

HSE Your Service Your Say

Anonymised Feedback Learning Casebook

Quarter 2 2023

The second quarter edition of the casebook for 2023 presents a total of 17 cases covering both complaints and compliments received by Hospital Groups, Community Healthcare Organisations and National Services.

The casebook features a total of **10 complaints**; 5 complaints from Hospital Groups, 3 from Community Healthcare Organisations and 2 from National Services that were investigated and/or reviewed along with their outcomes. The casebook also features **7 compliments**; 4 from Hospital Groups and 3 from Community Healthcare Organisations, which highlight the learning to be gained from positive Patient and Service User feedback.

Key issue categories:

Complaints

- *Communication and Information*
- *Safe and Effective Care*
- *Access*
- *Dignity and Respect*
- *Participation*
- *Improving Health*
- *Accountability*

Compliments

- *Safe and Effective Care*
- *Communication and Information*
- *Improving Health*
- *Dignity and Respect*
- *Access*

The publication of the casebook is part of the HSE's commitment to use Patient and Service User feedback as a tool for learning and to facilitate the sharing of that learning.



Introduction

The cases presented in the casebook contain themes and issues that need to be examined in the context of quality and service improvement. The learning gained from Patient and Service User feedback helps target and prioritise improvement efforts as well as highlighting good practice to be promoted and replicated.

The casebook features a total of 17 cases comprising of 10 complaints and 7 compliments received by Hospital Groups, Community Healthcare Organisations and National Services covering the second quarter of 2023.

The dominant theme for complaints in this Q2 2023 edition of the casebook relate to *Communication and Information* with this category featuring in 7 out of the 10 complaint cases presented. This was closely followed by *Safe and Effective Care* which featured in 5 of the complaint cases. Other categories such as *Access, Dignity and Respect, Participation, Improving Health, Accountability and Privacy* also featured.

Communication and Information relates to issues such as general communication skills, providing information or explanations, checking understanding and keeping the Patient/Service User informed in a timely manner.

Safe and Effective care issues concern the level of care and supports provided as well as the accuracy and availability of health care data/records. *Access* relates to the scheduling of appointments and facilities provided to Patients, Services Users and their families while waiting, particularly in the ED. *Dignity and Respect* concerns how care is delivered and being responsive to individual care needs as well as being mindful of the appropriateness of interactions. *Participation* relates to involving the Patient and /or their family and relatives, as appropriate, in the delivery of care and informing them of issues, while *Improving Health* concerns the other care needs of Patients and Service Users. *Accountability* relates to the management of patient feedback.

The positive feedback received mainly related to the category of Safe and Effective Care with this featuring in 5 out of the 7 compliments presented. The other categories of positive feedback featured are *Communication and Information, Improving Health, Dignity and Respect* and *Access* with one or more of these categories represented in 6 of the 7 compliments presented.

The casebook will be widely circulated to staff within the HSE and shared with Complaints Managers who will consider the learning from these cases.

Learning from feedback is fundamental in providing high quality healthcare services. Listening to and acting on the views, concerns and experiences of patients, Service Users and their families enable us to guide decision making to improve services and provide the best possible care.

Hospital Group

Category: Communication and Information (Information) (Communication Skills); Access (Hospital Facilities)

Status: Upheld

Background to Complaint

The parent of a Service User submitted a complaint regarding their visit to the hospital during a busy period in the Emergency Department (ED). The Service User's parent highlighted a number of observations that they felt, if dealt with, could significantly improve the experience of those attending the ED.

The observations included:

- A phone charging unit capable of charging 12 phones was not functioning.
- Another phone charging point was not in a practical position and there was a queue to use it due to the other charging corner not working.
- A lack of amenities to buy food in the evening time, or a lack of information/posters to direct people where to go for food.
- A lack of clarity over the queuing system in the ED, this led to frustrated Service Users regarding their wait time to be seen by a doctor.
- The Service User's time in ED proceeded past midnight. Some Service Users attempted to turn off the lights as they were very tired, however a security guard was abrupt in how they communicated that this was not allowed as it was a hazard.
- The Service User felt that it would have been helpful if a staff member (nurse, doctor, administration person, healthcare assistant, volunteer) could have walked around periodically to engage with worried and tired service users and to provide updates on wait times.

