

SPSO decision report

Case: 201608745, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that the board failed to care for her in a sensitive manner at Aberdeen Maternity Hospital after she had a miscarriage. Mrs C said that she had found staff to be lacking in empathy. There had also been some confusion in relation to the forms which required to be completed to confirm her wishes for disposal of the foetal remains. Mrs C said that she understood that she had completed the forms required and that she would not be contacted again unless there was any foetal abnormality, but she was contacted a couple of days later and asked to return to the ward to complete another form. Although Mrs C had stated her wish for the cremated remains to be scattered without her being present, she then received a phone call several months later advising that the ashes were ready to be collected.

We took independent advice from a nursing adviser, who noted that the board's correspondence with Mrs C had been poor, and that their apology in their response to her complaint had fallen short of a reasonable standard. We found that, although the board had apologised for some of the failings in Mrs C's care, they had failed to address all of the questions she had raised with them. We upheld Mrs C's complaint. We noted that the board had changed their processes in relation to recording patients' wishes about foetal remains, so we did not make any recommendations in this regard. However, we did recommend that the board re-issue an apology to Mrs C that is in line with SPSO guidance on apology.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- The board should re-issue an apology for the failings identified. The apology should comply with the SPSO guidance on apology.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.