) of 75%. To drive change and improve learning, a new national key performance indicator was introduced in 2023 and looks at the percentage of Stage 2 formal complaints where an action plan is identified as necessary, is in place and progressing. For 2023, 76% of plans were in place and progressing, above the target of 65%.

The key categories of complaint remain to be *safe and effective care, communication and information*, and *access*, closely followed by *dignity and respect* and *accountability*.

The National Complaints Governance and Learning Team continued to support services and promote best practice in the area of feedback. NCGLT facilitated the quarterly Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum, a valuable platform for networking, knowledge development and shared learning for Complaints Managers who drive the feedback agenda at local level.

Casebooks, that highlight and share the learning from complaints and positive feedback, were again published quarterly throughout 2023 and presented 76 cases of complaints and compliments received by Hospitals, Community Healthcare Organisations and National Services.

NCGLT continued to expand and support the capture of complaints data on the Complaints Management System (CMS). The analysis of this data identifies trends and issues that inform and drive quality improvement and patient safety throughout the system.

Our operational services, the National Your Service Your Say Team and the Assessment of Need Disability Complaints Team continued to respond to queries and complaints submitted. Your Service Your Say experienced a 3% increase in activity in 2023 recording 26,129 interactions. Assessment of Need Disability complaints experienced the greatest increase in activity with complaints received jumping from 892 in 2022 to 1506 in 2023, a 69% increase.

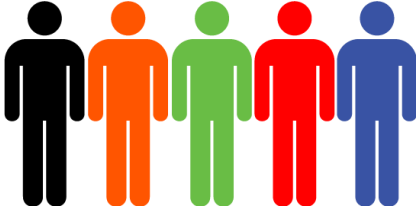


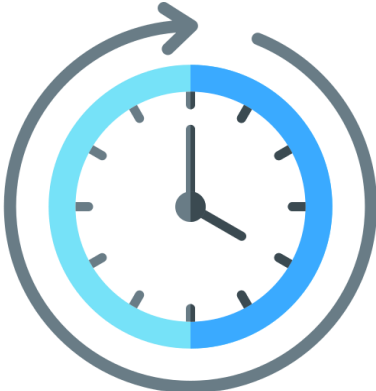
I acknowledge and appreciate the engagement and cooperation of the operational system to work with NCGLT to realise the potential that a positive feedback culture can deliver.

I hope that you, our patients and service users, are also encouraged and reassured of the HSE's commitment to listening and learning from your experience.



**Mr Christopher Rudland, Assistant National Director
National Complaints Governance and Learning Team**

2023... at a glance

<p>The health services received</p>  <p>14,819 new complaints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 14,819 Stage 2 complaints recorded and examined by Complaints Officers in both the HSE and Voluntary Health Services • 7.5% decrease in complaints compared with 2022
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 4,608 complaints to statutory services • 10,211 complaints to Voluntary Hospitals and Agencies 	
 <p>Causes for Complaints</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Safe and Effective Care • Communication & Information • Access • Dignity and Respect • Accountability
<p>The health services responded to 72% of complaints within 30 working days (KPI of 75%) with 76% of action plans in place and progressing (KPI of 65%)</p>	

- 7,067 staff completed HSeLand Effective Complaints Handling
- 965 staff completed HSeLand Effective Complaints Investigation
- 2,448 staff completed HSeLand YSYS Guidance for Clinical Staff
- NCGLT trained 102 CMS inputters
- NCGLT trained 39 Review Officers



National Your Service Your Say
Team

26,129
client interactions

1506

Assessment of Need Disability
Complaints received



Table of Contents

Foreword	Needs to be written	1
2023	... at a glance	2
1.0	Background	5
2.0	Complaints recorded in the Health Services 2023 (Community Services, Statutory Hospitals, Voluntary Hospitals and Voluntary Agencies)	6
2.1	Key Findings	7
2.2	Overall Findings	8
2.3	Key Performance Indicator (KPI)	9
2.4	Category of Complaint	10
2.5	Complaints Management System	12
3.0	The National Complaints Governance and Learning Team	14
3.1	Complaints Governance	15
3.2	Your Service Your Say Materials	20
3.3	Training	22
3.4	Audit	24
3.5	Healthcare Complaints Audit Tool (HCAT)	24
3.6	Learning from Individual Complaints: HSE Anonymised Feedback Learning Casebook	25
4.0	The National Complaints Governance and Learning Team: Operational Services	28
4.1	The National Your Service Your Say Office	29
4.2	Assessment of Need (AoN) Complaints - 2022	31
Appendices		35
	Appendix 1: Complaint Categories	35

2.0 Complaints recorded in the Health Services 2023 (Community Services, Statutory Hospitals, Voluntary Hospitals and Voluntary Agencies)

Learning from feedback is fundamental in providing high quality services. Listening to and acting on the views, concerns and experiences of patients, service users and their families enable us to provide the best possible care. The recording, analysing and reporting of such data across our health services will ensure feedback is integral to business improvement.

In 2023, there were 14,819 complaints received by the health services. Of these, 4,608 were recorded as received and examined by Complaint Officers in the Health Service Executive with 10,211 recorded and examined by Complaints Officers in Voluntary Hospitals and Agencies.

Under legislation and policy, Complaints Officers should attempt to complete formal investigations within 30 working days. For 2023, 72% of complaints were dealt with within 30 days or less. The HSE key performance indicator (KPI) target is 75%.

The main issues within complaints for 2023, as with past years, relate to *Safe and Effective Care, Communication and Information, Access, Dignity and Respect and Accountability*.

Compared with 2022, there was an overall decrease of 7.5% in complaints handled by Complaints Officers in the health services in 2023. Complaints recorded by HSE statutory hospitals decreased slightly by 2%. Complaints recorded for HSE Community Healthcare Organisations dropped significantly, by 17% as did complaints recorded by voluntary hospitals, who also recorded a decrease of 17%.

2.1 Key Findings

In 2023, the total number of complaints received by the health services was **14,819**¹ down 7.5% from 2022.



Health Service Executive (HSE)

Of these, **4,608** formal complaints were recorded as received and examined by Complaint Officers under the *Health Act 2004* (Part 9: Health Act, 2004, and Part 3: Disabilities Act, 2005) in the **Health Service Executive**.

- Of the total number of complaints recorded by HSE statutory services on the HSE’s Complaints Management System (CMS), **447 complaints** were excluded as they were either not subject to legislation, withdrawn by the service or were anonymous complaints.
- Of the remaining **4,161 complaints**, **2,526 (61%)** were investigated within the legislative timeframe of 30 working days.

¹ The data presented in this report is the data that has been collected from the Complaints Management System (CMS) as well as the individual service data spreadsheets and collated and analysed by the National Complaints Governance and Learning Team (NCGLT).

The Complaints Management System (CMS) is the national database management system developed to support the HSE’s complaints management process and to enable management and tracking of Stage 2 formal complaints as set out in the Your Service Your Say: The Management of Service User Feedback for comments, compliments and complaints Policy 2017. All statutory HSE services are mandated to use the CMS.

The voluntary hospitals and agencies’ data is taken from individual service data spreadsheets returned directly by the services to the NCGLT.

The data presented is a combination of both the CMS data returns and the data sheets.

Voluntary Hospitals and Agencies

Of the total complaints received by health services, there were **10, 211** formal complaints recorded and examined by Complaints Officers in **Voluntary Hospitals and Agencies**, a decrease of just over 9% from 2022.

- Of the total number of complaints received, **400** complaints were excluded, as they either were not subject to legislation, withdrawn by the service, or anonymous complaints.
- Of those 9,811 remaining complaints, **7,551 (77%)** were investigated within the legislative timeframe of 30 working days.

2.2 Overall Findings

Summary Table of Variance

Summary Table of Variance	2022	2023	% Change
HSE Statutory Hospitals	3,415	3,358	-2%
Voluntary Hospitals within Hospital Groups	7,300	6,068	-17%
HSE Community Healthcare Organisations	1,099	925	-16%
HSE National Ambulance Service	46	69	50%
Primary Care Reimbursement Service (PCRS)	250	239	-4%
National Screening Service (NSS)	0	0	0%
National Forensic Mental Health Service (NFMHS)	25	15	-40%
National Complaints Governance and Learning Team	1	0	100%
Other Voluntary Hospitals and Agencies	3,930	4,144	5%
Total	16,065	14,819	-8%

Table 1: Summary of % Variance of Complaints recorded 2022 to 2023

2.3 Key Performance Indicator (KPI)

NCGLT reports on two national KPI’s related to complaints.

