

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201202187, A Pharmacy in the Highland NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** policy/administration  
**Outcome:** some upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Miss C had been receiving a repeat prescription for tablets. However, on one occasion when she visited the pharmacy the pharmacist said the prescription could only be collected on certain dates, and that the next date had not yet arrived. Miss C had not been advised of this previously. The pharmacist gave Miss C five tablets to last until she could pick up her next prescription, although Miss C did not need that many tablets.

Miss C complained to us that the pharmacy applied rules about collection inconsistently and that although they had said there were dosage concerns, they then inconsistently issued more tablets than required. She was also unhappy with the way in which her complaint was handled.

We did not uphold Miss C's complaint about the inconsistent application of rules and issue of tablets. Our investigation found that the pharmacist was required to follow the advice of the prescribing doctor which in this case, was to provide a fortnight's supply of tablets every 14 days. The pattern of prescribing appears to have become slightly out of sync when the last prescription was written, leading to the change in dates. We did, however, make a recommendation to try to avoid this happening to someone else in future.

We upheld the complaint about complaints handling. Although the pharmacy acknowledged Miss C's complaint within their timescales, they did not respond to her until more than ten working days after receiving it, which was outside the recommended time limit. The pharmacy's head office, where the complaint was handled, is in England, and they failed to give Miss C information about the Scottish NHS complaints system and the Ombudsman.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the pharmacy:

- provide staff with guidance that ensures that they clearly explain the prescribing regime to patients with repeat prescriptions, as well as indicating the dates on which patients can collect such prescriptions; and
- apologise to Miss C for failing to provide the correct information when responding to her complaint, and for the delay in responding.