

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201300828, Tayside NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

After Mr C's daughter (Miss A) was in a road traffic accident, paramedics took her to A&E at Ninewells Hospital strapped to a spinal board (a specialised stretcher, designed to protect patients with spinal damage). Mr C complained that the board then failed to adequately assess and treat Miss A, and said that she was not x-rayed at any point before she was discharged. Following her discharge she remained in significant pain and discomfort and Mr C took her to the family GP who, after a brief examination, referred her as an emergency to a different hospital. An x-ray taken there revealed a fractured vertebrae in Miss A's back and a CT scan (a scan that uses a computer to create an image of the body) revealed two further fractures.

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers. He said that while the initial examination of Miss A was of a reasonable standard, a second more comprehensive examination should have identified the need for an x-ray of the spine. The adviser also said there was no record of Miss A's mobility having been assessed and that, as she was suffering pain in her abdomen, she should have been assessed for liver damage, given the speed at which the vehicle was travelling immediately before the crash.

In light of this advice we upheld Mr C's complaints, as we concluded that the board had failed to adequately assess and treat Miss A and had unreasonably failed to arrange for x-rays or scans to be taken of her spine.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the Board:

- apologise for the failings identified in the care provided; and
- provide evidence that they have addressed the failings our investigation identified with the doctor responsible, through the staff appraisal process.