

SPSO decision report

Case: 201302687, Forth Valley NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the treatment and support that his late son (Mr A) received from the board. Mr A had been suffering from low mood and agitation for about two months. He tried to take an overdose, but was stopped by his family. Following a call to the local out-of-hours service, he went to Forth Valley Royal Hospital for a review by their mental health unit. After what Mr C considered to be a very brief assessment, Mr A was discharged home, with phone numbers for three support organisations should he become upset again. Mr A went to his GP two days later saying that he was still depressed and that he had considered taking his own life. His GP referred him back to the mental health unit, where another assessment was carried out and Mr A was discharged home again. He took his own life a few days later. Mr C complained that the mental health unit failed to act on the concerns raised by his son's GP or to properly assess the severity of his condition. He felt that, had they done so, Mr A might have been admitted to the hospital as an in-patient and might have been treated.

After taking independent advice on this complaint from one of our medical advisers, who is a consultant forensic psychiatrist, we did not uphold Mr C's complaints. The adviser said that there was clear evidence that the mental health unit had acknowledged the concerns raised by Mr A's GP. The assessments that were carried out were thorough and followed accepted practice. We accepted his advice that, based on the information available to staff at both consultations, there was no cause for Mr A to be admitted as an in-patient. The adviser said that, in the circumstances, it was reasonable for Mr A to be discharged home with advice as to who to contact should he need support. He noted that Mr A was receiving medication from his GP and had reported benefitting from the support numbers he had been given.