Investigation

The Complaints Officer phoned the parent to acknowledge and discuss their complaint and they were satisfied that the Complaints Officer would bring their feedback to the relevant personnel for their consideration and learning.

Outcome and Learning

The Complaints Officer brought the feedback to the relevant ED Leads

- The ED lead confirmed that the charging unit had only recently been installed and was now fully functioning.
- They acknowledged that there is no out of hours' canteen but highlighted that although limited, there are vending machines available.
- The nursing lead confirmed that they would remind shift leaders to make regular informative announcements to families regarding wait times in ED as this remained a necessity given that ED, while out of the winter period, was still extremely busy at the time of the complaint.



Hospital Group

Category: Dignity and Respect (Delivery of Care); Access (Hospital Facilities)

Status: Compliment

Background to Compliment

During a particularly busy period in the Emergency Department (ED), a Paediatric Emergency Medicine Consultant contacted the Complaints Team due to a number of local complaints they had received in the ED regarding a lack of basic facilities for Service Users who were experiencing lengthy waits for admission. The doctor wished to advocate for these Service Users.

Nature of Positive Feedback

The Complaints Team discussed the ED concerns and it was suggested that perhaps the volunteer service and hospital accommodation could support in providing relief to Service Users while they await admission.

A Complaints Officer contacted the Assistant Director of Nursing (ADoN) over ED, the ED Clinical Nurse Manager (CNM), Deputy Support Services Manager for hospital accommodation and the hospital's volunteer representative. The Complaints Officer briefed those relevant on the situation and linked them with the ED CNM to work on potential relief options.

By the end of the day, it had been arranged that two volunteers would arrive the next morning to provide two hours of respite for Service Users. A mini hygiene station for was set up in the hospital's accommodation where they could also avail of tea, coffee / toast or cereal. Service Users were also offered the use of its newly renovated bathroom / shower-room which includes two stand up showers and a bathtub.

The hygiene station included:

- Sanitary products
- Bath towels
- Face wipes
- Toothbrushes / toothpaste
- Shampoo / Conditioner
- Shower gels / bath salts
- Hairbrushes / Hair Dryer
- Deodorants

Outcome and Learning

Overcrowding in hospitals can present numerous challenges to staff and Service Users in ED. Providing basic facilities and supplies in these difficult circumstances can greatly improve their experience in ED. The collaboration of staff in this instance and thinking about the problem in a new way and in a new perspective allowed even short respite in a low cost effective way. The initiative continues on an ad hoc basis and both staff and Service Users have expressed their gratitude, some of which is outlined below.

Nursing reported that "*this initiative has had a very positive impact on both our staff and the service users in the ED*" and that "*Service Users were able to have some time to themselves to stretch their legs, grab a cuppa or have a shower as they wished which we are very grateful to Hospital Accommodation for facilitating*".

Staff on the floor reported very positive feedback from Service Users regarding this and it is down to the kindness of the volunteers that this could happen.

Hospital Accommodation reported that from those who availed of the hygiene station, the feedback was of a positive nature and they expressed their gratitude. They reported that this initiative “*was a very low cost and simple act of kindness to offer service users while they experienced lengthy delays due to the strain on the service in ED. My team and I would be more than happy to facilitate this service again at any time. A small act of kindness in these situations can make such a big difference. As the saying goes “Never underestimate the power of a long hot shower”.*

The Volunteer Service said they were “*thrilled to have been included in this initiative, and our volunteers were happy to be able to provide support directly inside the ED. We felt the collaboration with the hospital’s accommodation was excellent, as it gave Service Users a quiet place to go, and those who went to use the showers, on the first few days the volunteers were in, came down feeling significantly refreshed. It was easier to encourage Service Users to take this break for showers as they would not necessarily have the time or support once they were admitted on to the wards*“.

