

SPSO decision report

Case: 201500517, A Dental Practice in the Lanarkshire NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that when he attended the practice in February 2015 for dental treatment he was told that he would have to agree to a new treatment plan as the previous one had lapsed. This meant that Mr C would have to pay additional costs for his dental treatment. However, Mr C said that his costs under the previous treatment plan had been capped and that he had reached the limit and, as such, the outstanding dental treatment should be provided at no extra cost to himself. He maintained that at no time was he told that there was a time limit to complete a course of treatment.

The practice maintained that the previous treatment plan began in August 2013 and that they had to repeatedly send reminders to Mr C to attend for further appointments under the treatment plan. Mr C last received treatment under the plan in October 2014 and the practice wrote to the health board in December 2014 and asked that the treatment plan should be deemed to be closed. The practice maintained that their staff verbally advised Mr C to attend regular appointments in order to complete the treatment plan.

We sought independent dental advice from two advisers. They confirmed that there was no obligation on dental practices to provide written information to patients with advice that should they fail to attend regular dental appointments under an agreed plan then the plan would be closed.

We did not uphold the complaint as we felt on balance that the practice staff had verbally encouraged Mr C to make regular appointments and that there was also an obligation on him to contact the practice if he had difficulty in being available for appointments. It was also noted that the practice now provide patients with written advice about the importance of attending regular appointments to complete an agreed treatment plan.