

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507616, A Dentist in the Tayside NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained about the dental treatment she received on a tooth that was infected. The tooth had previously had root canal treatment and a crown. Ms C said the dentist had been clear that after two courses of antibiotics, they would take the tooth out and apply the antibiotic directly and replace the tooth temporarily to allow the infection to clear completely. Ms C understood that she would then be able to return in two months and that it would be refitted permanently. Ms C said that she was not made aware that the integrity of the tooth might be compromised or consented to the treatment that was carried out by the dentist. Subsequently, the dentist was unable to replace the root filling and later the tooth fell out.

We took independent advice from a dental adviser. We found that the evidence from Ms C's dental records showed significant failings around the consent process and shortcomings in relation to the prescription of antibiotics and taking of x-rays. We also found that the dentist failed to offer and discuss alternative treatments with Ms C and so opportunities to save the tooth were missed. In view of the poor outlook of the tooth, we recommended that the dentist refund the cost of treatment available on the NHS to remedy the situation (a bridge), as well as the costs of the treatments Ms C received during this period.

Recommendations

We recommended that the dentist:

- refund Ms C the cost of a bridge (in line with the statement of dental remuneration) on receipt of an appropriate invoice when treatment has been completed;
- refund Ms C the cost of treatments provided during the period in question;
- review their consent process, prescription of antibiotics and taking x-rays, in line with relevant guidance and standards; and
- apologise for the clinical failings this investigation identified.