

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201204715, Lothian NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mrs A, who was 91 years old, became ill and was admitted to hospital, where she deteriorated and died. Her son (Mr C) complained to the board that it was inappropriate for them to have placed his late mother on the Liverpool Care Pathway (LCP - a care planning system for dying patients). Mrs A was on the LCP for more than two weeks before she died, which Mr C felt was too long. He felt that staff should instead have provided her with treatment, for example an operation. He said that although it might have ended her life sooner, he felt that at least she would not have suffered for so long.

The board maintained that it was appropriate to have placed Mrs A on the LCP. Due to Mrs A's age and her other medical conditions, the board said the risks of surgery would have outweighed any potential benefit. They confirmed that communication was maintained with appropriate family members. Our investigation found that it was not unreasonable for staff to have placed Mrs A on the LCP, as it is used by health care staff to ensure high quality personal care is delivered in the last days of life. We also noted that the decision was discussed with family members who were the hospital's first point of contact.