
PLANNING & CORPORATE AFFAIRS

PRESCRIPTION PRICING AUTHORITY : 10 JUNE 2004

ITEM No. 10**CUSTOMER COMPLAINTS ANNUAL REPORT**

1 Background

1.1 This report provides Authority Members with data on the Customer Complaints Procedure, covering the year to 31 March 2003. It also includes comparative data for the previous year April 2001 to March 2002. Since the complaints procedure was formally introduced in April 2001, the data presented here allow full year-on-year comparisons to be made.

2 Purpose of the Customer Complaints Procedure

2.1 The purpose of the complaints procedure is to:

- Provide the framework to deal with all complaints in a fair, objective and consistent manner;
- Aid in sharing best practice across the PPA;
- Identify improvement opportunities;
- Help in the development of staff;
- Support other PPA initiatives i.e. Investors in People and ISO 9000.

3 Changes in the Data

3.1 Complaints associated with the full range of patient services which we took over from October 2002, were not recorded in previous years' figures. In the data for 2003-04, these are categorised as Operations – Tax Credits and Operations – PPC. These need to be read in conjunction with Operations – LIS, for which there are comparative data from 2002-03, to give an overall picture with regard to Patient Services. These complaints are separately managed through the Respond system which logs and tracks complaint handling to completion. However, complaints for 2003-04 have not been categorised consistently and hence are not reported in all tables.

4 Analysis of April 2003 – March 2004 Data

4.1 The attached appendices show that:

- 1,196 complaints were recorded during the year, compared with 988 during the previous year. Excluding those patient Services for which no comparators exist, the totals are 1,092 and 988. The charts in the appendix show the monthly trend over the two-years in question.
- The number of complaints received averages 100 per month compared with 82 in 2002-03

- The underlying trend remains relatively flat across all directorates.
- As expected, those directorates dealing with dispensing contractors/ doctors and members of the public, continue to record the highest numbers of complaints.
- The number of complaints in Patient Services (Health Benefits Division during 2003-04) has risen against the trend. However this rise is insignificant compared to the five-fold increase in activity between the two years which relates to the new patient services operated since October 2002. These data now include complaints about Prescription Pre Payment and exemption certificates. Monitoring of these has only been incorporated into the corporate return from April 2003.

4.2 Annual Total Complaints

Directorate	No of Complaints			
	2003-04		2002-03	
Operations, Processing	909	76%	537	54%
Operations, Patient Services	-		159	16%
LIS	166	14%	-	-
Tax Credits	21	2%	-	-
PPC	83	7%	-	-
Operations Business Support	0	0%	0	0%
Finance	16	1%	8	1%
Human Resources	0	0%	0	0%
Information Technology	1	0%	12	1%
Pharmaceutical	0	0%	0	0%
Planning & Corporate Affairs	0	0%	0	0%
Chief Executive's Office	0	0%	0	0%
Compliance	N/A	N/A	272	28%
Totals	1196		988	

4.3 Categories of complaints:

4.3.1 Excluding patient Services, the two highest categories are "Referred back prescriptions" and 'Payment Complaints'. In the previous year, 'wrong/lack of information' and 'prescription switching' appeared at the top of the list. It is the first time that there has been a shift in this order which otherwise had remained consistent throughout the operation of the complaints system to date.

Category	No of Complaints			
	2003-04		2002-03	
Referred Back Prescriptions	646	70%	204	21%
Payment Complaint	208	23%	127	13%
Misdirected correspondence	31	3%	49	5%
Wrong/Lack of information	15	2%	316	32%
Prescription Switching	9	1%	161	16%
Procedural/Action Not Taken	8	1%	80	8%
Telephone Access	4	0%	9	1%
Timescales	1	0%	22	2%
Staff Attitude	0	0%	19	2%
Breach of Confidentiality	0	0%	1	0%
Totals	922		988	

4.4 Response timescales:

4.4.1 Timescales are tabulated in the appendix. These reveal that, excluding Patient Services, 79% of complaints were handled within 5 working days and 14% within 20 working days (with a 5-day acknowledgement). The figures for this table do not balance. This appears to be due to an anomaly between directorates in the way in which outstanding complaints are carried over at the month end.

5 Reviewing the Complaints Process

5.1 The active project to introduce a corporate Quality Management System, includes a review of the methods and objectives of our complaints handling. Alongside this, the Department of Health has consulted on reforms to the NHS Complaints System which may affect us in due course. Last month the DH announced that any further work to revise the NHS System is on hold pending the recommendations of the Shipman Inquiry. We will incorporate relevant developments into the QMS driven review of our procedures, monitoring and reporting, as these become available.