The first Key Performance Indicator (KPI) is defined as **“the percentage of Stage 2 formal complaints submitted to the HSE that are investigated by assigned Complaints Officers within the 30 working day legislative timeframe”**.

The national KPI target is set at 75%. The overall national KPI return for 2023 is 72%.

The second KPI, which was introduced in 2023 is defined as **“the percentage of Stage 2 YSYS Formal Complaints, where an action plan is identified as necessary, is in place and progressing”**.

The national KPI target is 65%. The overall national KPI return for 2023 is 76%.

Complaints resolved by Complaint Officers ≤30 working days

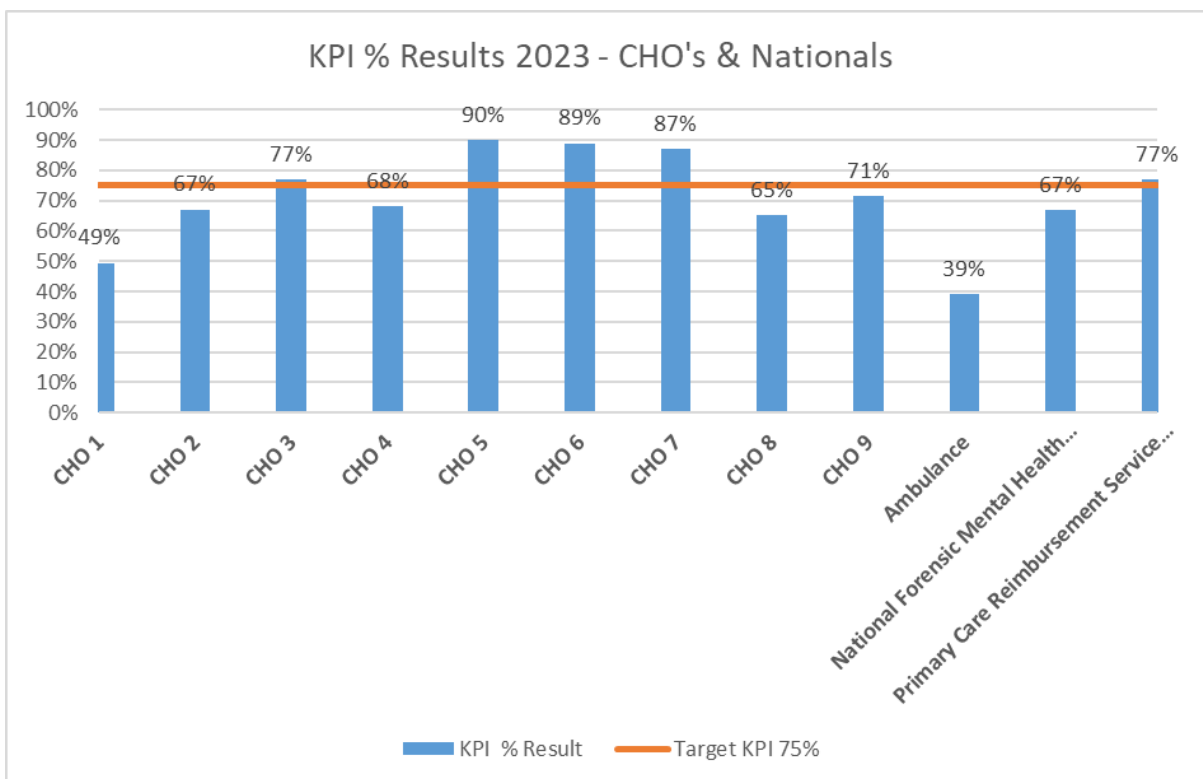


Figure: Complaints resolved by Complaint Officers ≤30 working days – Community Healthcare Services and National Services

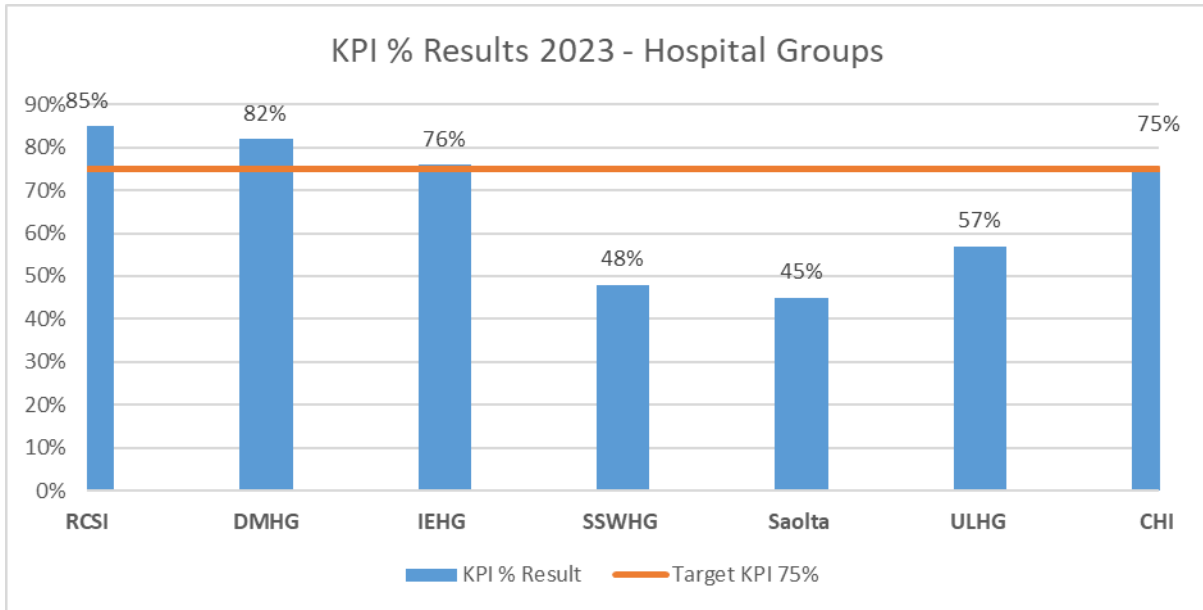


Figure: Complaints resolved by Complaint Officers ≤30 working days – Hospital Groups

2.4 Category of Complaint

Note: Many complaints contain multiple issues and therefore fall under more than one category

The top 5 causes of complaints contained an issue relating to the following classification:

1. Safe & Effective Care (33%)
2. Communication and Information (27%)
3. Access (21%)
4. Dignity and Respect (11%)
5. Accountability (4%)

