

SPSO decision report

Case: 201201488, Borders NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the board's actions in relation to his elderly father (Mr A). He said that his father had been admitted to hospital late in the evening. After being examined and declared fit, he was sent home in the early hours of the morning by car, with a relative. Mr C said the relative was not entirely happy with this but, nevertheless, complied. When Mr A reached home, a neighbour had to be recruited to help him get into the house. Mr C said that his father should not have been discharged, particularly because he was elderly, disabled and had memory problems.

We investigated the complaint taking all the relevant information, including all the complaints correspondence, the relevant clinical records and the board's discharge policy, into account. We also obtained independent advice from one of our advisers, who is a nurse.

In responding to the complaint, the board had confirmed that Mr A was considered fit for discharge and was keen to go home. There was, therefore, in their view, no clinical reason to keep him in hospital. They pointed out that the Scottish Ambulance Service did not provide out-of-hours transport and, as there was a relative available and willing to take Mr A home, they had asked him to do so. They said that if this had not been the case, they would have had to consider whether a taxi was appropriate.

Our nursing adviser reviewed the files and confirmed that the information in them indicated that Mr A was fit to go home. She also confirmed that Mr A was not in fact admitted to hospital, and so the board's discharge policy would not apply in his case. She said that in all the circumstances, it was not unreasonable for Mr A to return home with a relative, given that an emergency department was not an ideal place for an elderly and frail person.

Taking all the information into account, we did not uphold the complaint as we found that, while not ideal, in all the circumstances it was not unreasonable for the board to discharge Mr A home.