

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507857, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C complained that staff at the Assisted Conception Service at Glasgow Royal Infirmary failed to provide her with appropriate in vitro fertilisation treatment (IVF) and failed to communicate appropriately with her. IVF is where an egg is removed from the woman's ovaries and fertilised with sperm in a laboratory. The fertilised egg is then returned to the woman's womb to grow and develop.

Miss C's concerns included that during four referrals she was not once told that she was ineligible for treatment because she was a smoker. Miss C said she also attended various appointments at the service with an egg donor, only to be told at the last appointment that the donor was unsuitable because she was also a smoker.

We obtained independent medical advice from a consultant in reproductive medicine and surgery. The adviser said the IVF treatment provided to Miss C by the board was reasonable. However, the new Scottish Government Access Criteria for NHS-funded treatment for all NHS boards had already been introduced and this set out that smokers were no longer eligible for treatment. Miss C and her partner attended three appointments at the service over a nine-month period before they were finally advised that they were ineligible for treatment because they were both smokers. We were critical of the board in this regard.

The evidence also suggested that Miss C and her partner attended an appointment at the service in which a proposed donor was put forward but the eligibility of the donor under the new access criteria was not discussed.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- take steps to ensure that relevant staff and patients attending the clinic are fully aware of the new Access Criteria;
- provide us with a copy of their revised patient leaflet on egg donor treatment which includes information on the Access Criteria; and
- provide Miss C and her partner with a written apology for failing to advise them of the new Access Criteria at a specific appointment.