

**Case:** 201002888, Fife NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment; diagnosis  
**Outcome:** some upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C's father, Mr A, was admitted to the Victoria and Queen Margaret Hospitals for treatment of cancer of the oesophagus. The board assessed Mr A as being unfit for surgery. As a result, Mr C arranged for his father to travel abroad for a second opinion and he subsequently underwent successful surgery.

As Mr C complained to both the General Medical Council and Nursing and Midwifery Council regarding his father's treatment, this office did not duplicate their efforts and reconsider any clinical aspects. Our role was focussed on the board's handling of Mr C's complaint.

Mr C complained that the board failed to take promised follow-up action to consider implementing a policy for assessing patients' fitness for surgery. We asked the board to clarify what action had been taken following Mr C's complaint. They confirmed that the matter had been referred to their Managed Clinical Network and subsequently discussed at their annual meeting. The board concluded that the current systems in place were reasonable and that a formal policy was not required. As it appeared that the matter was duly considered by the board, we did not uphold the complaint.

Mr C also complained that the board had delayed in responding to his complaint. The board acknowledged that their investigation was delayed and they offered their apologies to Mr C. They also accepted that they delayed in issuing a holding letter to Mr C and that the holding letter should have provided fuller information. They advised us that they had taken steps to raise these matters with the relevant staff. In the circumstances, we upheld this complaint. However, as the board had already taken what we considered to be reasonable remedial action, we did not make any recommendations.