

Our ref: NB/LG/MM



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**Sent by email**

Dear Ms Myhill

**Annual Letter 2015/16**

Following the recent publication of my Annual Report I am pleased to provide you with the Annual Letter (2015/16) for **Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust**.

Overall my office's caseload has increased by 4% this year, but I am pleased to say that public body complaints fell by the same amount; only the second time in a decade this has happened. However, disappointingly the NHS in Wales was the only sector in my jurisdiction that saw a rise in complaints which now count for over a third of all public body complaints; a total increase of 51% in the last five years.

As expected most complaints about the health sector related to clinical treatment in hospital but I'm pleased to see a drop in the number about clinical treatment outside hospital. Complaint handling is one area that saw a significant increase this year – over 60%. This suggests that health boards need to do more to ensure they are adhering to Putting Things Right and correctly implementing their local complaint handling processes.

This year saw an encouraging 20% increase in the number of public body complaints settled voluntarily. Once again there has been a slight drop in the number of complaints upheld by my office and just under half the number of Public Interest Reports issued. Of the seven Public Interest reports issued, five related to health boards. These reports covered a range of themes including poor management of sepsis, incorrect discharge and failure to correctly treat stroke.

Whilst an ageing population and continued austerity is placing greater strain on our health service, we must endeavour to drive up standards to improve patient experience in Wales. One way to do this is by giving patients a voice through learning from complaints. One way I intend to do this is by issuing special reports highlighting particular themes that arise from my investigations. I published the first of these in February focusing on the poor quality of out of hours care in Welsh hospitals, which called for an independent systemic review. If the new Ombudsman legislation comes in to effect this year, I plan to use own initiative powers to drive more of these thematic reports.

Last year I assigned Improvement Officers to five of Wales' Health Boards, along with an overall lead for Health, placing greater emphasis on best practice and corporate cultural development. I hope that through better engagement with these bodies there will be an improvement in complaint handling and learning from complaints; however I believe fresh legislation is required to really have an impact on ending poor service delivery. Now the Fifth Assembly is in place we will be pushing ahead with the new powers and I hope to see the new PSOW Act introduced early next year.

You will find below a factsheet giving a breakdown of complaints data relating to your health board along with explanatory notes.

This correspondence is copied to the Chair of your Health Board for consideration by the board. I will also be sending a copy to your contact officer within your organisation and would again reiterate the importance of this role. Finally, a copy of all annual letters will be published on my website.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Nick Bennett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Nick Bennett

Ombudsman

## Factsheet

### Welsh Ambulance Trust

There was a 45% increase in the number of complaints received by my office about your Trust this year, and a small increase in the number taken forward to investigation. As expected the majority of complaints concern Ambulance Services, with Clinical Treatment in Hospital and Complaint Handling receiving one complaint each. There were two upheld reports issued in 2015/16 and although it has been recorded that one Public Interest Report was issued, it must be noted that this related to the health board element of the complaint and not the WAST element. As such I issued a Section 17 directive suspending the requirement for WAST to publicise the report.

#### A) Complaints received by my office

<b>Subject</b>	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
<b>Appointments/admissions/discharge and transfer procedures</b>	0	0
<b>Clinical treatment in hospital</b>	1	1
<b>Clinical treatment outside hospital</b>	0	1
<b>Recruitment and appointment procedures</b>	0	0
<b>Complaint-handling</b>	1	1
<b>Ambulance services</b>	14	7
<b>Other</b>	0	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	16	11