The Volunteer Service also reported that on hearing more about the challenges with moving Service Users to be admitted from ED and seeing it in practice, they are now distributing a pilot of packs that include basic supplies in it such as a wash cloth, toothbrush, and sanitary products. They are “*looking forward to seeing if donations of these resources might be of support in the times when volunteers might not be available. All in all a great extension of the support the volunteers give in a new space to meet the needs of service users better!*”

Hospital Group

Category: Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care); Participation (Patients/Family/Relatives); Improving Health (Catering)

Status: Upheld

Background to Complaint

A Patient commenced on a liquid diet in preparation for a procedure. However the procedure did not take place as the Patient was unable to tolerate it.

The Patient was not returned to a normal diet despite requests from family members.

Investigation

The Complaints Officer communicated with the Multidisciplinary Team (MDT) involved in the care of the Patient.

Outcome and Learning

Gaps in communications in the MDT were identified which resulted in the Patient’s diet not being returned to normal in a timely manner.

A full apology was given to the Patient and their family and it was acknowledged that the episode of care experienced was below expected standards.

Hospital Group

Category: Communication and Information (Information)

Status: Not Upheld

Background to Complaint

A complaint was received through Your Service Your Say. The Patient complained that following discharge from the Hospital, they were to be referred to Gynaecology Service and an MRI was to be arranged. As there was no follow up appointment issued, the Patient travelled to the Hospital to chase up on the referral. Following this, the Patient sent repeated emails enquiring about the referral as they had chronic pain and needed further treatment. The Patient wanted to speak to a Complaints Officer to discuss her complaint.

Investigation

Having discussed the complaint with the Patient and apologising for their experience, the Complaints Officer spoke with the Consultant involved in the Patient's initial care and also the Consultant's Secretary. The Consultant advised that this Patient was no longer under their care and that a referral request to another Consultant's Private Rooms as requested by the Patient had been made. However, the Consultant advised that there is a long wait for an appointment. The Patient would have been triaged once the referral was received by the new Consultant and an appointment issued.

The Consultant suggested that maybe the patient would like to attend an alternate Consultant and perhaps they would receive an appointment to be seen earlier, this could be arranged if it was agreeable with the Patient. The MRI referred to by the Patient would be booked by the receiving Consultant. The Consultant's secretary advised that she had informed the Patient that the referral had been sent.

Outcome and Learning

The Complaints Officer rang the Patient and advised of the above and informed them that their referral had been made and would have been triaged by the receiving Consultant. The long waiting times for appointments was explained. The Patient was informed that, should they wish to be referred to an alternate Consultant, this could be arranged and waiting times might be shorter. The Patient asked for a copy of the referral letter. This was organised and posted to the Patient.

The Complaints Officer again apologised to the Patient and assured them that it is the intention at all times is to provide a patient centred service and regretted that the service did not meet with their expectations.

Hospital Group

Category: Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care); Dignity and Respect (Delivery of Care)

Status: Upheld

Background to Complaint

The Hospital received a complaint from the family of a Patient who presented to the Emergency Department very unwell. Due to the capacity demands in the Hospital, the Patient unfortunately had to wait in the Emergency Department for 4 days while waiting for an inpatient bed. The complaint detailed how the Patient required help with their personal care needs and that no help was available to the patient for the period of their stay in the Emergency Department. This led to the Patient's personal care needs being neglected, which was cause of embarrassment and discomfort to the Patient. The complaint continued, that the patient did not receive help with their personal care needs until they were eventually moved to an inpatient ward and allocated a bed. This caused immense distress for the family of the patient also.

