Ashford and St. Peter's Hospitals NHS
NHS Foundation Trust

COUNCIL OF GOVERNORS
9th March 2015

TITLE	**Complaints Update**
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	This paper sets out the progress of the Complaints Process Review being undertaken and outlines the new process that is currently being trialled to improve response times and quality of response.
The Council is asked to:	Discuss the report
Submitted by:	Heather Caudle, Chief Nurse
Date:	March 2015
Decision	For discussion

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ASPH COMPLAINTS REVIEW PROJECT UPDATE

The review of behaviours practices and processes around complaints handling within the Trust is progressing well. A total of 39 interviews have been held with a wide variety of clinical and non-clinical staff. The results of these interviews show a distinct appetite for and recognition of the need for improvement in how we respond to complaints and concerns.

Below is a snapshot of the initial thoughts and feelings of our staff to a complaint.

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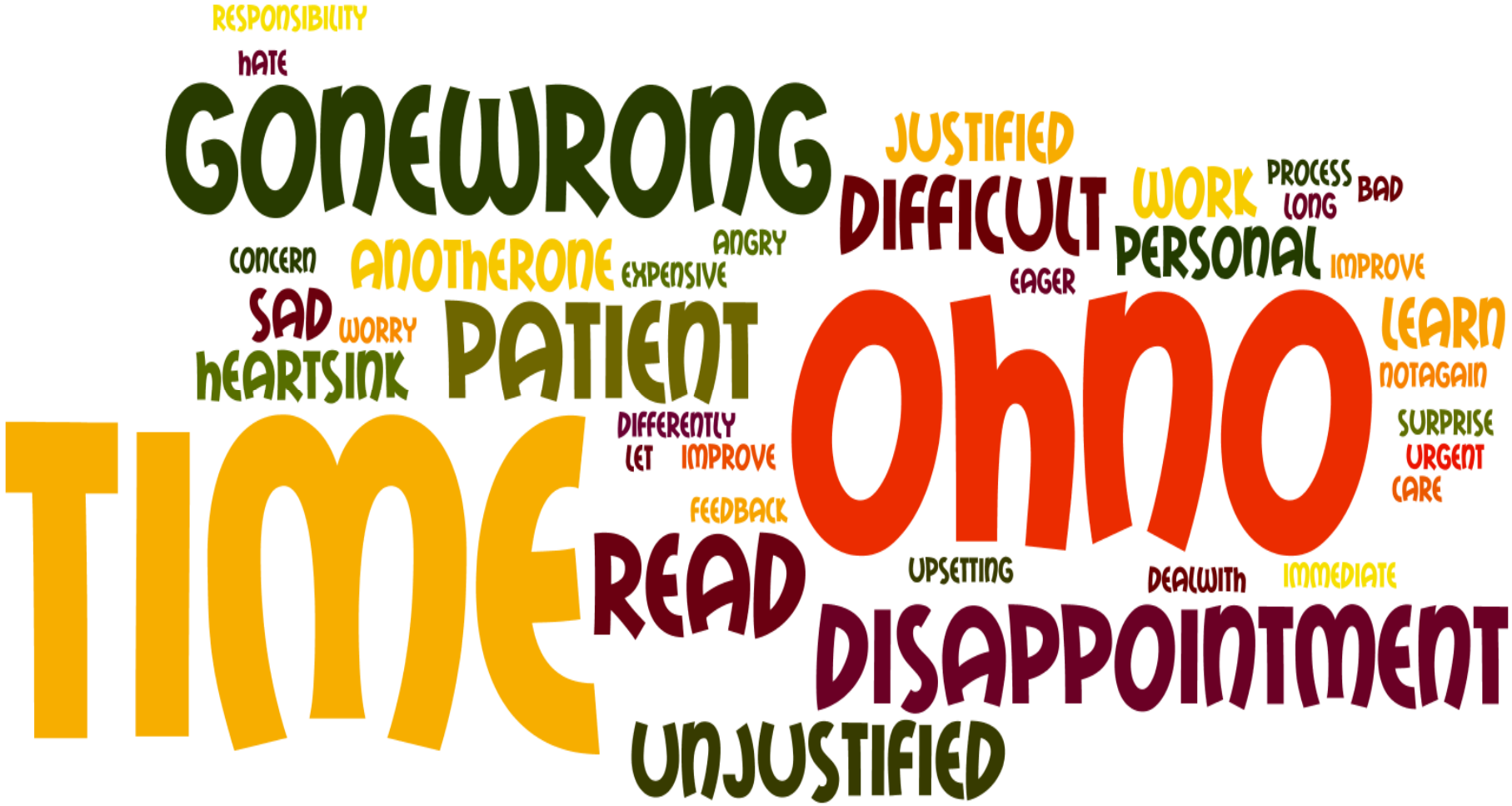

As well as responding emotionally to a complaint staff feel the lack of any formal training in handling and responding to a complaints, the more experience someone has had the better they are able to manage the experience of the complainant, and providing training, especially around appropriate written communication is urgently needed in order to improve the quality and empathy in our responses. A one day training course has recently been held for the central and divisional Patient Experience Teams. In addition many contributors would like to see the final response that is sent to the complainant in order to gain feedback on how the response should be written.