6 Summary

6.1 Authority Members are asked to note this report.

Michael King

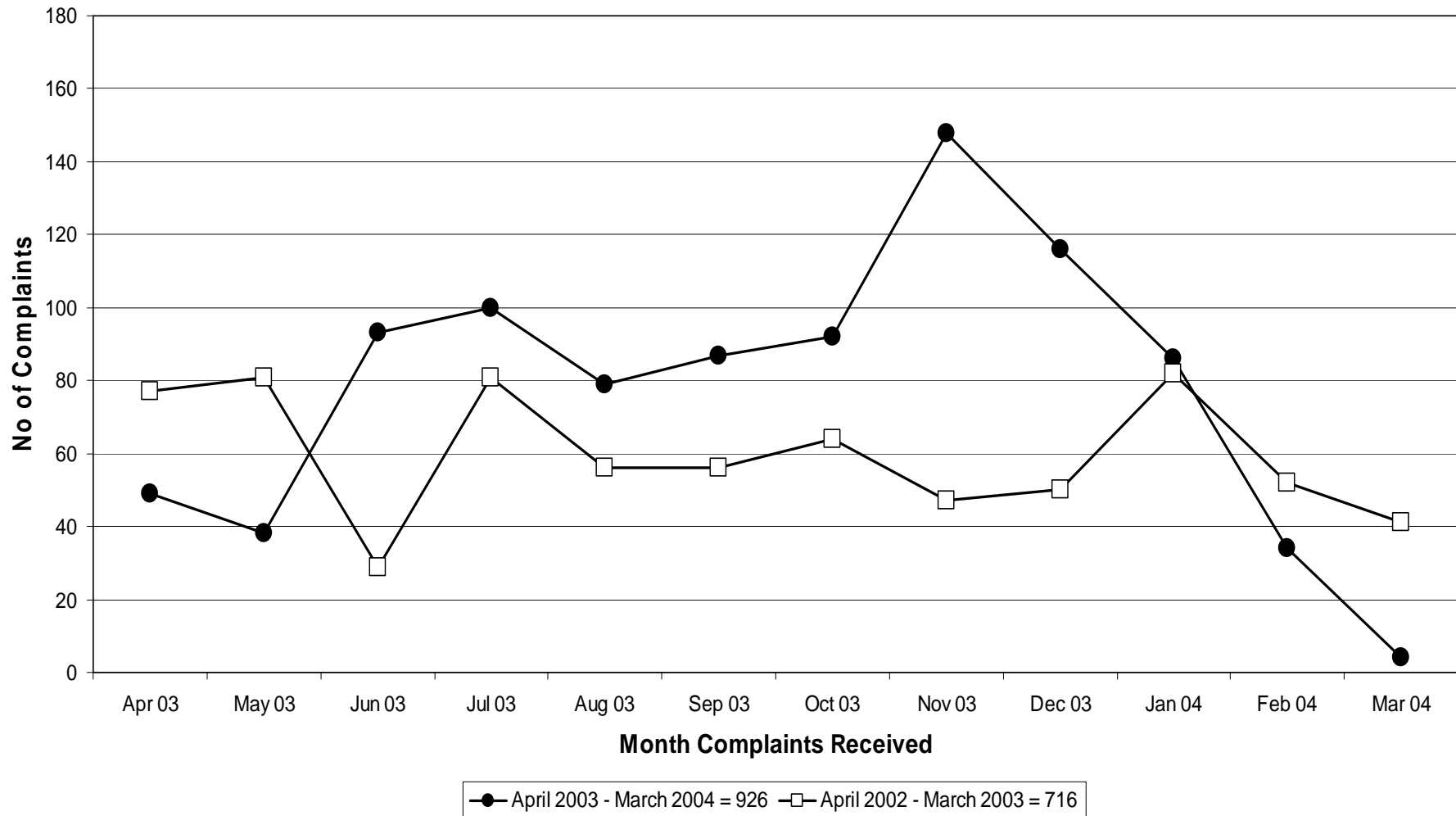
Director of Planning & Corporate Affairs