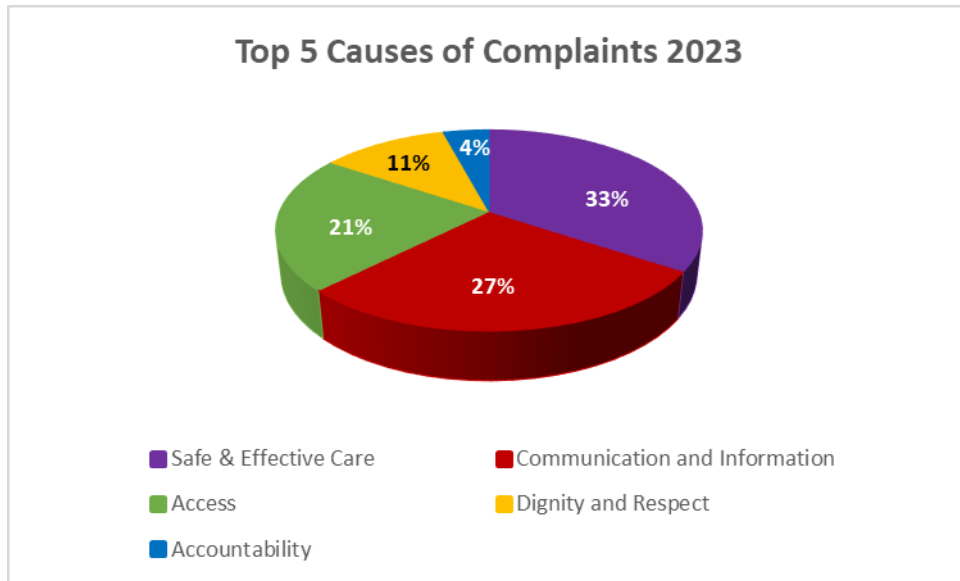


Figure: Top 5 complaint cause category 2023

Number of issues recorded under each complaint category

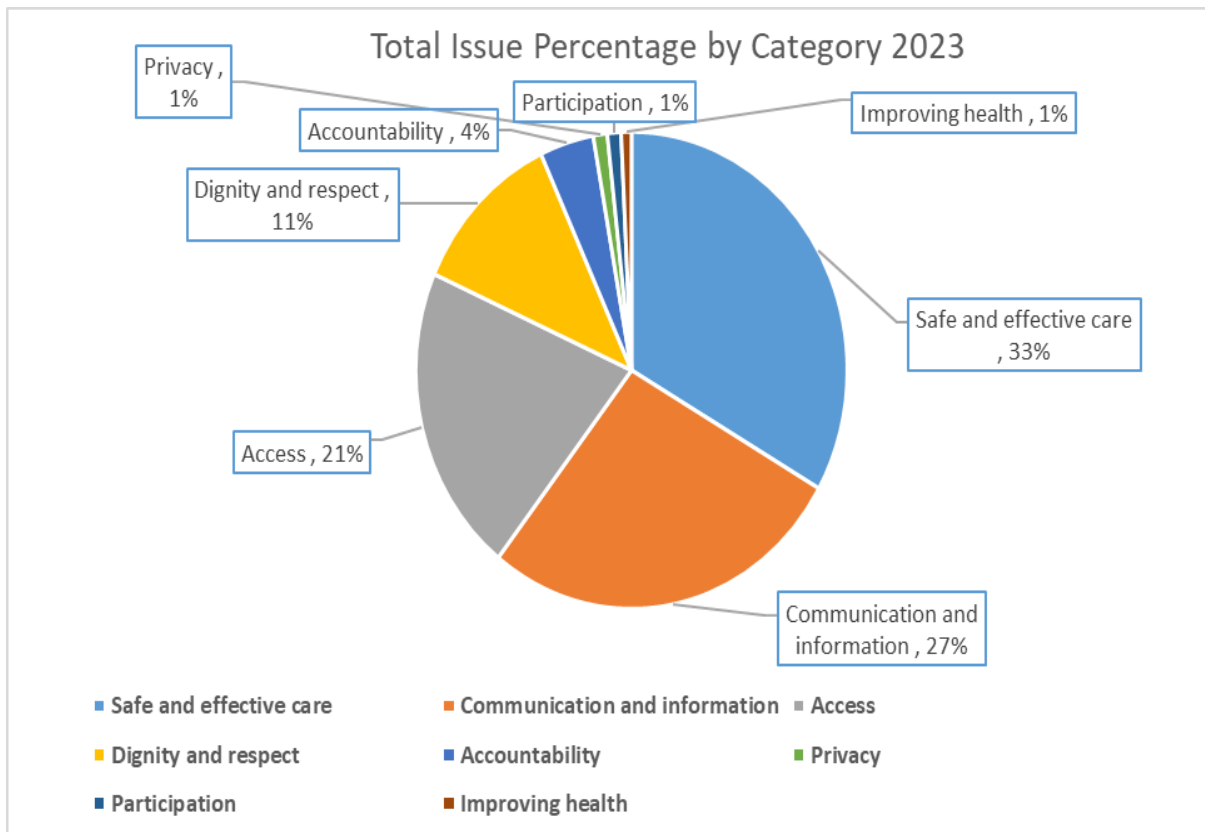


Figure: Percentage of issues recorded under each complaint category

2.5 Complaints Management System



The Complaints Management System (CMS) facilitates the capture and aggregation of comprehensive complaints data from Community Healthcare Organisations, Hospital Groups and National Services to enable analysis and comparison. This supports learning from complaints by enabling the reporting of issues and trends at various levels throughout the HSE and ensuring that evidence based best practice is shared across services to assist in decision-making and the targeting of resources to deliver quality improvements and better health outcomes and experiences for those who use our services.

Complaints Management System (CMS) Training

Complaints Officers and Support Staff trained in the Complaints Management System in 2023	CMS General Training	Report Training
Hospital Group		
CHI	0	0
ULHG	1	5
Saolta	20	9
SSWHG	0	1
DMHG	1	1
RCSI	1	6
IEHG	3	4
Community Health Organisations		
CHO 1	1	1
CHO 2	5	1
CHO 3	1	0
CHO 4	0	0
CHO 5	3	1
CHO 6	2	0
CHO 7	9	4
CHO 8	5	0
CHO 9	8	1
National Services		
PCRS	2	0
NAS	4	0
NCGLT	1	0
NSS	0	0
NFMHS	1	0
NHWD (National Health & Wellbeing Division)	0	0
Total 2023	68	34

2.5.1 Complaints Management System (CMS) Steering Group

A CMS Steering Group was established to provide governance and direction for the implementation and further development of agreed modules of the Complaints Management System. Each member of the CMS Steering Group is a nominated lead and represents their own Community Healthcare Organisation, Hospital Group or National Service.

The group also functions as an approval committee for change requests from users of the CMS before changes are forwarded to the NIMS Steering Group and State Claims Agency for implementation on the system.

The CMS Steering Group resumed in 2023 following a pause during the Covid-19 pandemic. In total, five meetings were facilitated by NCGLT during the year.

3.0 The National Complaints Governance and Learning Team

The National Complaints Governance and Learning Team (NCGLT) is a national unit tasked with developing the systems and supports to deliver on the HSE's commitment to provide an enhanced service user feedback process that is accessible, flexible and responsive as well as the mechanisms that enable the narrative and data from feedback to drive learning and quality improvement.

NCGLT provides a range of services broadly covering policy development, assurance & governance, training and development and data analytics.

NCGLT facilitates the quarterly National Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum providing a platform for shared learning, peer support and networking for Complaints Managers across Hospital Groups, CHOs and National Services.

NCGLT continued to utilise technology solutions to deliver training for Review Officers under Stage Three of the Your Service Your Say Policy and support staff to respond to feedback by developing and hosting online e-learning modules and webinars on HSeLanD. During 2023 a total of 10,480 HSE staff completed the online YSYS training modules. NCGLT delivered Review Officer training to 39 appointed Review Officers and trained 102 inputters on the Complaints Management System (CMS).

NCGLT published four quarterly editions of the National Your Service Your Say Anonymised Feedback Learning Casebook for 2023. The casebook featured a total of 76 cases, both complaints and compliments, received and responded to by Community Healthcare Organisations, Hospitals/Hospital Groups and National Services.

NCGLT operates two national frontline complaints services that are co-located between Naas and Limerick.

3.1 Complaints Governance

3.1.1 Complaints Managers

The Ombudsman's Learning to Get Better report recommended the appointment of 'a senior member of staff to assume an active and visible leadership role in the complaints process with key involvement in education, training and reporting arrangements.' (Rec #32)

To ensure governance in the area of feedback (comments, compliments and complaints) at a local level and to comply with best practice as set out under Learning to Get Better, the appointment of Complaints Managers, within Community Healthcare Organisations, Hospital Groups and National Services was supported and accordingly mandated by the HSE.

Complaints Managers are involved in education, training and reporting arrangements around Your Service Your Say. They ensure implementation of the HSE's feedback policy and that the system is functioning in line with policy, with key staff, including clinicians, supported to understand how to handle complaints. They provide assurance, through casebooks, that learning from feedback is captured and shared and supports quality improvement initiatives and report locally on the effectiveness of the Your Service Your Say process. Complaints Managers are also responsible for assigning Review Officers to complaints following a request for a review.

3.1.2 National Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum

To support Complaints Managers in the execution of their role, NCGLT facilitates the hosting of the National Complaints Governance and Learning Forum; attendance at which is mandatory.

The National Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum, established in 2016 and held on a quarterly basis, offers a valuable opportunity for shared learning, problem solving, discussion around issues, expert input into specialist topics as well as an arena for exploring areas for development to ensure the continuous evolution of our feedback processes.

Complaints Managers share key messages and learning from the Forum, including matters identified or arising with their respective Senior Management Teams at Community Healthcare Organisation, Hospital Group and National Service level for consideration and action as appropriate.

The Forum offers Complaints Managers an opportunity to relate their experience of responding to and managing feedback from an operational perspective and flag issues for further discussion. Members also have the chance to network with peers and build informal as well as more formal connections that will support them in their role.

