

SPSO decision report

Case: 201200723, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr and Mrs C complained about care that the board provided to their son (Mr A). Mr A was placed in foster care in an area away from the family home. The doctor who had been treating Mr A at home referred him to the new area's child and adolescent mental health services team (CAMHS). Mrs C complained that she and Mr C were not involved in the subsequent process.

We upheld this complaint. Our investigation found that there was no opportunity for Mr and Mrs C to express their views to the team despite the fact they maintained parental rights. We also found that CAMHS did not communicate with Mr and Mrs C until a third party prompted them to do so. We also upheld a complaint that mental health care arrangements for Mr A were not reasonable. We found that, although the board had attempted initial unsuccessful engagement with Mr A, his views had not been clearly sought at any stage. We noted that, during a meeting, those involved considered that Mr A was 'reluctant' to engage with CAMHS, but did not initiate a follow-up plan (which should have included obtaining Mr A's views clearly). Five months passed before Mr A was contacted again with the offer of an appointment, which he accepted.

We did not uphold a complaint that staff unreasonably failed to contact Mr and Mrs C when Mr A was admitted to hospital, as we found that they had acted reasonably by accepting that Mr A's foster parents, who had attended hospital with him, were acting as the responsible adults. Mrs C said that Mr A had been asking for her and Mr C, but we found no evidence that staff at the hospital were aware of this, as this information came from Mr A's foster carers rather than the medical records.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise to Mr and Mrs C for not involving them in Mr A's transfer to CAMHS;
- review the procedures within CAMHS following referrals, to ensure parents have the opportunity to exercise their parental rights, where appropriate, and that parents are advised of outcomes and communicated with appropriately;
- ensure all the staff concerned, and the CAMHS team as a whole, are reminded of the need to maintain detailed minutes during professionals' meetings and to ensure the terms of a referral are considered fully; and
- review CAMHS processes to ensure that the views of the child or young person concerned are taken into account in a timely way.