

Survey of Complaints – Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust

About the organisation

Dorset HealthCare is responsible for all mental health services and many physical health services in Dorset, delivering both hospital and community-based care. They are the biggest provider of healthcare in Dorset, serving a population of almost 700,000 people and employing around 5,000 staff covering a wide range of expertise and specialisms.

They provide healthcare at over 300 sites, ranging from village halls and GP surgeries to mental health inpatient hospitals and community hospitals, as well as in people's homes.

Methodology

Dorset Healthcare chose not to send a covering letter with the questionnaire as they felt all the information necessary was incorporated on the front page of the questionnaire.

Dorset HealthCare used the short survey without amending the questions. It was sent by post or electronically via Survey Monkey.

The surveys were sent out in monthly batches the month following the closure of the complaint. For example, all complaints closed in February were considered for survey in March.

The surveys were sent with a unique identifier number (URN), as advised in the Toolkit. This could then be traced back to the individual complaint file. Previously complaint questionnaires had been sent out with the complaint reference on them.

Reminders were sent electronically three weeks after the request to complete the survey. Surveys were given a unique identifier to allow them to be linked to individual complaint files.

Survey progress was included in the Board report but did not include individual survey results. The overall results were incorporated into the Quarterly Report which is discussed at the Executive Quality and Risk Committee and then published on the Trust website.

What changed?

Dorset HealthCare found the return rate of the paper survey greatly increased compared to previous survey response rate but received a limited reply to online surveys. The overall return rate was 35%.

Feedback received was shared with teams to enable them to reflect on comments made, but the feedback did not suggest changes or improvements were required.

What challenges were there?

The Trust felt that administering the survey and tracking responses was time consuming and the creation of URNs created extra work. They also found the low return on electronic surveys disappointing.

Useful learning for others

The Trust found the toolkit guidance comprehensive and advised organisations to use it, but recommended consideration be given to whether all data needs to be captured for their learning, for example the date of the complaint.

Dorset HealthCare liked the structure of the questions included within the questionnaire used for this pilot as they felt it focussed the complainant and led to more meaningful feedback.