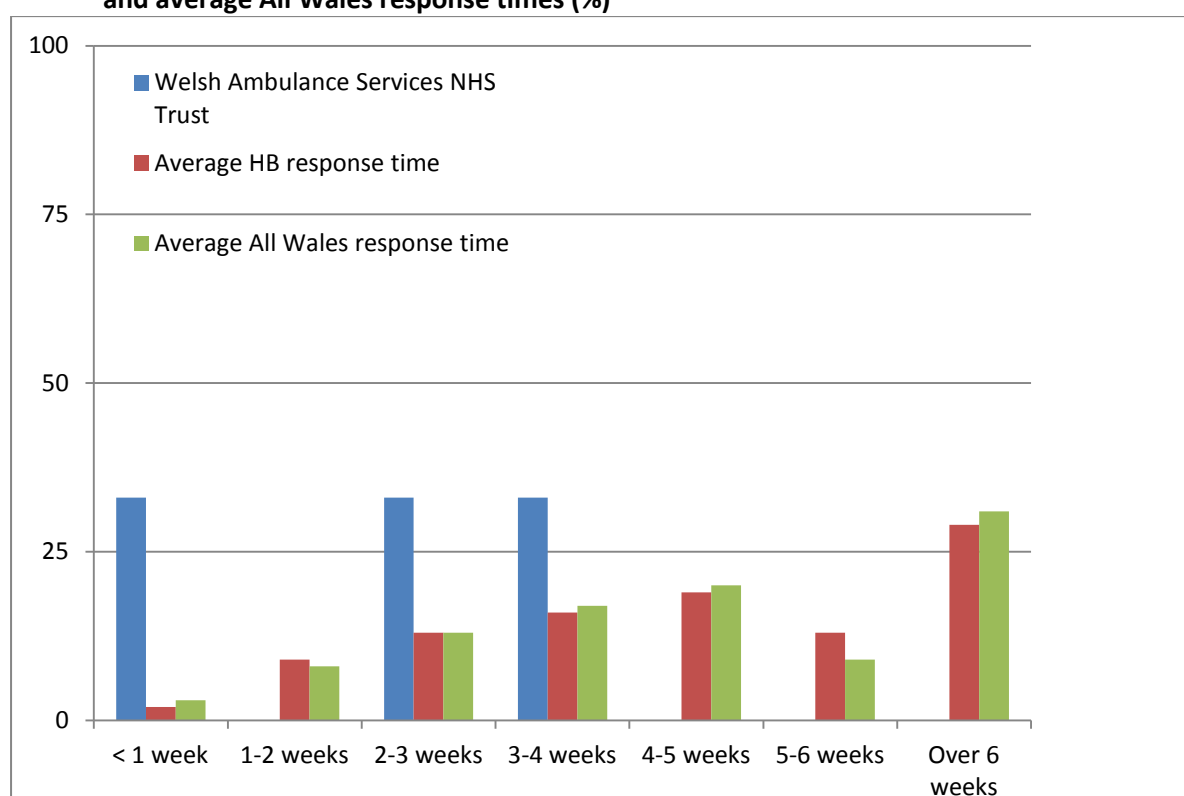
#### B) Complaints taken into investigation by my office

	<b>2015/16</b>	<b>2014/15</b>
Number of complaints taken into investigation	3	2

**C) Comparison of complaints by outcome during 2015/16 with 2014/15 figures**

Complaint Outcomes	2015/16	2014/15
Out of jurisdiction	3	2
Premature	4	4
'Other' cases closed after initial consideration	6	4
Discontinued	0	0
Quick fix / Voluntary settlement	0	0
Section 16 – Upheld – in whole or in part	1 <sup>1</sup>	1
Other report upheld – in whole or in part	2	1
Other report – not upheld	0	1
Withdrawn	0	0

**D) Comparison of times for responding to requests for information with average health board and average All Wales response times (%)**



<sup>1</sup> The Section 16 related to the health board in this case and not the WAST element of the investigation. The Ombudsman issued a Section 17 (a) directive suspending the obligation for WAST to publicise the report.

## E) Summaries

### Casebook 21

201402833

201401187

### **Casebook 22**

No summaries

### **Casebook 23**

No summaries

### Casebook 24

201501167

## **Appendix**

### **Explanatory Notes**

Sections A and B provide a breakdown of the number of complaints against the Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust which were received and investigated by my office during 2015/16. The tables also contain the figures for 2014/15.

Section C compares the complaint outcomes for Welsh Ambulance Services NHS Trust during 2015/16, with the equivalent outcomes during 2014/15. Public Interest reports issued under section 16 of the Public Services Ombudsman (Wales) Act 2005 are recorded as 'Section 16'.

Section D illustrates the response times for those complaints which were taken into investigation during 2015/16. Where no response times have been recorded, the graph contains an illustration of the average response times for health bodies, and the average for all public bodies in Wales during the same period.

### **Feedback**

We welcome your feedback on the enclosed information, including suggestions for any information to be enclosed in future annual summaries. Any feedback or queries should be sent to [lucy.geen@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:lucy.geen@ombudsman-wales.org.uk) or [matthew.aplin@ombudsman-wales.org.uk](mailto:matthew.aplin@ombudsman-wales.org.uk)