Investigation

The complaint was received by the Complaints Officer for the Emergency Department. The Complaints Officer raised the complaint with Nursing Management in the Emergency Department (Clinical Nurse Manager 3 (CNM3) and Assistant Director or Nursing). The CNM3 made contact with Patient and the complainant to apologise sincerely for their experience in the Emergency Department. They assured both the Patient and the complainant that the level of care received by the Patient fell far short of what would be expected. A plan was put in place to communicate to all staff throughout the Emergency Department in relation to patients with additional personal care needs to enable appropriate assistance be provided to avoid a repeat of the experience of this patient.

Outcome and Learning

Awareness was raised by the Emergency Department Nurse Management team, who communicated to all staff at the pre shift huddles and through their mentorship groups that all patients must be offered assistance with their personal needs. They stressed that particular attention must be afforded to patients who may be in the more vulnerable patient groups. The gap in this Patient's care was identified with the staff involved, and a learning piece put in place with their direct line manager with the support of the Clinical Skills Facilitator and Senior Nurse Management in the Emergency Department.

Hospital Group

Category: Access (Appointment); Communication and Information (Information)

Status: Upheld

Background to Complaint

The parent of a Patient emailed via Your Service Your Say advising that their child had not received a follow up appointment since the departure of the Consultant Paediatric Neurologist from the service and they were very concerned and worried about their child's medication levels and general lack of follow up care.

Investigation

The Complaints Officer retrieved the Patient's healthcare records and discussed the complaint with the Consultant Paediatrician covering the service. The Consultant Paediatrician issued the Patient with a follow up appointment. This was communicated to the parent of the child. The parent was very happy with this response. The parent had additional queries in relation to further tests that were required and was advised that this would be managed through a separate Department.

Outcome and Learning

The parent was very happy to have received such a quick response and for the issues that were causing concern to be resolved so satisfactorily. The importance of clear communication with patients and their families was a key learning from this complaint. Where there had been a change in Consultant cover for any service, this needs to be communicated with patients and their families.

Hospital Group

Category: Communication and Information (Information); Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care)

Status: Compliment

Background to Compliment

Through Your Service Your Say, a parent of a Patient wrote to the Hospital to express their thanks to the nurses and healthcare professionals who cared for her child who was regularly being admitted to services.

Nature of Positive Feedback

The parent expressed how amazing the nurses were and named the nurses individually. The parent also described them as being “*super helpful, attentive and hardworking*” and how they deserved recognition. The parent was very impressed with the “*wonderful teachers*” in the Hospitals school who do amazing work.

Outcome and Learning

The importance of clinical staff being so helpful and attentive to patients and their families both from a clinical and a non-clinical point of view cannot be underestimated. This very positive feedback was communicated back to all of the staff involved.

The importance of our staff wearing their “My name is” badges, as it is always so important that our patients and their parents/guardians know who is looking after them as this helps create a more welcome and relaxed atmosphere in a clinical setting.

Hospital Group

Category: Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care)

Status: Compliment

Background to Compliment

A Patient was admitted to a Medical Ward in the Hospital as an in-patient. While the Patient had been in hospital on numerous occasions this was the Patient’s first time to spend time in this particular Hospital.

Nature of Positive Feedback

The Patient advised that from the moment they were admitted they experienced nothing but the very best of care, from all disciplines of staff. They stated that the ethos of the hospital is exceptional and nothing is a problem or too much trouble for any of the staff. There is always time for the patients. The Patient described the hospital as a “gem” and they wanted to acknowledge this and thank staff most sincerely for all that they do.

Outcome and Learning

This positive feedback was communicated to all staff involved in the care of this Patient which highlights their commitment to a patient centred service and acknowledges the appreciation from the Patient.

Hospital Group

Category: Communication and Information (Information) (Communication Skills)

Status: Compliment

Background to Compliment

A Transition Clinic was established to ease the transfer of metabolic patients transitioning from paediatric services to adult services.

