

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 201800134, A Medical Practice in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained on behalf of his wife (Mrs A) about the care Mrs A received at the practice. Mrs A had previously been diagnosed and treated for breast cancer. Six months after her treatment concluded she began attending the practice complaining of recurrent urinary tract infections and back pain. Six months following that it was found that the cancer had returned and spread to her bones.

We took independent advice from a GP. We found that the practice had carried out reasonable investigations when Mrs A first reported her symptoms. They had appropriately sought to investigate and exclude other possible causes of the symptoms Mrs A was presenting with. However, when Mrs A's symptoms did not resolve and investigations did not reveal a definite cause, the practice should have been alert to the possibility of a more serious underlying condition. We noted that referral guidelines for patients who have previously suffered from breast cancer note that unresolved back pain is a 'red flag' sign, indicating further serious investigation is required. Therefore, we upheld Mr C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs A for the failure to provide a reasonable standard of care and treatment. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance](http://www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance).

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

- The practice should familiarise themselves with red flag signs and should ensure trainees are aware of this also.
- Ensure that the findings of this investigation are shared with the doctors involved in Mrs A's care and discussed at their next appraisal for shared learning and improvement in clinical practice.