

SPSO decision report

Case: 201607853, A Dental Practice in the Highland NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: complaints handling
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that the dental practice failed to deal with her complaints in a reasonable manner. We found that the practice had failed to establish in the first instance what Mrs C's complaint involved and that this resulted in a missed opportunity to resolve the complaint at an early stage. We also found that Mrs C's complaint was not acknowledged by the practice within the three working day timescale set out in the Scottish Government's 'Can I help you?' guidance for handling healthcare complaints, and that the practice did not communicate with Mrs C by her preferred method. Finally, we found that the practice's response to Mrs C's complaint was not sent to her within the 20 working day timescale that is set out in the Scottish Government's 'Can I help you?' guidance. We therefore upheld Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- apologise to Mrs C for the failings identified by this investigation;
- ensure all staff are familiar with the 'Can I help you?' guidance for handling healthcare complaints;
- ensure their complaints policy is in line with the 'Can I help you?' guidance; and
- ensure that their complaint response letters comply with the 'Can I help you?' guidance, and in particular give details for contacting our office.