An agreement has been reached with the Chief Executive to delegate the signing of Grade 1 and 2 Complaints to the Associate Directors of Nursing or the Associate Director of Operations for the Divisions. In order for this to happen she will need to be assured of the quality of these responses and this new process has commenced from the beginning of 2015. This delegation will enable a faster process for grade 1 and 2 complaints enabling a response at between 5 and 25 working days, with the potential for a rapid response when the complaint is time sensitive. The central Patient Experience Team are now grading complaints after 1 month of trial grading which was audited and consistent with the Divisional gradings.

Complaints Review Panel weekly meetings have started where all Grade 3 and 4 complaints, follow-ups and habitual/vexatious complaints will be discussed on receipt and again when the response has been drafted. This will enable the investigation to be fully discussed before it begins, ensuring all aspects of the complaint are addressed and to agree the proposed content of the response. These more serious and complex complaints may need a longer response time to be agreed with the complainant but many should be able to have a response ready within 25 days. As the Chief Nurse will be present at these weekly meetings the draft response will be able to be sent to the Chief Executive earlier and should require less revision before posting to the complainant, enabling compliance with our target of 95% of complaints being closed within the agreed timescale.

In order for these new processes to be efficiently instigated the Datix Web-based Patient Experience Package has been purchased and will be in use by April 2015. Without this there are many stages when the system can continue to cause process failures leading to delays or incomplete responses.

Below are the proposed processes for the different grades of complaints:

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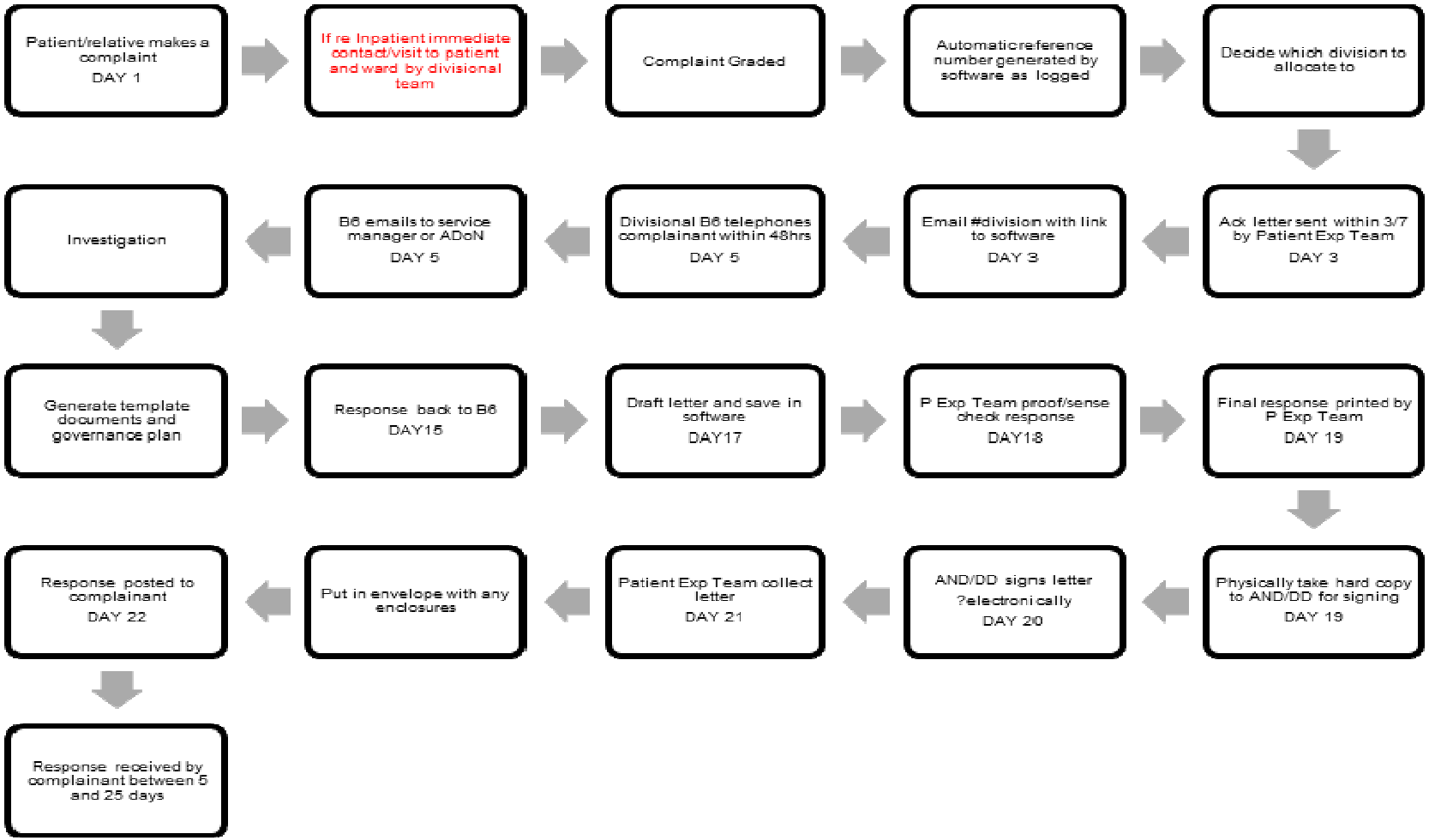
Proposed Process for Grade 1 & 2 Complaints