Service Users would meet with staff in the clinic in advance of the transfer to have any questions answered, be informed of what to expect and the differences in adult versus paediatric services as well as preparing the Service User for being responsible for making their own decisions in an adult service. This approach would help to ensure that the Service User's first appointment in adult services would be less daunting and stressful.

Nature of Positive Feedback

A Service User contacted the service in praise of the initiative. They commented that, “*the appointment allowed me to ask questions from the staff of the adult service and it definitely made it easier for my first appointment. It also helped that the staff were lovely. They gave me the rundown of what it is like and the differences between the services, which to be completely honest aren't that big. The main difference for me was that instead of staying in the one room and the nurses or dieticians coming to me I had to go to different rooms to meet them but they are all connected to each other, so it was pretty handy. The upside to having to wait till they were ready is that I was able to watch TV. I could also go get a coffee while I was waiting.*

I may sound a bit weird saying this, but I actually enjoyed the visit. The staff were so kind, and all the decisions were ultimately down to me. For example, my bloods were extremely high, and the staff just said, ‘what do you want to do?’ Don't get me wrong they gave me advice, but it really is down to me, and I appreciated that. It may seem stressful or sad leaving the children's hospital and maybe the fact that you have to take more responsibility for yourself may seem scary, but I loved it and I have little stickers with my name and age for my bloods and I'm obsessed.”

Outcome and Learning

This initiative demonstrates how a person centred approach underpinned by effective listening and good communication can contribute to a person's positive experience and support them when transitioning between services but also allow them autonomy in the management of their condition which can be very empowering.

Community Healthcare Organisation

Category: Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care); Dignity and Respect (End of Life Care)

Status: Compliment

Background to Compliment

A family contacted the Community Nursing Unit when their family member, who was a resident of the Unit, passed away. The Community Nursing Unit provides long term care to residents with a diagnosis of Dementia, chronic disease and having a palliative trajectory.

Nature of Positive Feedback

The family complimented the service and expressed their appreciation for the attention given to their loved one and for the support received by the family.

The family were complimentary to staff around the care received by their loved one during their years of stay in the Unit and at the palliative care and especially, the end of life care provided in the last few days of life.

The family had previously, and throughout their loved ones stay, complimented the care provided. The family commended the service with thank you notes and verbal appreciation and praise for all the staff including medical, nursing, security and catering. The compliments highlighted the excellent support and care received by their loved one over the last four years and reflected how much it meant to the family. They praised the service for the attention given and the safe and clean surroundings.

Outcome and Learning

The staff of the Community Nursing Unit were delighted with the positive feedback and appreciated the family providing this.

The management of the Community Nursing Unit highlighted to staff how their dedication to providing a quality and caring service had such an impact of their residents and their families.

The management of the Community Nursing Unit is committed to continuing to collect and discuss compliments with staff to reinforce quality practices and increase morale and job satisfaction.

To ensure and support the provision of a person centred and quality service, the management of the Community Nursing Unit will:

- continue to strive for excellence by promoting the best quality practice and care to residents.
- continue with active participation in CARU programme to support staff in providing quality end of life care.
- continue to promote a good learning environment for staff and encourage them to attend training to strengthen their knowledge around holistic palliative care and symptom management.

Community Healthcare Organisation

Category: Access (Accessibility/Resources); Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care); Dignity and Respect (Alleged Inappropriate Behaviour)

Status: Upheld (Security issue); Not Upheld (Delivery of Care)

Background to Complaint

A family member of a Service User contacted the Complaints Officer in relation to the perceived inadequate level of care and supports provided to the Service User whilst an inpatient. In addition the family member complained with regard to alleged inappropriate interactions (conversations and borrowing of cigarettes) with the Service User by an onsite Security Officer. The matters raised fell within the categories of access to services, delivery of safe and effective care and dignity and respect.

Investigation

The Complaints Officer spoke with the family member and undertook an investigation of the issues raised and sought input from the multi-disciplinary team and operations staff.