In 2023, the Forum was held in March, May, September and December.

Case Study Presentations

Case studies are an integral part of the learning agenda that is fostered and facilitated at the Forum.

NCGLT would like to thank the following for presenting the learning arising from examining complaints as well as from positive feedback received:

- Community Healthcare Dublin North City and County
- University of Limerick Hospital Group
- Ireland East Hospital Group
- Community Health East
- Saolta University Health Care Group

Guest Presenters

Presentations on specialist topics or from partner agencies feed into the professional expertise and the continuous development of the feedback service within the HSE.

NCGLT would like to offer thanks to the following guest presenters:

- Ms Georgina Cruise, National Manager Patient Advocacy Service and Ms Alexandria Collins, Advocacy Team Lead, who presented an overview of the work of PAS in 2023 and outlined the various successes enjoyed and challenges faced by the service.

Service User Experience

NCGLT were delighted to welcome a Service User to the Complaint Managers Forum in May to relate first hand to Complaint Managers their experience of engaging with the Your Service Your Say feedback management process and highlighted some excellent practice as well as areas for improvement. This engagement was very insightful and was appreciated by all those present.

Special thank you to the Office of the Ombudsman

Ms Geraldine McCormack represents the Office of the Ombudsman on the Complaint Managers Governance and Learning Forum. Ms McCormack addressed the Forum and advised that the Ombudsman was pleased with the statutory and policy framework in place to respond to feedback and mentioned in particular the HSE's national feedback learning casebook, produced quarterly, that highlights the learning gained from both complaints and positive feedback. Ms McCormack relayed the Ombudsman's praise for the HSE's robust complaints management system (CMS), the national complaints database, in the Oireachtas and advised that he uses the CMS as an example for other organisations.

All minutes from the National Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum are available on www.hse.ie/yoursay

Forum Attendees

While the National Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum is attended by Complaints Managers nominated at CHO, Hospital Group and National Service level, the Forum also has representatives from Consumer Affairs, the Office of the Ombudsman, and, on occasion, the Ombudsman for Children, national advocacy groups and service users.

NCGLT would like to thank Ms Rosalie Smith Lynch who is the nominated representative for Consumer Affairs at the Forum. Consumer Affairs provides training, support and advice to Complaints Officers on complaint investigations. Consumer Affairs is also the key contact for the Office of the Ombudsman for any external review by that office.

NCGLT would also like to give a special thanks to Ms Geraldine McCormack from the Office of the Ombudsman. As a member of and contributor to the Forum, Ms McCormack keeps members updated on developments within the Office of the Ombudsman, assists the HSE in furthering progress in the area of feedback and compliance with the recommendations set out in Learning to Get Better while addressing any practical issues arising at the operational level.

Attendance

The Forum is scheduled on a quarterly basis and attendance is mandatory. For those who send apologies a nominated representative can be sent in their stead. Please see summary table of attendance for 2023.

2023 Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum Attendance

NCGLF	Total Attended	% Attended
Hospital Groups		
Ireland East Hospital Group	4	100%
South / South West Hospital Group	2	50%
Dublin Midlands Hospital Group	4	100%
Children's Health Ireland	3	75%
Saolta University Healthcare Group	4	100%
RCSI Hospital Group	4	100%
UL Hospitals Group	4	100%
Community Healthcare Organisations		
CHO Area 1	4	100%
Community Healthcare West	2	50%
Mid West Community Healthcare	3	75%
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare	2	50%
South East Community Healthcare	2	50%
Community Healthcare East	4	100%
Dublin South Kildare & West Wicklow Community Healthcare	1	25%
Midlands Louth Meath Community Healthcare	4	100%
Dublin North City and County Community Healthcare	3	75%
National Services		
Internal Audit*		
Communications*		
Mental Health	2	50%
National Ambulance Service	1	25%
Acute Hospitals	2	50%
Primary Care	3	75%
Older Persons	2	50%
Disabilities	0	0%
Public Health	0	0%
PCRS	3	75%
Community Operations	4	100%
Consumer Affairs	3	75%
Other Attendees		
Office of the Ombudsman	2	50%
Ombudsman for Children's Office*		

*Attends as requested by Forum

3.1.3 *Complaints Officers and Review Officers*

In the HSE, Complaints Officers and Review Officers are appointed into their role and act independently and with the authority of the Chief Officer of a Community Healthcare Organisation, Chief Executive Officer of a Hospital Group or National Director of a National Division in the investigation / review of a complaint.

NCGLT developed guidance to support and ensure appropriate governance regarding the appointment of Complaints Officers and Review Officers.

Appointment Orders including Appointment Revocation Notifications must be sent to the Complaints Officer / Review Officer with a copy sent to the following:

1. the **Complaints Manager** for filing or held by the Chief Officer / Chief Executive Officer / Chief Operations Officer / General Manager (as appropriate) / National Director where no Complaints Manager is appointed.
2. **National Complaints Governance and Learning Team** at nationalcglthse.ie only where the Complaints Officer or Review Officer is accessing the Complaints Management System (CMS) as part of the governance for the CMS and where the Review Officer is attending for Review Officer training.

Under Section 19 **Public Awareness of Complaints Procedures** of the Health Act 2004 (Complaints) Regulations 2006, online service information is to contain a section on, or link to, how to provide feedback and the procedures involved as well as a listing of the **names and contact details** of appointed Complaints Officers and **names only** of appointed Review Officers.

3.2 Your Service Your Say Materials

In line with Communication Regulations, the national Your Service Your Say telephone contact number moved to a Freephone number on the 1st December 2023 and to reflect this change the suite of YSYS print and online resources were re-designed and updated to reflect this change.

NCGLT communicated this change in the YSYS contact number and all HSE services were requested to display the new suite of print resources by the 1st December 2023. We worked closely with our colleagues on the HSE Communications team and Digital Content team to ensure a seamless communication plan was coordinated and implemented during the project.

Information in other Languages

In addition, both the adult and children's YSYS information leaflets are now available in 24 languages and a QR code has been added to the YSYS poster and both information leaflets so that the various language versions can now be easily accessed by the public.

Information and feedback forms for adults as well as children and young persons are available in 24 different languages from the HSE website at:

<https://www2.hse.ie/complaints-feedback/languages/>

English	Irish (Gaeilge)
Albanian (Shqip)	Arabic (العربية)
Brazilian Portuguese (Português do Brasil)	Bulgarian (Български)
Chinese (中文)	Czech (Čeština)
Farsi (فارسی)	French (Français)
French (Français)	German (Deutsch)
Georgian (ქართული)	Italian (Italiano)
Kurdish (كوردی)	Lithuanian (Lietuvių)
Pashto (پښتو)	Polish (Polski)
Portuguese (Português)	Romanian (Română)
Russian (Русский)	Slovak (Slovenčina)
Somali (Afsoomaali)	Spanish (Español)
Ukrainian (Українська)	Urdu (اردو)

These developments will enhance and support access to Your Service Your Say and enable the HSE to hear and benefit from the experiences of a wider service user base.

