

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204168, Western Isles NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: policy/administration
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the board failed to take reasonable steps to fund travel and accommodation costs for his mother (Mrs A) following his father's emergency transfer to a hospital on the mainland. Mrs A wished to accompany her husband but there was no room in the ambulance, and so she made arrangements to travel to the mainland herself. Mrs A's GP had signed a post-dated escort authorisation form for her. Because of this she submitted an expenses claim, expecting the board to pay her costs, but they refused to do so.

Our investigation found that the board's policy says that they will only fund costs when someone is required to escort a patient who needs their support when travelling. This does not apply where the patient has travelled by ambulance, nor where family members to travel to be with someone who had been taken to hospital, and so the GP had incorrectly signed the form. Because of this, we did not uphold Mr C's complaint. In responding to our enquiries, the board also explained that they intended to highlight the requirements of the patient travel policy to all GPs in their area to ensure that the correct information is provided to families in future.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- provide the Ombudsman with evidence that they have reminded GPs in their area about correct use of the patient travel policy.