The Complaints Officer did not uphold those aspects of the complaint in relation to access to services and delivery of safe and effective care as the evidence did not support the assertions outlined by the family member.

The Complaints Officer did however uphold that aspect of the complaint in relation to the inappropriate interactions by the Security Officer with the Service User as it was acknowledged by the private security provider that the interaction as outlined did occur.

Outcome and Learning

In relation to the Security Guard issue, the complaint highlighted the fact that there was no guidance or documentation provided to the onsite external Security Officers located across the mental health service. As a result of this, a Code of Conduct for issue to the Contracted Security Company was developed. The guide provides a reference and guide for Security Officers on the sensitive nature of the service and the need to be mindful of a Service User's dignity and respect, confidentiality and to act professionally at all times in their interactions with Service Users and staff.

Community Healthcare Organisation

Category: Communication and Information (Information); Accountability (Patient feedback)

Status: Upheld

Background to Complaint

A Service User submitted a complaint about lack of resources in the provision of supports and care at home in keeping with recommendations based on assessed needs.

The complaint was examined and a report was issued to the service user that indicated it was an interim report.

As further correspondence following that report was not received, the Service User sought the support of an advocate and the issue was subsequently referred to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Investigation

The Ombudsman examined the information and identified failings in how the information was communicated, in particular that using the term 'interim' suggested further follow-up communication would be issued on the matter, when in fact correspondence on the complaint process had concluded.

The Ombudsman also found that a recommendation made was not realistic as it proposed a model of care not in keeping with existing models available from the service. This created an expectation for the Service User on which the service could not deliver.

Outcome and Learning

The Office of the Ombudsman upheld the complaint and identified associated learning that emphasised the importance of clear communication with complainants to ensure realistic expectations.

As a consequence of that learning the local training supports for Complaint Officers were revised to reflect the emphasis as requested on clear communication and appropriate recommendations.

Community Healthcare Organisation

Category: Access (Appointment); Communication and Information (Information); Safe and Effective Care (Health Care Records)

Status: Upheld

Background to Complaint

A Service User submitted a written complaint in relation to their experiences in accessing mental health services as an outpatient. The Service User had moved address out of the catchment area but returned for an appointment with the Senior Registrar for review. However, on presentation for review, the appointment could not proceed as planned as it had not been scheduled in the new Senior Registrar's diary. In addition, the clinical file could not be located and so the appointment could not proceed as planned. The Service User was also upset as a letter of transfer to the care of the new community mental health team had not been completed.

Investigation

The Complaints Officer spoke with the Service User and undertook an investigation of the issues raised and sought input from the multi-disciplinary team.

Outcome and Learning

The Complaints Officer upheld the complaint as outlined and apologised to the Service User for the lack of a service which was due to human and systems error. The letter of transfer was completed.

The complaint highlighted that both system and human error contributed to the Service User not receiving their appointment as planned. The Complaints Officer made a recommendation that the issues raised in the complaint by the Service User are to be reviewed by the relevant community mental health team with a view to ensuring that similar issues do not reoccur in the future.

The Head of Service subsequently approved for the Service User be reimbursed for the expenditure which they incurred in availing of public transport to attend the appointment.

Community Healthcare Organisation

Category: Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care); Improving Health (Empowerment)

Status: Compliment

Background to Compliment

An older Service User was treated by the home visiting nursing team for two separate leg injuries.

Nature of Positive Feedback

The Service User was delighted with the treatment provided saying that it, '*made a world of difference to my life and recovery. Each nurse was excellent, always in good humour, putting me at ease and giving me the confidence to get back to some semblance of normality.*'

Outcome and Learning

This compliment provides an excellent example of the right care provided by the right team in the right place. Treating people at home and preventing unnecessary hospital admission is a key aim of community healthcare.

