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Complaints Annual Report

1 April 2009 to 31 March 2010

Introduction

Following extensive consultation, 1 April 2009 saw the introduction of the new Local Authority and NHS Complaints (England) regulations. The new regulations in conjunction with guidance published by the Department of Health “Listening Responding Improving” put the patient or complainant at the centre of every complaint. Every complainant is now invited to discuss how they would like their complaint investigated and responded to as well as agree the timescales for any investigation.

People wishing to complain about NHS services can if they wish now complain to NHS West Sussex (PCT) as commissioner of services rather than to the service provider itself. The PCT considers such complaints and decides whether or not it is appropriate for the PCT to handle them. Where complaints are referred to other organisations for investigation and response a copy of the response is requested so that any learning arising from the complaint can be shared across the PCT area.

The key areas to be covered in the annual report are the number and subject of complaints received, and actions and learning arising out of complaints.

Complaints management

To improve customer services within NHS West Sussex and also as a result of the new complaints regulations, the existing Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) and Complaints Team merged to form the Customer Service Unit (CSU) in June 2009. As a result of the publicity campaign to advertise the new unit, numbers of complaints received as well as PALS enquiries and issues have increased.

Complaints are managed in the CSU and all PCT staff receive training at induction regarding customer service, customer enquiries and complaints. In addition PCT managers receive training on investigating complaints at mandatory Integrated Risk Management Training.

The PCT complaints policy was revised in June 2009 and again in July 2010 to ensure compliance with the new regulations. Guidance is included in the policy for staff to assist them in dealing with complaints.

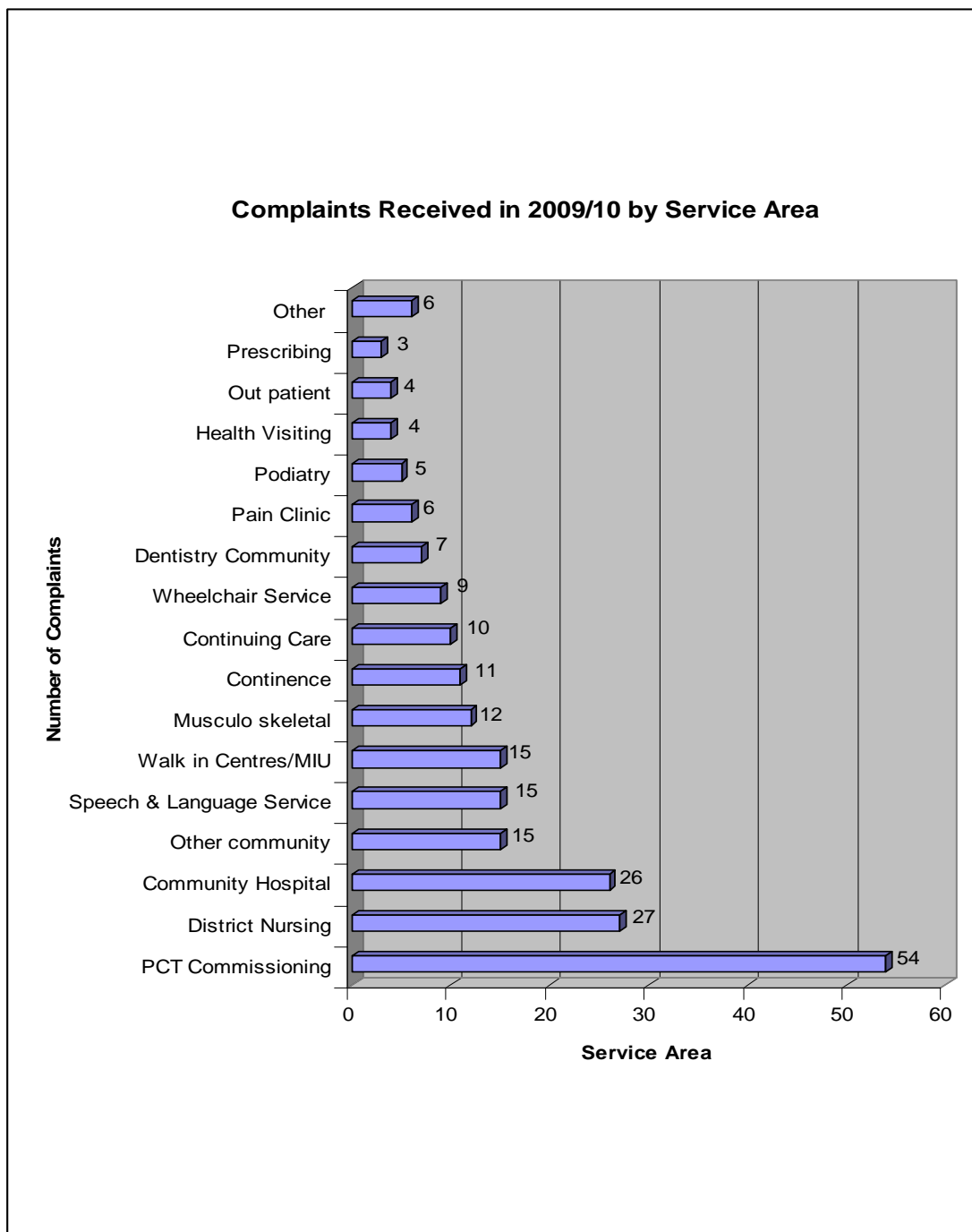
The CSU provides regular reports of patient feedback including complaints and issues notified through PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service), to the PCT Quality Management Committee (QMC). In addition the Complaints Manager has worked closely with the PCT Medical Director and Director of Quality to develop procedures to ensure clinical complaints are reviewed appropriately.

