

Case: 201002718, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C, who is a telephonist, suffered an acoustic shock incident at work for which she needed medical treatment. She was unhappy with the care and treatment she received from the Board and the way they handled her complaint. During a consultation with a specialist, Ms C described the pain in her ear, head and neck. She also described how noise and/or examination made her symptoms worse. The specialist told Ms C's GP that Ms C had suffered an acoustic shock and that the description of the pain sounded like muscle tension. He also said that Ms C had tinnitus and that this was difficult to tie in with acoustic shock, although it was also difficult to say what else might have caused the problem. Ms C complained that this diagnosis was not reasonable and that the Board's subsequent investigation of her complaint was inadequate. After taking advice from one of the Ombudsman's professional medical advisers, we found that the specialist's conclusions were reasonable in the circumstances. We also found that the Board's investigation of the matter was appropriate. Ms C had said she felt that certain clinical aspects of the complaint should have been subject to independent review and that this was missing from the Board's investigation. We explained to Ms C that the second stage of the NHS Complaints Procedure (investigation by our office) provides the independent and impartial examination of the clinical information that she wanted.

Recommendations

We recommended that Tayside NHS Board ensures the doctor concerned has established a tinnitus protocol for his patients.