
Minutes
Complaints Managers Governance and Learning Forum
10:00am-12:25pm Monday, 9th June 2025 via MS Teams

The meeting opened with welcoming all members present and outlining some housekeeping rules ahead of presentations.

1. Welcome and Introductions: The Assistant National Director (AND), National Complaints Governance and Learning Team, welcomed everyone present to the first forum of 2025 and acknowledged that a lot of changes have been happening in the intervening months between the last forum and today and welcomed members to raise any questions later in the meeting regarding any changes in process.

The AND updated attendees in relation to some new forum members.

2. Minutes from last meeting

Minutes were agreed.

Matters arising:

PAS: PAS will pull information in relation to Stage 2 complaints and how many were escalated beyond Stage 2. NCGLT will liaise with PAS offline regarding this.

Assisted Decision Making Act and information in relation to the Public Sector Duty: NCGLT confirmed that the Ombudsman's link to the Public Sector Duty information on their website has been circulated. There has also been contact with the HSE office for Human Rights and Equality Policy. Currently there is no information available online on the HSE's public sector duty. However it has been requested that they attend the September forum to provide further information on the HSE Assisted Decision Making Act and an update on the HSE Public Sector Duty Policy. If members have any questions in relation to the HSE Public Sector Duty or the Assisted Decision Making Act in the interim they may contact the HSE office for Human Rights and Equality Policy via adm@hs.ie.

Presentation Slides and Materials: Presentation Slides & materials were circulated to members

3. Welcome by National Director, Communications and Public Affairs

The National Director, Communications and Public Affairs acknowledged that the ongoing transition to the regional structure for the 6 health regions is bringing a number of changes to the structure of the HSE at the centre as well as at regional level and one of those changes is that the entity formerly known as HSE Communications is now known as HSE Communications and Public Affairs. New functions have come in under this division including National Complaints Governance & Learning as well as Parliamentary Affairs. This Complaints Managers forum falls under those new structures and he welcomed both previous and new members as well as guest speakers.

The National Director, Communications and Public Affairs highlighted that under the high level regional plans that were developed at the start of the structural changes it was decided that the new position of complaints at the centre would be applied at regional level so the governance of complaints and feedback would now come under Communications and Public Affairs at the regional level. The National Director confirmed there has been a lot of work done to devise a model for how complaints governance and management of feedback would work. NCGLT and Communications have worked with the Health Regions Programme Team to design a working model. It was acknowledged that to date there has been uneven implementation across the health regions as the REO's and management teams are still considering the models in relation to final decisions regarding how these models will operate within their region.

The National Director confirmed there has been a growing interest from the board in relation to complaints management, particularly in relation to how feedback and learning from complaints actually gets fed back into services for service improvement. He acknowledged that it was good to see pressure coming on the

work being translated to real change in the health service. He highlighted the importance of strong and meaningful contributions such as the quarterly publications of casebooks and for services to learn lessons and make changes to improve quality and safety.

The National Director concluded by stating that he looks forward to working with everybody ensuring the work has real impact on HSE services and ensuring that eventually as the transition to regional structures continues, that each region settles into a strong and workable approach to complaints management, governance and learning.

4. Overview of Forum and future direction (Terms of Reference): NCGLT

NCGLT presented an overview of the National Complaints Governance and Learning Forum and acknowledged that with the current restructuring of complaints at local level that it is an opportune time to take a fresh look at the future direction of the forum.

Regarding the Terms of Reference, it is a good opportunity to re-look at the purpose, objectives, structure and membership of the forum.

Action: Circulate the current TOR with the minutes for feedback purposes.

Action: Forum members are asked to seek feedback from colleagues (1 submission per health region) regarding a new TOR for the Forum and to submit this to NCGLT by 12th September 2025.

5. Address from the Office of the Ombudsman: Senior Investigator and Investigator

The Senior Investigator provided an overview of the Office of the Ombudsman and what they do.

The Investigator welcomed the update from the 2024 Learning to Get Better Self Assessment of Compliance but flagged concerns regarding non compliance of 4 out of 6 health regions in relation to the recommendation for appointment of Access Officers as required under the Disability Act 2005.

The Office of the Ombudsman confirmed that they have been and are happy to continue liaising with and working with the current arrangements pending the confirmation of new structures.

Discussion arose regarding whether there was any update on the Office of the Ombudsman end in relation to the introduction of clinical judgement complaints. It was confirmed that there was no update in relation to this and highlighted concerns regarding where the expertise would come from in order to introduce this function.

A forum member advised that they appreciate the point about not having access to clinical expertise however there are some active and engaged clinical directors. The Ombudsman representatives noted that the government have not extended their remit to clinical judgement to date and it is important not to overstep and encroach into the medical council or other regulatory bodies territory who currently hold that function.

It was noted that although the Northern Ireland ombudsman does hold this function, their remit is a much smaller area and it is believed that a panel of paid private independent advisors are used for such investigations which may not be a feasible model that could transfer over as we are dealing with a much larger population.

NCGLT noted that the introduction of clinical judgement complaints remains on the programme for government. Contact will be made with the DoH for an update and possibly invite the DoH back to the Forum to provide an update.

