

SPSO decision report

Case: 201404336, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: policy / administration
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that she had been provided with an unreasonable service by the board's orthotic service (service that designs, makes and fits devices to support or control a part of the body). She said she had been provided with substandard footwear, and that she had suffered unacceptable delays whilst trying to arrange an appointment. Ms C was unhappy that the board had failed to communicate with her properly, resulting in unnecessary travel for appointments which were cancelled on her arrival. She also complained that it had taken an unreasonable length of time to fit her orthotic footwear when it was delivered.

We took independent advice on this complaint, which stated that the standard of communication with Ms C was not acceptable and that Ms C's notes were not maintained to a professional standard. There was, however, no set time-frame for fitting specialist footwear and Ms C had not been treated unreasonably in this respect.

Our investigation found the board had unreasonably delayed in providing Ms C with an appointment, although there was no evidence the delay was as severe as Ms C suggested. We also found that the board had failed to communicate appropriately with Ms C. We did not find the length of time taken to fit Ms C's specialist footwear was unreasonable.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- remind staff involved in this case of the importance of communicating timeously with patients, especially when an appointment requires cancellation;
- remind all staff of the importance of responding timeously to requests for appointments;
- remind staff of the importance of recording any delays in requesting appointments; and
- apologise for the failures identified in this investigation.