

**Case:** 201001569, Highland NHS Board

**Sector:** health

**Subject:** policy/administration

**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained about the service that she received when attending her local out-of-hours medical service. She felt that the information that she was given delayed her treatment. She had been unwell for a number of days and called NHS 24 for an appointment at the out-of-hours centre. Before the appointment was arranged, she took a turn for the worse and made her way to the centre. She was met by an unidentified individual (understood to be the doctor's driver). She was told that she could wait for the doctor but that this could take several hours. Alternatively she could return home and call NHS 24. Mrs C returned home. When NHS 24 called with her appointment, she cancelled it as she was too unwell to return to the out-of-hours centre. Mrs C saw her GP the following morning and was immediately referred to hospital. We found that the service provided was poor as a result of the Board's policy for out-of-hours walk-in patients, which required a medical assessment to be made by non-medical staff. Information provided to patients in the absence of a doctor was also found to be poor.

### Recommendations

We recommend that Highland NHS Board:

- review their policy with specific attention given to which members of staff should assess patients' medical records;
- apologise to Mrs C; and
- review the information provided to patients when the reception is unmanned.