

SPSO decision report

Case: 201101197, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment; diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained to the board about the delay in diagnosing her son (Mr A) with asperger's syndrome when he was 41 years old. Mr A had been examined by various doctors since he was 8 years old and Mrs C wished to know why it had taken so long to reach a diagnosis.

We found that autism-spectrum disorders are a complex group of developmental disorders which are frequently associated with other psychiatric disorders which can colour their presentation and complicate their management. Asperger's syndrome was formally recognised by the World Health Organisation in 1992 and by the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders in 1994. Our medical adviser explained that due to system overlap, some people with asperger's syndrome can be wrongly diagnosed with other mental health disorders. However, it was possible that some of Mr A's previous diagnoses could have been legitimate mental health disorders in their own right. We found no evidence that there had been a delay in reaching Mr A's diagnosis of asperger's syndrome.