

SPSO decision report



Case: 202206802, Scottish Ambulance Service
Sector: Health
Subject: Failure to send ambulance / delay in sending ambulance
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained about delays in ambulance response time after their elderly parent (A) had a fall at their care home. Care home staff called 999 and, following triage, the call generated an emergency but non-life-threatening response. A clinical triage call took place shortly after followed by another 999 call by care home staff. A paramedic response unit arrived at A's location, followed by an ambulance. A arrived at hospital around 5 and a half hours after the first 999 call.

Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) acknowledged that the wait for an ambulance was unreasonable and apologised to C for this. They explained that the delay was due to limited resource and very high demand at that time. C was unhappy with this response and brought their complaint to us. C felt that A was not prioritised fairly following the 999 and clinical triage calls. C considered this to be partly due to A's age. Although SAS had already acknowledged that there was an unreasonable delay, we carried out an investigation to determine whether the assessment and prioritisation of the calls also contributed to that delay.

We took independent advice from a paramedic. We found that the non-clinical call handling was appropriate. We also considered that there was no indication that A was treated differently or unreasonably as a result of their age. Therefore, we did not uphold C's complaint. However, we did provide feedback to SAS regarding an aspect of the clinical triage call which did not cause or contribute to the delay in an ambulance being provided, but was not in line with relevant national guidance.