

Ambulance complaints increase



by **RICHARD CATTON**

Health reporter

COMPLAINTS against Yorkshire Ambulance Service have soared by more than 40 per cent in the past year, new figures have revealed.

Dissatisfaction with the service now accounts for 11.2 per cent of all NHS complaints in our region - equivalent to one in nine of all complaints. The national average is just 4.3 per cent, or one in 23.

The number of complaints in Yorkshire rose from 742 in 2009/10 to 1,058 in 2010/11 - a rise of 42.6 per cent.

The figures were revealed in a report by the NHS Information Centre, which shows the number of annual written gripes against hospitals, community services and GPs.

In April last year, the trust was given five months to improve its response times after it emerged they were the worst

of any trust in England. The service improved and hit its target with two months to spare.

Over the past year however, there have been a number of complaints against the service, from both patients and staff.

In August last year, MS sufferer Michaela Dykes said she was left waiting more than five hours for an ambulance to take her home from a routine appointment at York Hospital.

The previous month, in separate incidents, two York boys were told they had to wait an hour for ambulances after each suffered broken wrists.

Then in September last year, the service apologised to the family of heart attack victim Donald Lawson, 73, who died two days after an ambulance defibrillator was found not to work as paramedics battled to save his life outside his Tang Hall home.

This year disgruntled ambulance staff have twice contacted

The Press to raise concerns over a perceived lack of emergency cover for some areas of York.

Yorkshire Ambulance Service acknowledged the increase in the number of people contacting it about the quality of service provided.

A spokesperson for the service said: "Many of the 1,058 complaints and concerns received relate to our non-emergency patient transport service which made 1.1 million non-emergency patient journeys last year, and which operates alongside the A&E service which received 725,000 urgent and emergency calls during the same period."

She said the service also included verbal complaints in its figures, which not all trusts necessarily do. She said the trust also received compliments from patients.

Asked how YAS intended to reverse the rising trend, the spokesman said they would act upon any feedback received.