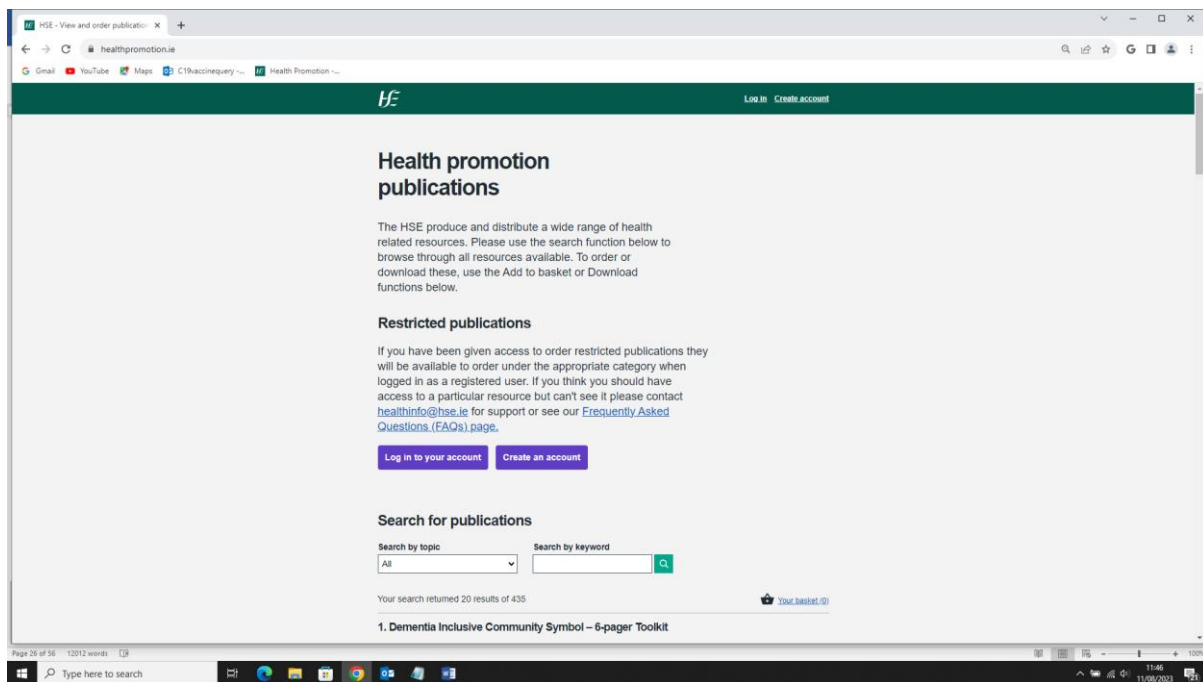
Ordering YSYS Materials

All newly revised published materials are available to order from www.healthpromotion.ie

To order materials, log into www.healthpromotion.ie and follow the instructions on screen.

Your Service Your Say publications are only available to order by healthcare staff. You will need to register for an account to access these.

If you have previously registered for an account, enter in your login details and enter *Your Service Your Say* in the search box and all publications available to order will be listed.



If you do not currently have a registered account and require one, please select 'Create Account' or if you think you should have access to a particular resource but can't see it please contact healthinfo@hse.ie for support.

Materials available to order from the site include:

- Your Service Your Say Adult Information Leaflet in Irish and English
- Your Service Your Say Children's Information Leaflet in Irish and English
- Your Service Your Say A3 and A4 English Poster
- Your Service Your Say A3 and A4 Irish Poster
- Your Service Your Say Feedback Box Stickers

Materials available to download are:

- Your Service Your Say Policy Document

Feedback boxes are not available to order from the site. Please source these locally.

Posters

In addition to the above materials, NCGLT have developed a suite of posters.

- **Assessing a Complaint:** Designed to assist staff in relation to complaints that cannot be managed under Part 9 of the Health Act 2004 and therefore cannot be investigated under the Your Service Your Say policy.
- **Complaints Management Pathway:** Designed to provide an overview of the four stages in the Your Service Your Say process and the key steps to take at each stage along with the timeframes applying.
- **Timeframes for the Complaints Management Process:** Designed to provide a guide for each person involved in the Your Service Your Say process regarding the legislative and policy timeframes applying to the various stages of the complaints management process.

Posters are available on request from NCGLT or alternatively a PDF version can be downloaded by following this link:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/qavd/complaints/ysysguidance/appendices/>

3.3 Training

NCGLT develop and deliver training programmes in order to support staff in their efforts to respond to and deal with complaints from point of contact through to the internal review stage as well as delivering train the trainer workshops.

HSeLand is an online learning forum developed and run by the Health Service Executive. Access to hseland.ie is available over the internet, on a secure site. It is available to all Healthcare Professionals in the Republic of Ireland, both within Health Service Executive (HSE), Voluntary Hospital Sector, and associated Non-Government-Organisations (NGO's).

By providing guidance through this online platform, NCGLT hoped to increase the access by staff to training as well as offer greater flexibility over that access.

The following webinars remain available to staff to support them in managing complaints as well as guiding them through the complaints process.

- Assessment of Need and Complaints Awareness Training
- Complaints Management System Training
- Learning from Complaints
- Telephone Etiquette and Tips for Managing Unreasonable Caller Behaviour
- Your Service Your Say Review Officer Training
- Resilience Training

3.3.1 HSeLanD Complaint Modules

Staff can access the following NCGLT complaint modules on HSeLanD.

- Module 1: Effective Complaints Handling
- Module 2: Effective Complaints Investigation
- Module 3: Your Service Your Say: Complaints Handling Guidance for Clinical Staff

The Nursing and Midwifery Board of Ireland (NMBI) has awarded one continuing education unit (1 CEU) to each module.

Module 1, Effective Complaints Handling is for all staff to use and encompasses a number of interactive complaint handling scenarios that encourages engagement of the staff member through the exploration of different e-learning paths. This is very effective for empowering staff to respond to point of contact complaints.



A total of **7,067** staff completed this module to date up to December 2023.



Module 2, Effective Complaints Investigation is an interactive learning tool for Complaints Officers, taking them through the entire process of handling a written complaint from when it initially received right through to guiding the user on how to create a final report.

A total of **965** staff have completed this module to date up to December 2023.

Module 3: Your Service Your Say: Complaints Handling Guidance for Clinical Staff gives practical application to the guidance document *YSYS Guidance for Clinical Staff*. Both the guide and module were developed to provide support to the various clinical professionals who may, at some point, be asked to contribute their views as part of a complaints investigation or to write a specific clinical report as part of the complaints investigation.

The module provides clinical staff with a clear understanding of the YSYS complaints process and outlines how individual clinical staff may become involved in the process as well as assisting clinical staff in understanding what is required of them under the YSYS complaints management process.



A total of **2,448** staff completed this module to date up to December 2023.

3.4 Audit

3.4.1 General Audit

The general audit of services in relation to compliance with the *Your Service Your Say, the Management of Service User Feedback for Comments, Compliments and Complaints 2017 Policy* is deferred until 2024.

3.5 Healthcare Complaints Audit Tool (HCAT)

Healthcare complaints are often written with the aim of contributing to the improvement of services. However, the tools for harnessing the potential of these insights have been limited. We know that utilising service user experiences such as complaints has the potential to enhance the quality and safety of healthcare delivery. Service users and their families process a huge amount of data, observing and evaluating all care interactions.

The Healthcare Complaints Audit Tool (HCAT) is an innovative method of classifying complaints developed by the London School of Economics (LSE) after a rigorous analysis of 80,000 NHS complaints. The HCAT tool is a reliable method of coding and systemising healthcare complaints that also supports international comparability of data.

In addition, applying HCAT to complaints helps services to identify ‘hot spots’ for harm, i.e. an area in care where harm occurs frequently, as well as ‘blind spots’, i.e. areas in care that are not easily observed.

Following an extensive project with NUIG and the London School of Economics to examine the suitability of HCAT within the Irish healthcare context and piloting the use of HCAT in both community and acute services, HCAT is now a mandatory feature of complaints recording on the national Complaints Management System (CMS).

The Healthcare Complaints Analysis Tool (HCAT) treats each complaint as an ‘incident’, and asks the following:

1. *What is the problem being reported?*
2. *How severe was it?*
3. *Where, in the system, did it happen?*
4. *Who did it involve?*
5. *Was there a consequence?*

The improved classification system will support the identification of systemic issues and trends within services leading to improvements in healthcare delivery and ensuring high standards of quality and safety.

3.6 Learning from Individual Complaints: HSE Anonymised Feedback Learning Casebook

While analysing complaints data provides great insight into trends and issues as well as highlighting ‘hot spots’ and ‘blinds spots’ that impact on service quality and patient safety, there is a lot to be learned from the narrative from individual complaints and compliments.

NCGLT captures and presents anonymised cases of Your Service Your Say complaints and compliments in a national feedback learning casebook that is published quarterly.

Casebooks form part of the HSE’s commitment to use complaints as a tool for learning and to share that learning to demonstrate to services users that sharing their experience has made a difference and has led to change

The development and publication of casebooks was also a recommendation by the Ombudsman in his report, *Learning to Get Better* and further progresses the HSE’s promise to implement all recommendations from the Ombudsman’s report pertaining to the HSE.

The HSE National Your Service Your Say Anonymised Learning Casebook is published on a quarterly basis and is available to view on www.hse.ie/yoursay

3.6.1 Casebook Development

National casebooks are generated from the learning notification forms that are completed by Complaints Officers, following a complaint investigation, and Review Officers, following a complaint review and forwarded to Complaints Managers. Complaints Managers review these forms and submit those cases with organisational learning to NCGLT for the inclusion in the national casebook.

