

SPSO decision report



Case: 202210928, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: Health and Social Care
Subject: Complaints handling
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the way that the partnership handled their complaint about the care and treatment provided to C's late sibling. C said that the complaint process had been long and difficult to follow and it had been hard to obtain a clear and final complaint response from the partnership. C stated that they had to make their own enquiries to determine whether the complaint had been closed and they had been inappropriately referred to another internal complaint process. C also complained about staff conduct during complaint meetings, specifically citing instances of rude and defensive behaviour, as well as a failure to keep meeting notes.

The partnership considered that they had reasonably handled C's complaint in line with the correct complaint handling procedure (CHP).

We found that it had been unclear which CHP had been followed (the council or NHS) and that there was a failure to comply with timescales. The partnership's complaint handling did not consider the separate significant adverse event review undertaken by the partnership. Additionally, inaccurate information was provided about the stages of the CHP and the point at which C could escalate the complaint to the SPSO. Finally, we found that the partnership failed to apologise to C for the failings identified in their own complaint investigation. While we could not reach a decision on the behaviour of staff during meetings, we found that they failed to keep written records of complaint meetings. We upheld C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to reasonably handle their complaint and for the failings identified following their own investigation of the complaint. The apology should 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:

- Complaint investigations should be managed in accordance with the appropriate complaint handling procedure. The complaint response letter should be clear and fully address all of the points of concern raised, and an apology should be offered when failings have been identified. A written record of complaint meetings should be kept and timeously shared with the complainant. The organisation should have good oversight of how a complaint is progressing, which ensures correspondence with the complainant is clear, consistent and concise.

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.