

SPSO decision report

Case: 201708492, Lothian NHS Board - Acute Division
Sector: health
Subject: appliances / equipment / premises
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained that the board failed to prevent her baby (Baby A) developing hypothermia (the condition of having an abnormally and typically dangerously low body temperature) in the hours after their birth at the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh.

We took independent advice from a midwife. We found that Mrs C and hospital staff had different recollections of what was said about the reason why Baby A developed hypothermia. The medical records noted the likely reasons, such as possible infection or due to medication given to Mrs C during labour, but did not reach a definitive conclusion. We noted that staff gave Baby A antibiotics in line with relevant clinical guidance to ensure they recovered. We did not find evidence that the board acted unreasonably. Therefore, we did not uphold this aspect of Mrs C's complaint.

Mrs C also complained that the board's response to her complaint was unreasonable. Mrs C was particularly concerned that Baby A's hypothermia could have developed because the birthing centre was too cold. We found that the board failed to investigate this specific part of Mrs C's complaint, and did not respond to her about it, despite having noted it in their acknowledgement letter. Therefore, we upheld this aspect of Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for failing to investigate and respond to her specific complaint about the birthing centre temperature. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Responses to complaints should address the points raised, or explain why information cannot be provided.