3.6.2 2023 Anonymised Feedback Learning Casebook

The four editions of the 2023 casebooks presented 76 cases covering both complaints and compliments received by Hospitals, Community Healthcare Organisations and National Services.

The casebooks contained 44 complaints that were investigated and/or reviewed along with their outcomes and featured 32 compliments that highlighted the learning to be gained from positive feedback.

The following services contributed to the 2023 Casebook:

Community Healthcare Organisations	Hospital Groups
CHO 1	Children’s Health Ireland*
Community Healthcare West	Ireland East Hospital Group
Cork Kerry Community Healthcare	Saolta University Health Care Group
HSE Community Healthcare East*	University of Limerick Hospital Group
Midlands Louth Meath Community Health Organisation	Dublin Midlands Hospital Group
CHO Dublin North City and County	
National Services	
National Screening Services	

* Both Children’s Health Ireland and HSE Community Healthcare East contributed cases to all four casebooks.

The following services **did not** contribute to the casebook during 2023

Community Healthcare Organisations	Hospital Groups
Community Healthcare Mid West	RCSI Hospital group
South East Community Healthcare	South South West Hospital Group
Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare	
National Services	
National Ambulance Service	
Primary Care Reimbursement Service	
National Mental Health	

The top categories for both complaints and compliments for the 2023 casebook relate to *communication and information, safe and effective care, access, dignity and respect and accountability.*

Some of the key issues for the main complaint categories were:

- *Communication and Information* relate to issues such as general communication skills such as being aware of how you are speaking with a patient/service user, providing information, keeping the patient/service user informed, telephone etiquette, signage to direct and relay information and the timeliness of the provision of information.

- *Safe and Effective Care* issues concern the carrying out of treatment procedures, the timeliness of test results that can affect scheduled follow up appointments, the identification of an incident, as well as the careful and respectful noting of patient data on health care records.
- *Access* features with issues around appointments such as organising, rescheduling and booking in as well as accessing appointments / services, accessibility and resources and facilities such as parking.
- *Dignity and Respect* relates to how care was delivered within a clinical setting and being aware how behaviour can affect others. Issues such as discrimination and end of life care such as mortuary facilities also featured.
- *Privacy* featured issues around confidentiality.
- *Accountability* concerned issues around responding to patient feedback as well as patient charges.

The cases presented across the four editions of the casebook for 2023 offer services an opportunity to reflect on service delivery, to understand the issues experienced by Service Users, to examine the measures and initiatives used to address these and how such methods can be utilised in their area to address or prevent similar issues.

Current and past casebooks can be accessed from:

<https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/complaints/hse-complaints-casebook/>

4.0 The National Complaints Governance and Learning Team: Operational Services

The National Complaints Governance and Learning Team (NCGLT) operates two national frontline complaints services that are co-located between Naas and Limerick.

1. The **National Your Service Your Say office** provides a dedicated national contact point for Service Users, or an individual acting on behalf of a Service User, to provide feedback (comments, compliments and complaints) on their experience with our health services or to seek assistance with providing feedback. During 2023 the office engaged in **26,129** client interactions, an increase of 3% on the previous year.
2. **Assessment of Need Disability Complaints service**
NCGLT also offers a specialised service for those wishing to make a complaint under the Disability Act 2005 where they are unhappy with their child's assessment of need or Service Statement. In 2023, the **Assessment of Need Disability Complaints Service** received 1,506 disability complaints relating to Assessment of Need (AoN). This was up 69% from 2022 figures.

4.1 The National Your Service Your Say Office

The HSE is committed to encouraging and enabling those who use our services to share their experience with us so that we learn from this and improve the safety and quality of those services.

The National Your Service Your Say office comes under the remit of the National Complaints Governance & Learning Team (NCGLT). The Your Service Your Say Team responds to queries, provides advice and information as needed and ensures that any feedback given is directed to the appropriate local service for their examination and direct response to the person raising the concern.

The Team also supports the office of the HSE Chief Executive Officer and the Department of Health. The Team ensure that Service Users who have been in contact with these offices have their issues routed to the appropriate service for examination and response within the Your Service Your Say process, as appropriate, to provide them access to review mechanisms both internally and externally, if required.

4.1.1 The National Your Service Your Say Office Activity

Activity for the National Your Service Your Say office is based on the interactions generated by calls, emails, online forms and post received into the National Your Service Your Say office, either directly from Service Users, or from individuals acting on behalf of a Service User, or through the Office of the Chief Executive Officer or the Department of Health.

For 2023, the National Your Service Your Say Office recorded **26,129** interactions, which was a 3% increase on activity noted for 2022.

Email continued to be the preferred method of contact with the National Your Service Your Say office, accounting for 37% of office activity with online forms the next preferred method of contact, accounting for 26% of office activity.

4.1.2 Activity Overview

Your Service Your Say Office

In 2023, there were 12,825 comments, compliments, complaints and queries logged under Your Service Your Say, compared to 14,102 in 2022. Of this, 9,754 were complaints, 1,872 were compliments, 277 related to comments, while 922 queries were received. Nineteen complaint review requests were received.

The feedback can be broken down between services as follows:

CHO	Acute Services	National Services	Voluntary Agencies	Voluntary Hospitals
3,483	4,250	1,812	26	779

Table: Breakdown of YSYS feedback by service for 2023

The top four categories of feedback in 2023 were *Access, Dignity and Respect, Communication and Information* and *Safe and Effective Care*.

As in 2021 and 2022, *Accessibility & Resources* emerged as the key sub category within *Access*. *Delivery of Care* was the key sub-category in *Dignity and Respect*, while *Information* was the key sub-category within *Communication and Information*, as was observed for these categories in 2022. *Treatment and Care* emerged as the key sub category within *Safe and Effective Care*.

Office of the HSE Chief Executive Officer

In 2023, there were 130 items of feedback received from the CEO’s office, which represents a decrease when compared with 194 items received in 2022.

Department of Health

In 2023, there was a total of 2,169 items of feedback received from the Department of Health via email.

Summary of Your Service Your Say National Office Activity for 2023

Matters relating to *Access, Dignity and Respect, Communication and Information*, and *Safe & Effective Care* were the four main categories of feedback received from Service Users into the National Your Service Your Say Office, either directly or through the CEO’s Office or the Department of Health.

Overall, *Access* accounted for 4,156 (28%) of categories recorded, *Dignity & Respect* accounted for 3,154 (21%), *Communication and Information* accounted for 2,716 (18%), and *Safe & Effective Care* accounted for 2,504 (17%) of the categories recorded.

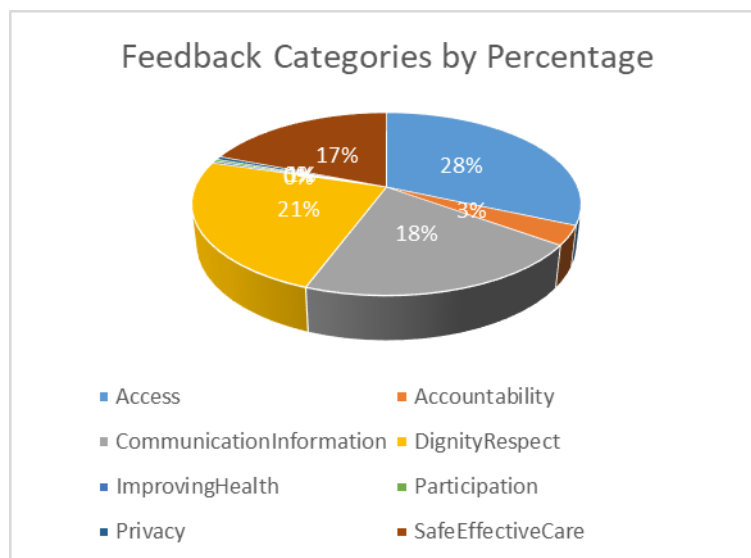


Figure: Feedback categories by percentage

4.2 Assessment of Need (AoN) Complaints - 2023

The Disability Act 2005 provides for a special complaints and appeals procedure for service users if they are unhappy with their child's assessment of need or Service Statement.

Under the Act a parent/guardian can make a complaint in relation to one or more of the following:

- (a) a determination by the assessment officer concerned that he or she does not have a disability;
- (b) the assessment under section 9 was not commenced within the time specified in section 9(5) or was not completed without undue delay;
- (c) the assessment under section 9 was not conducted in a manner that conforms to the standards determined by a body referred to in section 10;
- (d) the contents of the service statement provided;
- (e) the Executive or the education service provider, as the case may be, failed to provide or to fully provide a service specified in the service statement.

