

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507493, NHS 24
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained to us about the way NHS 24 handled calls she made to them on two separate occasions. We took independent medical advice and found that when Ms C made her first call to NHS 24 to report symptoms she was experiencing, they failed to deal with her call in line with the appropriate protocol. The protocol said that staff should speak to a doctor as soon as possible. However, in Ms C's case, staff said that they would arrange for a nurse to call Ms C back within a three-hour timescale. Though Ms C was called by a nurse within that timescale, we found that it was likely that this delayed Ms C's admission to hospital. Although we upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint, we were satisfied that NHS 24 has apologised for this and shared the learning from Ms C's complaint with staff.

Ms C also complained about the handling of two calls she made to NHS 24 almost a year later regarding symptoms she was experiencing. Staff initially said that someone would call her back within two hours. However, Ms C had to call them again, as she had not been called back within two hours and her symptoms had deteriorated. She was then referred to an out-of-hours service to be assessed by a GP. NHS 24 had accepted that the handling of the calls was not of the standard they expect from staff and that some of Ms C's symptoms should have been explored further. We therefore upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint. The board had apologised to Ms C for this and had taken action to prevent similar problems occurring.

In view of the action already taken by NHS 24, we did not make recommendations.