NCGLT queried whether the Office of the Ombudsman had noted any setbacks in relation to interactions with the HSE since the new structures came into place. The Ombudsman's representatives confirmed that there have been no changes as yet in relation to the contacts however delays in sending back responses

have been noted and vacancies across the services in the area of complaints has also been affecting responses. Concerns were voiced regarding trends in seeking extensions to timeframes for responses to the Office of the Ombudsman.

Action: NCGLT to seek an update regarding introduction of clinical judgment complaints and invite the DoH to return for an update.

6. Patient Advocacy Service 2024 Overview: *National Manager, PAS*

The National Manager presented an overview and update in relation to the Patient Advocacy Services including statistics and case study examples of their work.

The National Manager confirmed that PAS have rolled out an advertising campaign this year to increase engagement with services including introducing billboards in areas where they are seeing gaps or less engagement and awareness.

The Office of the Ombudsman noted that the case study mentioned that the PAS service attended a meeting with a person and queried whether that was an additional function they now offer. The PAS National Manager confirmed that in this particular case the PAS member attended as a support person but PAS do not speak on their behalf. It's not in a representative capacity but more of an emotional support function for this particular case. The representative from the Office of the Ombudsman queried if it would be okay if the Office of the Ombudsman stated that PAS can provide that function. PAS advised that this function would only be available with prior arrangement and would not be available as an emergency resource at short notice.

Another forum member highlighted that one of the issues noted under the incident management framework in the presentation was recommendations not being included in draft report. The forum member noted that recommendations should not be included in a draft report as the persons involved don't have opportunity to comment at that stage. The National Manager agreed to revert back regarding this query.

NCGLT welcomed the increase in engagement with PAS and successful outcomes when working with PAS. It was noted that the data would be useful to include in the MOU.

7. Member proposed agenda items: HSE West and North West

The forum member who raised the agenda items sent their apologies for the Forum and so could not pose their own questions. However, NCGLT briefly ran through the items raised in their absence.

(a) Update on the restructure in relation to service feedback at regional level.

This item was addressed by the National Director for National Communication and Public Affairs and by the AND, NCGLT throughout the forum. The Health Regions are still in the transitioning phase and it will likely be another number of months yet before there is progression towards an agreement on the model. In the meantime members should link in with the REO in their own region regarding any queries.

(b) YSYS Policy review date and Vexatious Complaints Policy review date

Both Regional staffing and structures need to be in place before the policies can be progressed to as the roles and responsibilities set out in those policies will need to be aligned with the change. The current YSYS policy remains fit for purpose.

(c) Support and training for Service Feedback/Complaints Managers

Once the leads for the service locally are identified NCGLT will meet with them as a group and identify their needs in this area. Currently there is support available through Consumer Affairs, through NCGLT and through online training and webinars available via HSeLanD. Members of this forum are a great resource to each other also.

8. Overview of the NCGLT Activity Report 2024: NCGLT

The Your Service Your Say Activity Report for 2024, which is now live on the HSE website at <https://www.hse.ie/eng/about/who/complaints/ncglit/> is a high level summary of the work undertaken by NCGLT during the past year. The report sets out CMS complaints and KPI data, training provided, casebooks published and the analysis of the Learning to Get Better Self Assessment compliance returns as well as providing an overview of our two frontline services; Your Service Your Say and Assessment of Need Disability Complaints Service. The full Activity Report has been presented to the HSE Senior Leadership Team. A presentation on YSYS office activity, CMS complaints data and KPI data was provided along with a brief summary of the casebooks published in 2024 and the analysis of the LTGB self-assessment returns data.

9. Any other Business:

a) HIQA and Nursing Homes

This is an issue that had been raised at a previous forum and that had been addressed with the Department of Health who confirmed that,

'our intention and understanding were that the provisions in relation to complaints processes in S.I. 628/2022 would not apply to nursing homes that fall under the remit of provisions in S.I.652/2006'. Therefore, 'in practical terms, this means that S.I. 628/2022 does not apply to HSE operated nursing homes.'

One area raised with NCGLT that their HIQA inspectors keep referring to the new Statutory Instruments under the Health Act 2007 Care and Welfare of Residents in Designated Centres for Older People. NCGLT have again raised this with the Department of Health to raise with HIQA. It was requested that anybody who continues to experience issues with HIQA quoting incorrect legislation on their inspection reports to email NCGLT directly.

Action: Forum members are asked to email NCGLT in relation to any issues with HIQA quoting incorrect legislation on inspection reports relating to complaints in HSE operated nursing homes.

b) Case Studies

Volunteers were sought to provide Case Study presentations for September forum. A rota will be be up and running for the December forum.

Action: All Presentation Slides & materials from today's meeting will be circulated to members.

Date of Next Meeting: Monday 29th September 2025.

Please note remaining Forum dates for 2025:

2025 Forum Dates	
• 29 th September 2025	• 1 st December 2025

Please note Casebook submission deadlines below for 2025:

2025 Casebook Submission Deadlines		
• 27 th June 2025	• 26 th September 2025	• 19 th December 2025