

COMPLAINTS RETURN

In April 2009 the DHSSPS issued new guidelines for the management and resolution of complaints (Complaints in Health & Social Care: Standards & Guidelines for Resolution and Learning). All regulated establishments and agencies must operate a complaints procedure that meets the requirements of applicable Regulations, relevant Minimum Standards and HSC Complaints Procedure.

This new HSC Complaints Procedure has removed RQIA from undertaking Stage 2 investigations. It has instead introduced a new single tier where complaints are expected to be resolved by local resolution.

However RQIA has responsibility to record and monitor all outcomes and report on complaints activity within the regulated sector.

All regulated establishments and agencies are required to provide RQIA, on request, with a statement containing a summary of all complaints made during the preceding 12 months and the action that was taken.

Providers are reminded that the DHSSPS define a complaint as:

“An expression of dissatisfaction that requires a response”

Complainants may not always use the word “complaint”. They may offer a comment or suggestion that can be extremely helpful. It is important to recognise those comments that are really complaints and need to be handled as such.

A complaint may be made by a person about any matter connected with the provision of the service:

- a patient or client;
- former patients, clients or visitors using HSC services and facilities;
- someone acting on behalf of existing or former patients or clients, providing they have obtained the patient’s or client’s consent;
- parents (or persons with parental responsibility) on behalf of a child;
- any appropriate person in respect of a patient or client unable by reason of physical or mental capacity to make the complaint himself or who has died e.g. the next of kin.

Accurate recording of complaints is not only a regulatory responsibility, providers should view complaints and the correct management of complaints as opportunities to improve:

- outcomes for services users;
- the quality of their services; and
- service user experiences.

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority is requesting that as part of the annual return of information prior to an inspection taking place that all providers will be asked to complete a record summary of complaints they received in the preceding year.

In order to make it more convenient for providers and improve the accuracy of data collection managers are asked to complete the attached form.

All complaints received by the service should be recorded on the form using the drop down boxes provided.

Providers are asked to complete the attached form with any complaints they have received from **1 January 2013 to 31 December 2013**.

The completed form should be returned with the self assessment framework and other pre inspection materials.