In 2023, 1506 complaints were received by the AoN Complaints Office. 4% of completed investigations were dealt with by an AoN Complaints Officer within 30 days.

No. of complaints received variance from 2022

Summary Table of Variance	2023	2022	% change
HSE Assessment of Need	1506	892	+69%

Breakdown of Recorded 2023 Complaints (Excluding Voluntary Hospitals and Agencies)

HSE: Excluding Voluntary Hospitals and Agencies	Total
Complaints received under Part 2 of the Disabilities Act 2005 (Assessment of Need)	1506

Complaints received and resolved by the AoN Complaints Office (Disabilities) (across all CHOs) under the Disability Act.

AoN Nationally (across all CHOs)	Complaints received 2023	Complaints that do not fall under Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005	Withdrawn	Anonymous	Resolved informally	Resolved through formal investigation ≤30 working days	Resolved through formal investigation >30 working days	% Resolved ≤30 working days
Total	1506	56	8	0	0	21	555	4

Table: Assessment of Need complaints received and resolved across all CHOs

- The number of applications for Assessment of Need (AoN) in 2023 was 8,628; a 28% increase on the previous year.
- The number of complaints received by the AoN Complaints Office in 2023 was 1,506; a 69% increase in complaints received in 2022.
- The proportional increase in complaints received (+69%) has outpaced the proportional increase in AoN applications (+28%).
- The number of complaints received per 100 AoN applications increased from 12 in 2022 to 17 in 2023.
- Of the complaints investigated, the average number of days taken by AoN Complaint Officer to close out a complaint increased from 122 days, for those received in 2022; to 175 days, for those received in 2023.
- Of the complaints investigated, the primary ground for complaint was Ground B; of these, 84% of were Ground B only, which is up 17% from last year.
- Single issue complaints make up the vast majority (92%) of complaints investigated thus far, up 10%.

Assessment of Need Nationally (Disabilities) (across all CHOs)

	Complaints received 2022	Withdrawn, Anonymous, Excluded	Less Withdrawn, Anonymous, Excluded	Resolved through formal investigation ≤30 working days	Resolved through formal investigation >30 working days	Complaints not yet resolved	% Resolved ≤30 working days
Across all CHOs	1506	64	1442	21	555	859	4

Table: Assessment of Need complaints across all CHOs

There is currently a backlog of complaints regarding Assessment of Need services to be addressed. NCGLT recruited an additional Disability Complaints Officer and administrative support post during 2020. This expanded the team to 4 staff, three of which are Disability Complaints Officers and one administrator. However, resourcing is now proving insufficient to meet the demand on the service despite additional temporary resources being provided since August 2022.

Area	Applications for AoN	Complaints received under Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 (AoN)	Complaints received per 100 applications
CHO 1	355	44	12
CHO 2	354	22	6
CHO 3	221	36	16
CHO 4	1058	81	8
CHO 5	477	142	30
CHO 6	1013	110	11
CHO 7	2044	493	24
CHO 8	1368	103	8
CHO 9	1738	475	27

Table: Assessment of Need complaints in the context of the no. of Applications received, 2023

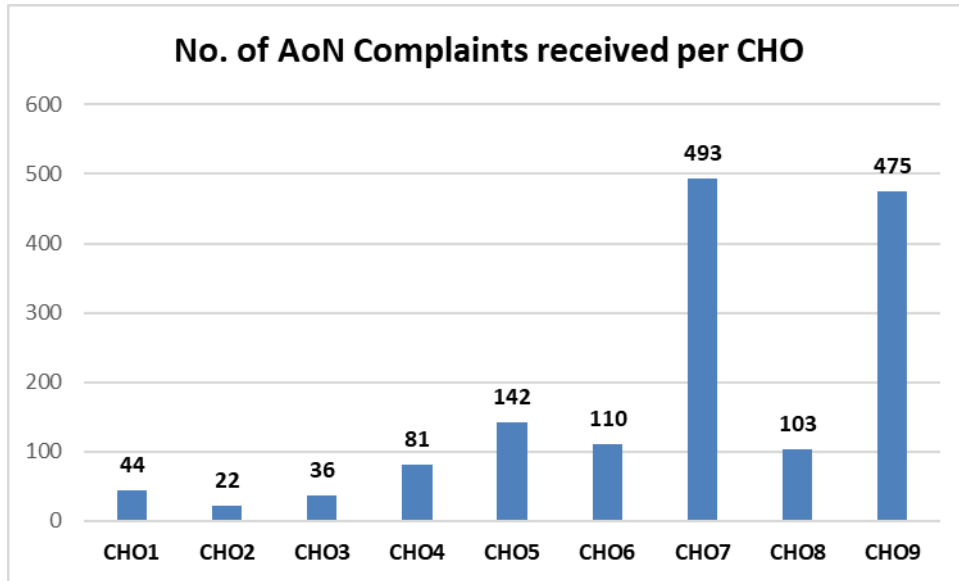


Figure: No of AoN complaints received per CHO

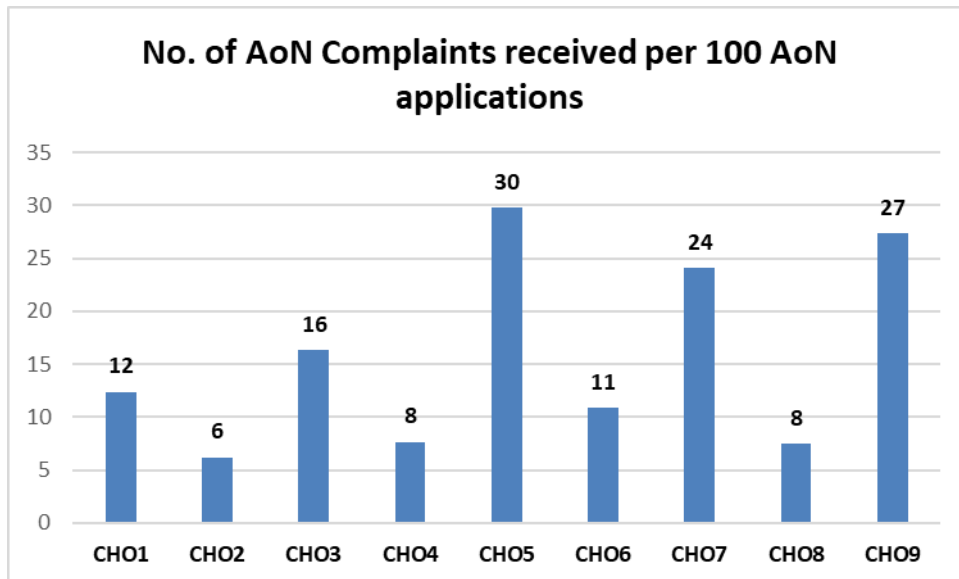


Figure: No. of AoN complaints received per CHO per 100 Applications

Assessment of Need Nationally (across all CHOs)

Assessment of Need Nationally (across all CHOs)	Access (ground B, D, E)	Dignity and Respect	Safe and Effective Care (ground C)	Communication and information	Participation	Privacy	Improving Health	Accountability	
AoN	583	0	33	0	0	0	0	0	
Assessment of Need Nationally (across all CHOs)	Clinical Judgement (ground A)	Vexatious Complaints	Nursing homes / residential care age >65	Nursing homes and residential care age ≤64	Pre-school inspection services	Trust in Care	Children First	Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons	Yet to be determined via investigation
AoN	18	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	859

Table: AoN Complaints Categories 2023

Note: A complaint may contain multiple grounds for complaint. For the purposes of the table above one complaint may be counted in more than one category, hence the total of the above figures surpasses the total no. of complaints received.

