

SPSO decision report

Case: 201703354, Lanarkshire NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of his mother (Mrs A) regarding cataract surgery (surgery which involves replacing the cloudy lens inside the eye with an artificial one) she received at Hairmyres Hospital. Mr C stated that the board failed to give his mother the appropriate priority for surgery and failed to provide surgery within a reasonable period of time.

We took independent advice from a consultant ophthalmologist (a specialist in the branch of medicine concerned with the study and treatment of disorders and diseases of the eye). We found that the categorisation of non-priority was reasonable according to nationwide practice. However, when Mr C notified the board that Mrs A's condition had deteriorated whilst she was on the waiting list for surgery, no further review of her condition was offered. This meant that there was no opportunity to assess if Mrs A required to move up the waiting list. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

In relation to the surgery waiting time, we found that Mrs A was referred for an out-patient appointment outside the NHS target times. We noted that Mrs A could not be referred for surgery elsewhere in order to cut down on her waiting time due to her condition and the density of her cataract. However, Mrs A was given surgery 22 weeks after being listed for surgery which was outside the NHS treatment guarantee time of 12 weeks. We upheld this aspect of Mr C's complaint. However, we acknowledged that the board had apologised for this delay which reflects the current situation nationwide due to the demand on the NHS for eye surgery.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C and Mrs A for the failure to re-assess Mrs A whilst she was on the waiting list to establish if her priority for surgery had changed. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at <https://www.spsa.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance>.

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

- Where the patient, relative or GP notifies the board of rapid deterioration, steps should be taken to re-assess the patient to establish if their prioritisation for surgery has changed.