

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300258, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments/admissions (delay, cancellation, waiting lists)
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that there were delays in providing dental treatment to her profoundly disabled daughter (Ms A). Mrs C said that after Ms A attended a dental appointment it was some seven months before she received treatment under general anaesthetic. Mrs C alleged that Ms A received a standard of care which was less than that given to the general population, because of her disability, and that the delay was unreasonable. Mrs C also complained that the board failed to deal with her complaint properly.

We took independent advice from our dental adviser on Ms A's care and treatment, and took all the complaints correspondence and relevant medical records into account. Our investigation found that Mrs C had questioned both the treatment and the approach recommended by Ms A's dentist. Because of this, the board were placed in the unusual position of having to have two dentists with Ms A during her treatment. The board also had to satisfy themselves that what was being agreed with Mrs C was in accordance with the policies with which they had to comply. The adviser confirmed that the complex discussions and additional arrangements that were necessary to provide Ms A's treatment created a delay which was understandable, and did not consider this unreasonable. However, an internal time line tracking events over a three month period between the date when an approach to treatment was agreed and the date the approach was confirmed to Mrs C was too long and showed no urgency. In the circumstances, we upheld the complaint of delay. We also found that the board showed a similar lack of urgency in responding to Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- make a formal apology to Mrs C and Ms A for the delays in providing treatment;
- confirm that a relevant protocol is in place;
- apologise to Mrs C for the delay in dealing with her complaint; and
- remind the appropriate staff of the importance of adhering to their stated complaints policy.