

SPSO decision report

Case: 201800445, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: Health and Social Care
Subject: complaints handling
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C, a support and advocacy worker, complained on behalf of their client (A). A received psychiatric and social work support for a number of years. A obtained copies of letters written by their psychiatrist to other clinicians. C complained to the partnership about the actions of the psychiatrist and social workers. There were issues with the investigation of the complaint and a response was ultimately provided a number of months later. The response included the partnership's views on the actions of the psychiatrist but not of the social workers. The response also included acknowledgement that there had been delays in the handling of A's complaints. A was dissatisfied with the response and C brought their complaint to us.

During our investigation of these complaints it became clear that A was not a client of the partnership in respect of social work matters. We found that the delays had been caused by confusion over which of the bodies within the partnership were responsible for the matters complained of, the partnership's inability to quickly and accurately determine the whereabouts of a complaints co-ordinator, the failure to alter voicemail messages or monitor voicemails received and confusion over management responsibility. We found that the partnership had opportunities to pro-actively advise C of these delays but had not done so. We also found that the partnership had unreasonably failed to advise C that A had not been a client of theirs in respect of social work. We upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise for the unreasonable handling of A's complaints. The apology should make clear mention of each of the failings identified and meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaints should be dealt with in accordance with the complaints process, including that any barriers to meeting the timescales of the complaints process are identified at an early stage or as quickly as possible when they arise.
- Complaints should be dealt with in accordance with the complaints process, including that complainants should be pro-actively contacted to advise of likely delays.
- When the partnership receive complaints about the actions of bodies that are not involved with the partnership, they should advise complainants of this as soon as possible and give any advice they can about how to raise complaints about the organisations complained of.

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.