Complaints by Divisions: CHOs

Community Health Organisation (CHO)	Complaints received under Part 2 of the Disability Act 2005 (AoN)
CHO1	44
CHO2	22
CHO3	36
CHO4	81
CHO5	142
CHO6	110
CHO7	493
CHO8	103
CHO9	475
Total	1506

Table: AoN Complaints by Divisions: CHOs, 2023

Complaints Reported by Service

Assessment of Need Nationally (across all CHOs) 2023

Complaints received - Assessment of Need - Nationally (across all CHOs)	Social Care	Primary Care	Mental Health	Health and Wellbeing
AoN	1506	0	0	0

Table: AoN Complaints by Service, 2023

Appendices

Appendix 1: Complaint Categories

Incident /Category	Sub Category Type	Sub Category Please Specify
Access	Accessibility / resources	Equipment
		Medication
		Personnel
		Services
		Treatment
	Appointment - delays	Appointment - cancelled and not rearranged
		Appointment - delay in issuing appointment
		Appointment - postponed
		Surgery / therapies / diagnostics - delayed or postponed
		Operation and opening times of clinics
	Appointment - other	No / lost referral letter
		Appointment - request for earlier appointment
		Unavailability of service
	Admission - delays	Delayed - elective bed
		Delayed - emergency bed
		Admission - delay in admission process
		Admission - postponed
	Admission - other	Admission - refused admission by hospital
	Hospital facilities	Crèche
		Lack of adequate seating
		Lack of baby changing facilities
		Lack of / minimal breastfeeding facilities
		Lack of toilet and washroom facilities (general)
		Lack of toilet and washroom facilities (special needs)
		Lack of wheelchair access
		No treatment area / space for consultation / trolley facilities
		Shop
		Signage (internal and external)
	Hospital room facilities (access to)	Bed location
		Disability facilities
		Isolation / single room facilities
		Overcrowding
		Public
		Semi-private / private
	Parking	Access to disabled spaces
		Access to spaces
		Car parking charges
		Clamping / Declamping of car
		Condition or maintenance of car parks

Access contd.	Parking contd.	Damaged cars	
		Location of pay machine	
	Transfer issues	External transfer	
		Internal transfer	
	Transport	External transportation	
		Internal transportation	
	Visiting times	Lack of visiting policy enforcement	
		Special visiting times not accommodated	
Dignity and Respect	Alleged inappropriate behaviour	Patient	
		Staff	
		Visitor	
	Delivery of care	Lack of respect shown to patient during examination / consultation	
		No concern for patient as a person	
		Patient's dignity not respected	
	Discrimination	Age	
		Civil status	
		Disability	
		Family status	
		Gender	
		Membership of traveller community	
		Race	
		Religion	
		Sexual orientation	
	Socio-economic		
	End-of-Life Care	Breaking bad news	
		Breaking bad news - private area unavailable	
		Death cert - delay in issuing death cert	
		Death cert - incorrect / returned death cert	
		Delay in release and condition of body	
		Inattention to patient discomfort	
		Mortuary facilities	
		Organ retention	
		Palliative care	
		Poor communication	
	End-of-Life Care (contd.)	Single room for patient unavailable	
		Treatment of deceased not respected	
	Ethnicity	Insensitivity to cultural beliefs and values	
		Requests not respected	
		Special food requests unavailable	
	Safe & Effective Care	Human Resources	Competency
			Complement
Skill mix			
Diagnosis		Diagnosis - misdiagnosis	
		Diagnosis - delayed diagnosis	
		Diagnosis - contradictory diagnosis	

Safe & Effective Care contd.	Test	Delay / failure to report test results
		Incorrect tests ordered
		No tests ordered
		Mislabeled test result/sample
		Mislaid sample
		Performed on wrong patient
		Repeat test required
		Result not available
		Delay in transport/collection of sample
	Continuity of care (internal)	Poor clinical handover
		Lack of approved home care packages
		Lack of community supports
		Lack of medical devices / faulty equipment
		Lack of support services post discharge
		Unsuitable home environment
	Discharge	Adherence to discharge policy
		Delayed discharge
		Discharge against medical advice
		No discharge letter
		Patient / family refuse discharge
		Premature discharge
	Health and Safety issues	Building not secure
		Central heating
		Equipment (lack of / failure of / wrong equipment used)
		Failure to provide a safe environment
		Fixtures and fittings
		Furnishing
		Lights
		Manual handling
		Noise levels
		Overcrowding
		Pest control
		Slips / trips and falls
		Temperature regulation
		Waste Management
	Health Care Records	Admission / registration process error
		Inaccurate information on healthcare record / hospital systems
		Missing chart
		Missing films/scans
		Patient impersonation (identify theft)
Poor quality control of chart		
Poor recording of information		
Wrong records applied to patient		

Safe & Effective Care contd.	Hygiene	Cleanliness of area
		Hand Hygiene / Gel Dispensers
		Linen (beds and Curtains)
		Spills on floors
		Waste management
	Infection prevention and control	Communication deficit - infection status
		Health Care Associated Infection
		Non-compliance with Infection and Control policies and protocols
		Personal hygiene of staff
	Patient property	Clothes
		Dentures
		Glasses
		Hearing Aid
		Jewellery
		Lack of secure space
		Money
		Personal equipment
	Medication	Administering error
		Dispensing
		Prescribing
	Tissue Bank	Bone marrow
		Cord blood
		Cornea implant
		Cryogenics
		Fertility issues
		Heart valves
		Samples/test results
		Skin
		Stem cell
	Treatment and Care	Failure / delay in treatment / delivery of care
		Failure / delay to diagnose
		Failure to act on abnormal diagnostic results
		Inconsistent delivery of care
		Insufficient time for delivery of care
		Lack of follow-up care
		Lack of knowledge in staff
Lack of monitoring of pain control		
Lack of patient supervision		
Practitioners not working together / cooperating		
Prolonged fasting		
Unsatisfactory treatment or care		
Unsuccessful treatment or care		

Communication & Information	Communication skills	Patient felt their opinion was dismissed / discounted
		Disagreement about expectations
		Inadequate listening and response
		Inappropriate comments from staff member
		Lack of support
		Language barrier between patients/relatives and staff
		No opportunity to ask questions
		Non-verbal tone / body language
		Open disclosure (lack of)
		Patient dissatisfied with questions
		Patient felt rushed
		Staff not introducing themselves and letting patients know their role
		Staff unsympathetic
		Tone of voice
		Untimely delivery of information
	Delay and failure to communicate	Breakdown in communication between staff or areas
		Failure / delay to communicate with outside agency/organisation
		Failure / delay in communicating with patient
		<i>Advising patient of treating consultant</i>
		Failure / delay in communicating with relatives
		Failure / delay in notifying consultant (external)
		Failure / delay to communicate with GP / referral source
		Lack of information provided about medication side effects (KPI)
	Diverse Needs	Interpretation service (e.g. Braille services)
		Special needs
		Translation service
Information	Conflicting information	
	Confusing information	
	Insufficient and inadequate information	
	Misinformation	
Telephone calls	Telephone call not returned	
	Telephone call unanswered	
Participation	Consent	Consent not obtained
		Lack of informed consent
		Patient felt coerced
	Parental Access and Consent	Consent, guardianship and information issues related to lesbian, gay parental relationships
		Correct procedure not consented for
		Guardianship consent not explained
		Mother or father unable to access information
		Mother/Father/Guardian not informed

Participation contd.	Patients/ Family/ Relatives	Excluded from decision making process - family / relatives / advocate / next of kin
		Excluded from decision making process - patient
		Opinion discounted - family / relatives / advocate / next of kin
		Opinion discounted - patient
		Parent not allowed accompany child in recovery room
		Parent not allowed accompany child to theatre
		Second opinion
Privacy	Confidentiality	Breach of another patient's confidentiality
		Breach of patient confidentiality
		Security of files and records
	Hospital Facilities (Privacy)	Lack of privacy during consultation/discussing condition
		Lack of privacy during examination/ treatment
		Privacy - No single room
		Privacy - Overcrowding
Improving Health	Empowerment	Independence and self care not supported
		Lack / provision of patient / carer education
		Patient / family preference discounted / disrespected
	Holistic Care	Lack of information / support on how to prevent further illness / disease
		Lack of understanding as to what is important to the patient
	Catering	Dietary requirements not met
		Food quality
Smoking Policy	Non-compliance (visitor, patient, staff smoking)	
Accountability	Patient feedback	Feedback not provided to patients on improvements made as result of their feedback
		Information about the complaints / patient feedback process not available
		Patient concerns not dealt with promptly
		Quality of response to the complaint made
		Where to go to ask questions in relation to services and giving feedback (visibility of customer services)
	Finance	Bill dispute
		Bill sent to deceased patient
		Cost of products
		Insurance cover
		Invoice error
		Unhappy with income collection process