

SPSO decision report

Case: 201608877, Fife NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Decision: some upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the length of time it had taken the board to provide him with treatment for varicose veins. Mr C was referred to vascular surgery at Victoria Hospital by his GP. Around four months later he saw a vascular consultant who said that he needed a special scan before treatment could be decided. He was told that there was a long waiting time for scans and that it was likely he would be seen approximately five months later, which Mr C said was contrary to relevant waiting times standards for treatment (18 weeks from initial referral to start of treatment). Ultimately Mr C received treatment seven months after his appointment with the vascular consultant, and 11 months after his initial referral. Mr C told us that the long delay had caused him considerable stress and that he was in pain on a daily basis. He also said that the board failed to deal with his complaint in a reasonable way.

We took independent advice from a nursing adviser with experience in surgical nursing care. We found that, whilst varicose veins is not considered an urgent clinical need, the waiting time from referral to treatment in this case was excessive (11 months) and clearly breached the relevant standards. We upheld this part of Mr C's complaint. However, we found that the board had already apologised and had taken measures taken to address the long waiting times and so we did not make any recommendations.

In relation to Mr C's complaint about complaints handling, we were satisfied that the complaint was dealt with in a reasonable time and that the response clearly reflected the position in relation to waiting times and reasons for the delays. We did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint.