

SPSO decision report

Case: 201104532, Forth Valley NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: communication, staff attitude, dignity, confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that staff failed to involve him and his brother in discussions about future care plans for their mother (Mrs A). He said that staff decided that their mother was to be moved to another hospital to be assessed for a nursing home without any consultation with the family. We found that this was a difficult situation where Mr C and his brother, along with the health care team, were trying to get the best outcome for Mrs A. It appears that Mrs A was not able to return home and staff did their best to involve Mr C and his brother in the discharge arrangements. There was clearly some confusion regarding Mrs A's transfer to another hospital. The records showed that Mr C was told that his mother would have a further assessment for a nursing home there. The doctor also tried to contact Mr C again to discuss this before Mrs A was transferred, but there was no answer.

We did not uphold Mr C's complaint about this, as we found that the records provided evidence that staff spoke to Mr C and his brother very frequently throughout their mother's stay in hospital. There was no evidence of shortcomings in relation to communication and we were satisfied that staff took on Mr C's concerns about Mrs A's future care plans when he later complained about this.

Mr C also complained that staff inappropriately assessed Mrs A without ensuring that her hearing aid was in place. Although Mrs A lost her hearing aid on several occasions, we were satisfied that staff took reasonable steps to obtain replacements. Ideally, a patient should be wearing a hearing aid when being assessed. However, where this is not possible, as in Mrs A's case, it is reasonable for staff to carry out an assessment without the hearing aid in place, providing that they speak clearly and loudly during the assessment. Finally, Mr C complained that staff failed to adequately investigate his concerns that some of Mrs A's clothing had been lost. We were satisfied that staff adequately dealt with his concerns about this.