

# Families silent about poor NHS care for old

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Relatives' concerns about the treatment of older people by the NHS go unreported close to half the time, research suggests.

Only 58 per cent of family members with a concern about hospital care or treatment complained, a survey published by the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman and the website Gransnet said.

The PHSO said that it saw far fewer complaints from older people than it would expect, given that they tended to be frequent users of NHS services.

Rob Behrens, the ombudsman, said: "The NHS is a lifeline for many vulner-

able older people but when things go wrong too many are suffering in silence. I want people to be confident to complain, know their rights, and speak up when things go wrong so that the NHS can learn from mistakes.

"NHS staff should make patients and their loved ones aware of how to complain, point them to available support, and make it absolutely clear that their future care will not be compromised."

The survey, of more than 600 Gransnet members who had had an older relative in hospital during the previous year, found that 51 per cent of family members said that it was difficult to complain. Sixty-seven per cent of those who did complain did not believe it

made a difference. Lara Crisp, editor of Gransnet, said: "Patients deserve better than this. While we appreciate that services are stretched, communication with patients and their families must be improved. They should feel that their concerns are taken seriously and addressed properly."

● Only two in three GPs about to complete their training intend to work in the specialism for the NHS, research has found. The Royal College of General Practitioners called the findings by the University of Warwick "incredibly concerning". The study was based on 178 GP trainees in the West Midlands who were within three months of achieving their final qualification.

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