

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204540, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: communication, staff attitude, dignity, confidentiality
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C's late mother (Mrs A) was treated in hospital as an in-patient for illnesses that included pneumonia and chronic heart failure. Ms C complained that during that time the hospital communicated inadequately with her and other family members about Mrs A's medical condition. In particular Ms C said that she and family members were not made aware of the severity of Mrs A's condition before she was discharged from hospital. Mrs A died around two weeks after being discharged.

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers, who considered all aspects of the medical evidence. We took account of his advice alongside all the documentation supplied by Ms C and the board. Our adviser said that when Mrs A was admitted to hospital she was suffering from severe illnesses. When she was discharged, these had all been treated and were not significant ongoing issues. He noted that Mrs A had suffered from a severe degree of heart failure prior to admission. The adviser said that the records showed that staff had communicated appropriately with Ms C and other family members about Mrs A's true condition, in keeping with the General Medical Council's guidance on communication. Given this, we did not uphold this complaint.