

SPSO decision report

Case: 201303988, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that he waited too long to see a prison dentist after a crown fell out. He said that he had twice asked to see the dentist and had explained that he was suffering some pain. In response to Mr C's complaint, the board said that they did not consider his dental problem to be an emergency and that his needs would be met by a routine appointment, for which he was placed on a waiting list. Mr C then complained to us as he was concerned the root would be beyond repair if he waited any longer for an appointment. Although he then received treatment, Mr C continued to pursue his complaint with us as he felt he had waited too long for treatment and did not want this to happen again.

We took independent advice on this case from a dental adviser. Although Mr C had asked for an emergency appointment, our adviser considered that he had been appropriately categorised as needing routine dental care even though he had some pain. We found this to be in accordance with guidance to which the board referred when treating prisoners. However, we upheld his complaint as we found that it was four weeks before the crown was re-cemented. We considered this wait to be unreasonably long, and not in accordance with the seven day timescale set out in the guidance for treating routine patients. We also found that there was no documented information to show that Mr C was given advice about pain management while waiting for his appointment. We noted that the Scottish Government will shortly be publishing national guidance for a robust framework for oral health improvement and dental services in Scottish prisons, and made our recommendations in the light of this.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise to Mr C for the unreasonable delay in being seen by the dentist and for the lack of pain relief advice; and
- consider developing a policy for dental care within the prison when the Scottish Government's national guidance is published.