30 November, 2004

Appendix

Charts and Diagrams

No of Complaints Received - Comparison 2002-03 and 2003-04

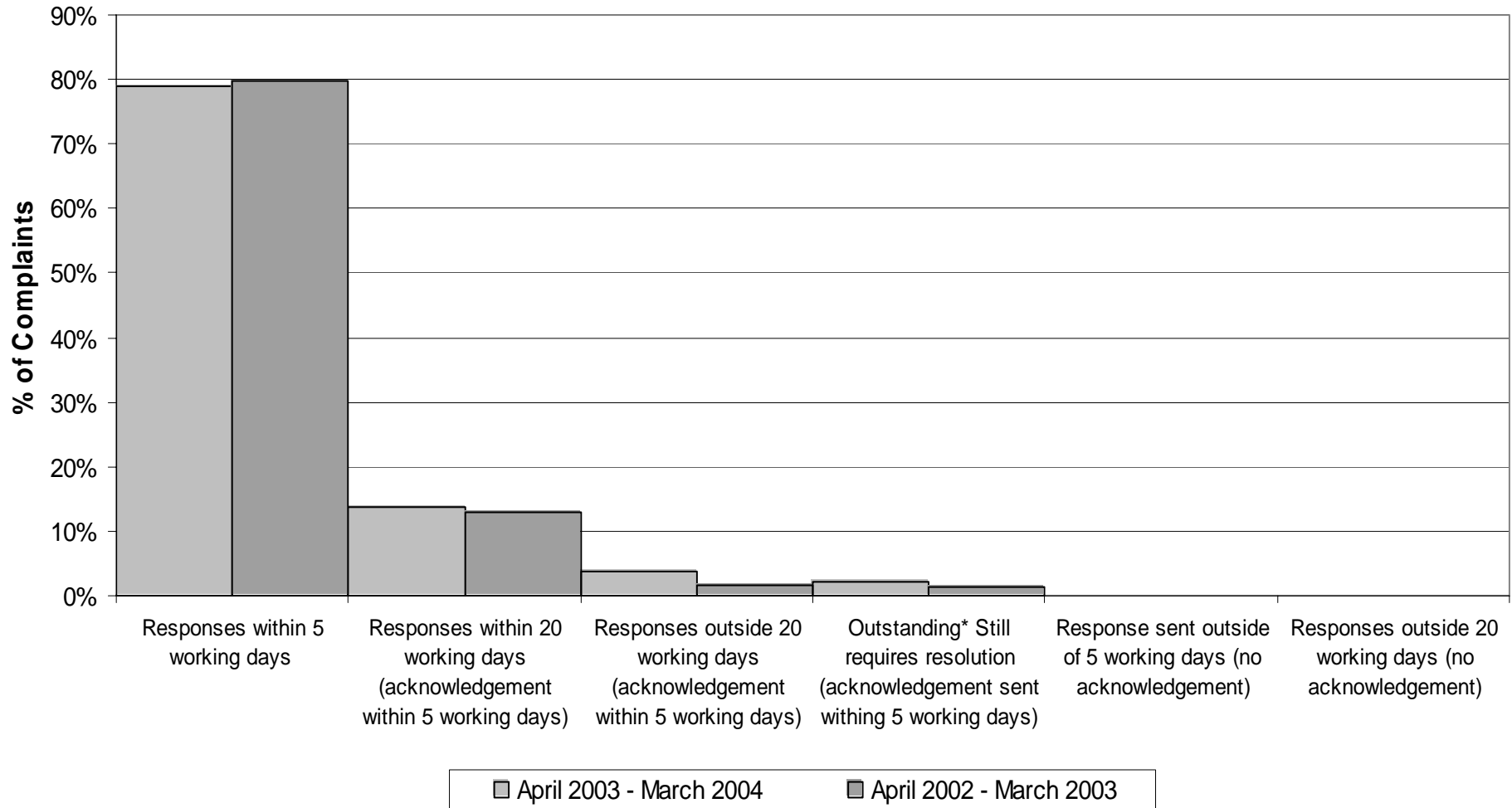


Response Times

Month Complaint Received	Complaints Received	Responses within 5 working days	Responses within 20 working days (acknowledgement within 5 working days)	Responses outside 20 working days (acknowledgement within 5 working days)	Outstanding* Still requires resolution (acknowledgement sent within 5 working days)	Response sent outside 5 working days (no acknowledgement)
Apr-03	49	36	6	7	0	0
May-03	38	20	13	4	0	0
Jun-03	93	72	8	6	1	0
Jul-03	100	82	12	4	2	0
Aug-03	79	65	10	1	0	0
Sep-03	87	68	10	4	0	0
Oct-03	92	81	4	1	6	0
Nov-03	148	128	18	1	1	0
Dec-03	116	94	16	4	2	0
Jan-04	86	59	18	3	7	0
Feb-04	34	22	12	0	0	0
Mar-04	4	4	0	0	0	0
Totals	926	731	127	35	19	0
		78.94%	13.71%	3.78%	2.05%	0.00%
Grand Total						
						912
						98.49%

* Cases where further information is being sought from complainant or other body before a substantive response can be provided.

Response Timescales - Comparison 2002-03 and 2003-04



Complaints by Directorate - Comparing 2003-04 to 2002-03

