

SPSO decision report

Case: 201302236, Lanarkshire NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C, who is a prisoner, complained that the board refused to prescribe him suboxone (a prescription medication used to treat opiate addiction). Mr C had been prescribed methadone, but he felt that suboxone would assist in his final recovery from drug addiction and told the board that he wanted to switch to this. However, the board told him that there was no absolute right for any patient to receive a specific form of treatment simply because they requested it. They said that what was important was the prescriber's clinical judgement that a treatment choice was appropriate for the individual, and whether they were at the correct stage of their recovery to support a change of treatment.

In their response to our enquiries, the board said that all patients within the addictions service are regularly assessed using both national and local guidance. They said that some patients may not be offered the drug of their choice, and that Mr C was receiving the most appropriate treatment for his clinical condition. They also explained that they had produced new guidance for prescribing suboxone in the prison after Mr C complained.

We did not uphold the complaint, as we found that the board had acted reasonably in deciding to maintain Mr C on methadone and that this decision had been based on a clinical assessment.

Mr C also complained that the board had not provided a written response to his 'feedback, comments or concerns' form. During our investigation the board accepted that there were failures in their communication with Mr C, and apologised for this.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- formally apologise to Mr C for the handling of his complaint.