

Meeting of
Lanarkshire NHS Board
25 August 2010

Lanarkshire NHS Board
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SUBJECT: Annual Complaints Reports 2009/10

1. PURPOSE

The Annual Complaints Reports for 2009/10 set out in detail the Board's performance in the management of formal and informal complaints in the Community Health Partnerships (CHPs) and the Acute Services Division. The Reports provide a commentary on those complaints received, achievements against national performance indicators and the actions taken to improve the quality of services.

2. CONTENT/SUMMARY OF KEY ISSUES

There was an increase of 9% (up from 488 to 534) in the number of formal complaints received about acute services, most notably General Medicine at Hairmyres Hospital and General Surgery at Monklands Hospital. Taking formal and informal (verbal) complaints together, Endoscopy and Ophthalmology services also recorded unusually high levels of dissatisfaction.

Complaints about those about services managed by the CHPs remained at the same level as in 2008/09 (138).

Across services (and reflecting the national picture) the most common issues raised in complaints related to clinical treatment (38% of issues in Acute and 43% in CHPs) and to staff attitude, behaviour or communication (32% and 31% respectively). In many cases complaints about clinical treatment appear to have been a result of poor communication.

As in previous years, the Board has an excellent record in responding to formal complaints within the 20 working day target: 99% by the Acute Services Division and 91% by the CHPs. Notably the CHP figure rose from 82% in 2008/09. The latest available comparator is the national average of 68% for 2008/09.

During the year the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman published three reports following investigations into complaints about acute services, one report regarding reimbursement of home care costs and two regarding GP Practices.

3. ACTIONS

Statutory Directions require that the Board prepares an annual report on complaints and that Board publishes a report on complaints handling in its Annual Report. This Report fulfils the former requirement.

Complaints provide a valuable insight into the experiences of patients and their families or carers and it is vitally important that we learn from these experiences. Whenever the need is highlighted by an investigation, remedial action is taken to address failings in our service and to ensure that learning takes place. This includes the formal debriefing of staff in wards or departments where the complaint has raised issues of particular significance or has suggested a pattern; and the development and implementation of action plans to address failings. Our focus is on addressing the triggers that give rise to complaints.

Regrettably, a significant proportion of complaints from patients or their relatives relate to staff attitude, behaviour and communications. In order to reinforce the required standards the Board's approach to customer care is discussed during the induction programme attended by all new staff members, the aim being to stress that the delivery of good customer care is a key objective. Half-day customer care training sessions under the banner "How Can I Help You" have been delivered to over 500 staff since January 2009; a condensed version is included in the supervisory management programme.

The results of the Better Together inpatient experience survey, carried out in early 2010, paint a broader picture of patient experience and inform the direction for improvement activity. A local survey tool for use in inpatient settings has been piloted and is scheduled to be introduced in Autumn 2010.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The Board is asked to note:

- NHS Lanarkshire's performance in the efficient and effective management of complaints in 2009/10
- That complaints are one of a range of avenues open to patients and their representatives to deliver feedback to the Board

- The service improvements that arose following review of complaints
- That the Operating Committees receive complaints reports on a quarterly basis.

5. FURTHER INFORMATION

For further information or clarification of any issues in this paper please contact: Shona Welton, Head of Patient Affairs, 01698 245197.