

## SPSO decision report



**Case:** 202410666, A Medical Practice in the Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board area  
**Sector:** Health  
**Subject:** Communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C complained that the practice failed to handle their telephone call reasonably. C called the practice while being discharged from hospital to speak to a GP about an urgent review of their GP prescribed medication. In particular, regarding the safe discontinuation of pregabalin (an anti-epileptic drug that can also be used to treat nerve pain and anxiety) following surgery.

We found that the call did not address C's concern that C needed advice about how to safely discontinue GP prescribed medication. C was also not told that further fit notes could be accessed by requesting one through the practice website or that they needed to wait until they had received a discharge letter so that the pharmacy team and the GP had the correct information.

C was not informed that they could call for a same day triage appointment on their discharge from hospital. Although C was offered a routine appointment which is consistent with the practice's policy on GP access, C was not given the chance to say whether they wanted to accept this before the call was terminated by the practice.

We found that no offer was made to send a message to a GP informing them of the problem, to be actioned by the GP as and when appropriate. No explanation was provided to C about why their request to speak to the Practice Manager was refused and no consideration was given to requesting someone else (such as the Team Leader) to call C back. Therefore, we upheld this part of C's complaint.

C also complained that the practice failed to handle their complaint reasonably. We found that the complaint response did not address all the issues that C raised. The response also made statements about what C was told that were not supported by the recording of the telephone call to the reception team. We upheld this part of C's complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for not addressing C's concern that they needed advice about how to safely discontinue GP prescribed medication, not informing C that further fit notes could be accessed by requesting one through the practice website, not informing C that they needed to wait until they had received a discharge letter so that the pharmacy team and the GP had the correct information, not informing C that they could call for a same day triage appointment on their discharge from hospital, not giving C the chance to say whether they wanted to accept the offer of a routine appointment before the call was terminated, not offering to send a message to a GP informing the GP of the problem, to be actioned by the GP as and when appropriate, not explaining why their request to speak to the Practice Manager was refused and not giving consideration to requesting someone else (such as the Team Leader) to call C back, not addressing all the issues they raised in the complaint response, and making statements in the complaint response that were not supported by the recording of the telephone call to the reception team. The apology should

meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/meaningful-apologies](http://www.spsso.org.uk/meaningful-apologies).

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

- Patients should be provided with appropriate explanations and advice when they contact the reception team.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- Complaints should be investigated and responded to in accordance with the NHS Model Complaints Handling Procedure. Complaints investigators should fully investigate and address the key issues raised, ensure responses are supported by the relevant records, identify and action appropriate learning and apologise where issues have been identified. We offer SPSO accredited Complaints Handling training. Details and registration forms for our online self-guided Good Complaints Handling course (Stage 1) and our online trainer-led Complaints Investigation Skills course (Stage 2) are available at <https://www.spsso.org.uk/training-courses>.

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.