Number of complaints received

The Department of Health (DH) monitors complaint activity in hospitals and community services each year via the annual K041 (a) returns. The information collected contributes to the improvement of the patient experience and is published by the DH. Independent contractors' (GPs and dentists) complaints are also monitored via the K041 (b) returns but this information is not included in this report as each contractor is obliged to publish their own individual annual complaints report.

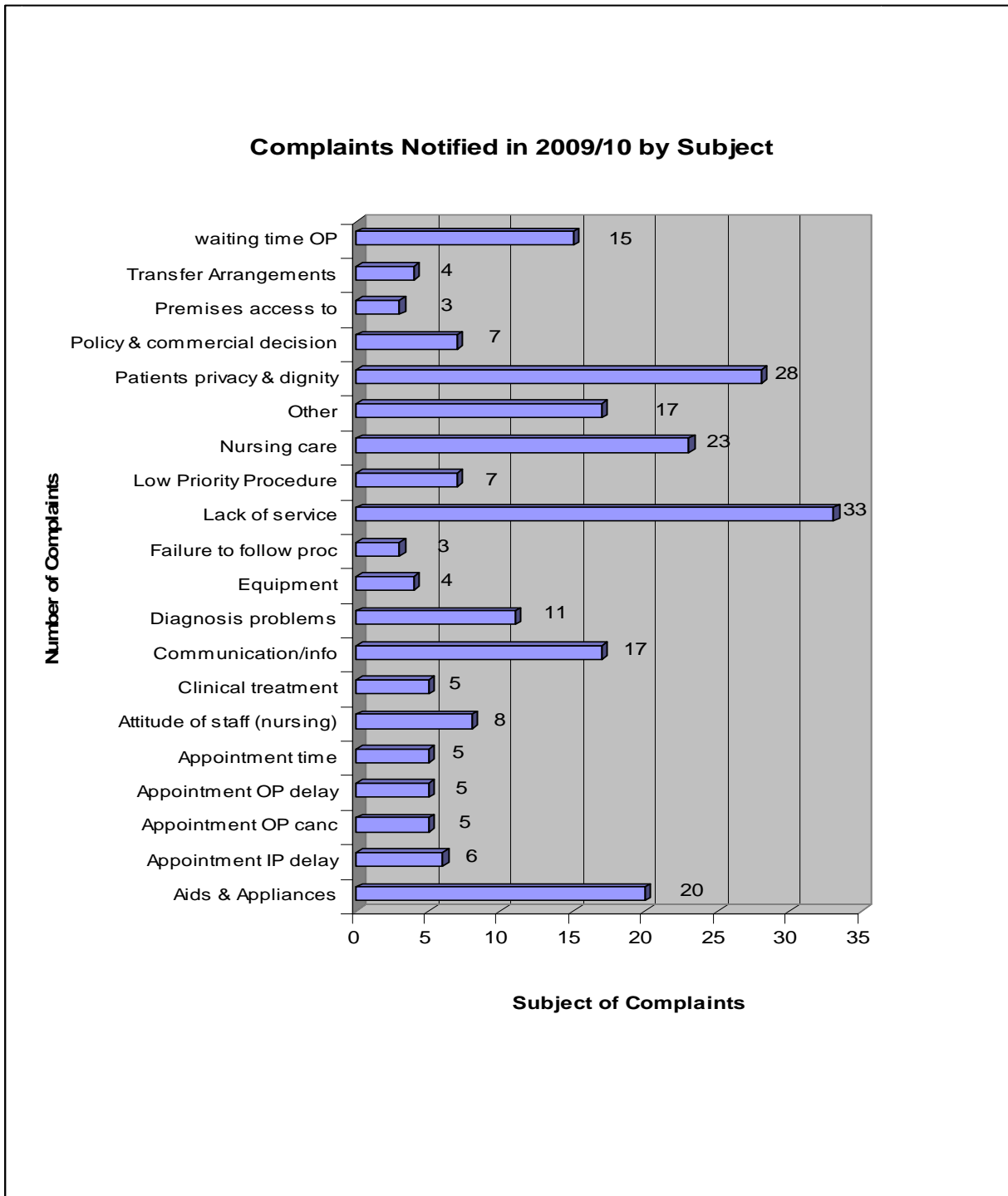
The total number of complaints received by NHS West Sussex including complaints made about PCT commissioning as well as community services was 229. The following graphs provide information about the number of complaints received by service, subject and profession as collected by the Department of Health.

Complaints by service area



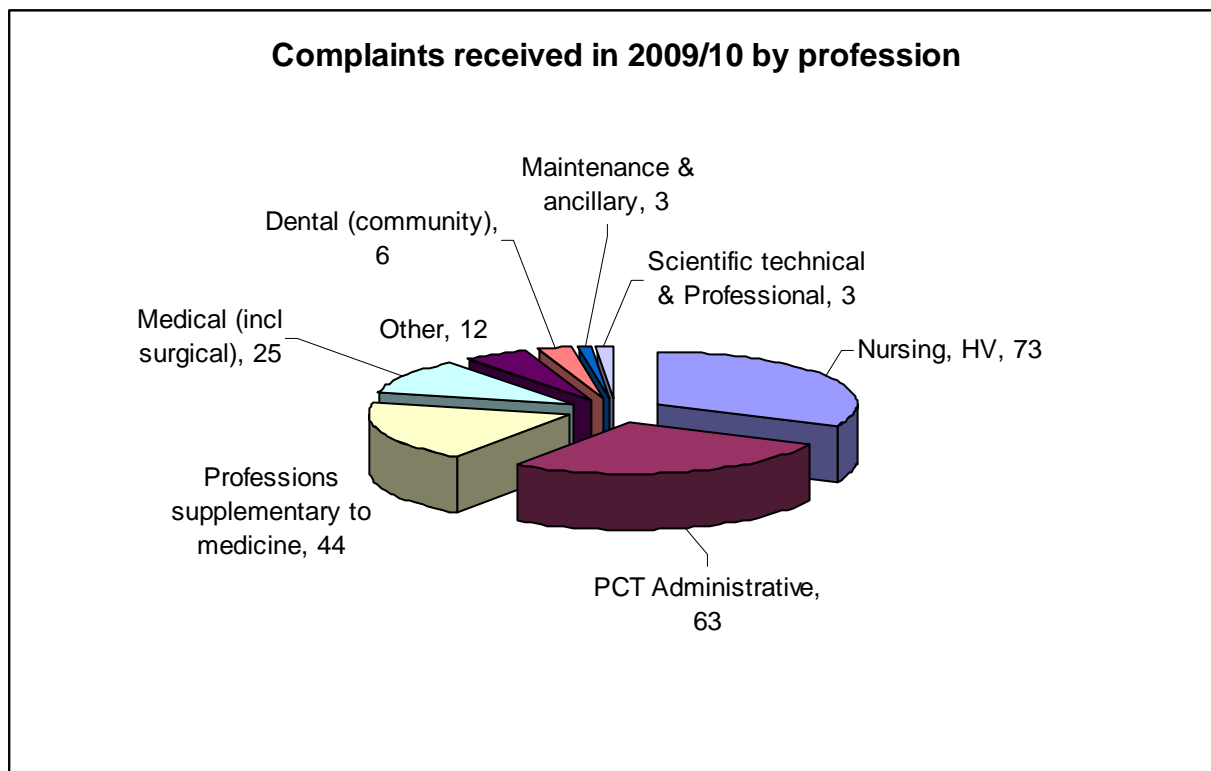
(Where two or less complaints were received regarding a particular service area, these are included in the "other" total)