Community Healthcare Organisation

Category: Safe and Effective Care (Treatment and Care); Improving Health (Empowerment)

Status: Compliment

Background to Compliment

The Physiotherapy service recently commenced a new, updated and evidence-based version of a Falls Prevention Programme. The programme is targeted at older people living at home who are at risk of falling. The programme consists of weekly exercise classes for 12 weeks.

Nature of Positive Feedback

A Service User attended the programme. They wrote to the Manager to say 'well done' to the HSE and to compliment the staff involved for delivering the programme in a very caring and professional manner. The Service User noted an improvement in their co-ordination, balance and confidence as a result of their participation in the programme.

Outcome and Learning

Supporting people to live independently and safely in their own home is a key aim of community healthcare. Such initiatives empower people to participate in maintaining their own well-being. Providing this in a person centred manner and with a caring approach encourages people to get involved and be more proactive in their own care.

National Service

Category: Communication and Information (Information); Safe and Effective Care (Health Care Records)

Status: Partially Upheld

Background to Complaint

Service User contacted the service following receipt of a routine letter. The Service User's complaint raised 2 concerns which were:

1. The letter received showed that their personal details contained inaccuracies that had not been there on previous communications.
2. The Service User had also sought answers pertaining to where some of their data was held and processed by the organisation but was not satisfied with the response that they had received.

Investigation

To investigate these issues the Complaints Officer engaged with the service's Information Governance Manager and the relevant programme staff to find out when and how the inaccuracies in the Service User's personal details came about. The programme team determined that the inaccuracies resulted from data received from an external data source which then was imported into the internal system. Once the cause was identified, the inaccuracies were immediately rectified in line with standard practice.

To investigate the second issue, the Complaints Officer liaised with the relevant staff member that had initially provided the Service User with answers pertaining to the holding and processing of their information. On reflection, the staff member acknowledged that they should have been more forthcoming with additional details. They explained that they had focused on making sure that they were answering all of the very specific questions asked but on hindsight could have anticipated that the Service User would have found some additional information helpful in trying to understand the service's information management processes. An apology was issued to the Service User.

Outcome and Learning

Relevant staff were reminded of the importance of putting additional checks in place to ensure data integrity, in so far as possible, on all internal and shared systems.

This complaint and the issues of good communication and of data transfer integrity were raised in an internal shared learning forum to highlight to staff the importance of accuracy when managing personal data. In addition, staff were advised to, where possible, empower Service Users to identify additional questions they may have during any communications about complex service processes.

National Service

Category: Communication and Information (Information)

Status: Partially Upheld

Background to Complaint

A Service User wrote in with a complaint regarding why their results and subsequent follow-up appointment had not been communicated to them. The Service User noted that they were concerned that they had somehow been forgotten and wanted to bring this to the service's attention in case there were other people who may also have been forgotten and not received their results. The Service User also mentioned that the wait times in the department were very long and, while this was to be expected, it would have been nice if someone had checked in with them every so often to see if they were okay during the wait time.

Investigation

As part of the investigation, the Complaints Officer directly contacted the Service User to discuss their concerns and explore their experience during and after the appointment. This enabled the Complaints Officer to discuss in detail the issues and to provide the Service User with a full explanation as to the reason why they hadn't yet received their results and follow-up. In addition, the Complaints Officer engaged with the Senior Management Team to raise the issues, including the issue of communicating delays whilst waiting to be seen during an appointment, with the aim of having them considered for future service improvements.

Outcome and Learning

An apology was issued to the Service User for the breakdown in communication. It was explained that the department does not issue results until an appointment is available because the department wants to avoid causing unnecessary worry for Service Users. It was also explained that the department has a robust system for managing Service User pathways which gave reassurance that Service Users were not being missed or forgotten. The issues raised were escalated to the Senior Management Team so that they could look at ways of improving communication with Service Users regarding their processes and any delays when attending appointments. Following the outcome, the Service User wrote in to say that they were very appreciative of the call by the Complaints Officer and the follow-up and reassured by the explanations provided.