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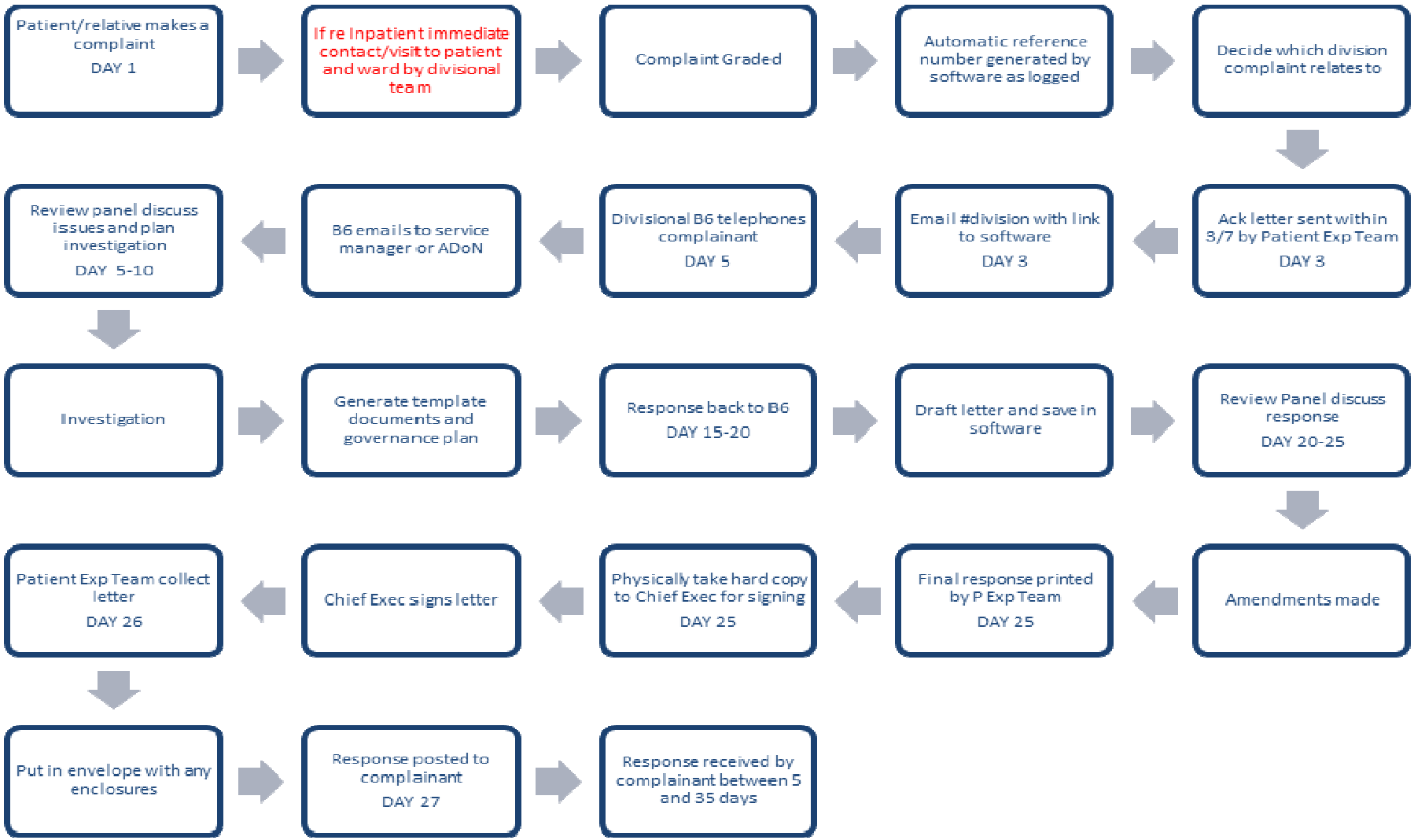
Follow-ups