Complaints by subject



(Where two or less complaints were received about a particular subject, these are included in the "other" total)

Complaints by profession



Actions and learning undertaken as a result of complaints

Various actions and service improvements were implemented during the year 2009/10 as a result of both complaints and issues notified to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS), some of which are detailed below:

- Parents told us they experienced difficulty in accessing speech and language therapy services for their children. A needs analysis was undertaken including collating the views of patients and parents and a new service specification has been agreed with the providers of the service.
- Fifteen complaints were received about the Wheelchair Service. Following a full service review and patient satisfaction survey a new service specification has been prepared for agreement with the service provider and a separate specification will be prepared for the children's service.
- Some patients advised us that they experienced long waiting times for appointments at the dental sedation service in East Grinstead. A new sedation service was contracted in Steyning but this issue will continue to be monitored by the Dental Contracting Team.
- Many patients and carers told us that they were unhappy with availability and quality of continence products following change of supplier. A service review was held which led to the introduction of a continence panel to review cases on an individual basis and provide alternative products where appropriate. The continence service was also selected to pilot individual budgets, allowing patients further choice as to where to obtain products.
- Patients in the north of the county told us they were regularly visiting a hospital consultant in their local town yet had to travel to a hospital in another town to collect their medication. NHS West Sussex worked with our partner organisations and a local arrangement was agreed and community pharmacists were trained to dispense the medication locally.
- Patients told us that they were having difficulty claiming their travel costs after attending some independent community services. We raised this matter with our contract managers who took steps to ensure that all of our providers were aware of the systems that should be in place.

Conclusion

This has been a year of change for the PCT in terms of reviewing complaints policies and practices to ensure that complaints are managed in accordance with the law and good practice guidance. Following the merger of the complaints and PALS teams to form the CSU, a more seamless and complainant-centred approach has been provided which is focussed on learning from complaints. It is anticipated that during 2010/11 this will be embedded and developed further.



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It is the job of NHS West Sussex to help people to live healthily and stay well, and to ensure that everyone living and working in the area has access to high quality health services which meet their needs.

To do this we commission (plan, buy, and check) health services from a range of providers including hospitals, GPs, community services, voluntary organisations and the independent sector, ensuring that the best value for money is obtained.

We also commission services such as flu immunisations, cancer screening and health visiting for the people of West Sussex.

We listen to and learn from everyone who has a view on how NHS services should be provided. You can find out more about what we do, and how you can get involved at www.westsussex.nhs.uk

NHS West Sussex
1 The Causeway
Goring-by-Sea
Worthing
West Sussex BN12 6BT

Tel: 01903 708400

Web: www.westsussex.nhs.uk

NHS West Sussex is the working name of West Sussex Primary Care Trust