

SPSO decision report

Case: 201300375, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appliances, equipment and premises
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C's young daughter (Miss C) suffers from a number of medical conditions and has serious mobility problems. She uses either a wheelchair or a gait trainer, both of which need a lot of space for turning. After a number of years during which the family waited for a suitable house, a housing association, in conjunction with the local council, agreed to provide a new house. In relation to this, an occupational therapist from the health board assessed Miss C's housing needs and liaised with the housing association. Mr C complained that the occupational therapist did not properly assess Miss C and ensure that the house being built met her needs. He alleged that when he complained to the board about the situation, they did not properly investigate it.

Our investigation found that the procurement process for the house being built to meet Miss C's needs was not straightforward. There were a number of agencies and organisations involved and the role of the occupational therapist was to assess Miss C's needs in order to properly facilitate them in the development of the property. The occupational therapist provided her professional opinion of what these needs were. However, during the complicated construction and development, the housing association contacted the occupational therapist about a number of design changes, which she agreed without speaking to Mr C. If followed through, one of these changes would have had serious repercussions for Miss C's mobility. We also found that Mr C had first complained to the council, who passed him on to the health board, but then the board took too long to reply to him. We, therefore, upheld his complaints about these matters, but not about the assessment of his daughter's needs, in which nothing had gone wrong.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise to Mr C for the errors identified, and for the delay in responding to his complaint.