

SPSO decision report

Case: 201701390, Shetland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs and Mrs C complained about a delay in diagnosing their child (child A) with autism spectrum disorder (ASD). In particular, they complained that an autism diagnostic observation schedule (ADOS) was not carried out. Child A was subsequently diagnosed with ASD after an ADOS was carried out.

The board did not consider there was an unreasonable delay in diagnosing child A with ASD. They also explained that their ASD assessment pathway has developed since the events complained about occurred.

During our investigation we took independent advice from a consultant paediatrician. The adviser considered that child A should have been referred for a multi-disciplinary ASD assessment, given their family history, their symptoms and Mr and Mrs C's strong concerns. The adviser explained that an ADOS is not a requirement to diagnose ASD but that it can be a helpful tool. In light of the failure to refer child A for a multi-disciplinary ASD assessment, we upheld the complaint and made recommendations in light of our findings.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr and Mrs C for not referring child A for a multi-disciplinary autism spectrum disorder assessment. The apology should comply with the SPSO guidelines on making an apology, available at: www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Parental concerns should be taken into account when deciding if a child should be referred for an autism spectrum disorder assessment, in line with the relevant guidelines, as should any reported symptoms and family history of learning difficulties.

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.