

SPSO decision report

Case: 201102164, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: communication, staff attitude, dignity, confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the board unreasonably failed to consult him when they decided to put a 'do not resuscitate' order in place for his late mother. Mr C was unhappy about how the board had implemented the national policy on decisions regarding resuscitation.

We took advice from our medical adviser about Mr C's concerns. The adviser said that the policy is intended to prevent inappropriate or futile attempts at resuscitation, which may cause distress to the patient and their families. The policy also outlines the circumstances in which healthcare professionals are not required to discuss the order with a relative or carer. This is when the patient's doctor believes that resuscitation would be unsuccessful and, therefore, should not be attempted.

On looking at this case, we found that the board implemented the policy properly because one of the doctors caring for Mr C's mother had decided that resuscitation would be inappropriate because of her medical condition and frailty at the time.