

SPSO decision report

Case: 201302916, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C, who is an advocacy worker, complained on behalf of her client, Mrs A. Mrs A went to her dentist with toothache. She was examined, but decided not to have treatment because of the complexity of the problems. Early the next month, the dentist referred Mrs A to the dental hospital. They referred her there again about two weeks later for an emergency appointment, and made a further referral some four days after that. The assessment consultation for this last referral was not until two months after the date of referral. Mrs A said that despite then going to the dental hospital a number of times, she did not receive appropriate treatment until some eight months after she first went to her dentist with toothache. Throughout this period, she made a number of calls to NHS 24 because she was in considerable pain.

Mrs A complained about the delay in treatment, and said her dentist provided all relevant information to allow treatment to proceed at the time of the third referral. She said that the delay was particularly unreasonable because she was pregnant and in pain.

We took independent advice on this case from one of our dental advisers. They said that while the board failed to meet the national 18-week target in relation to the third referral, they did tell Mrs A of the likely delays, and provided advice about what she could do to be treated more quickly. The adviser also said that Mrs A's pregnancy did not necessarily mean that she was a priority patient, and that it was the responsibility of her dentist to manage her pain while waiting for treatment. In light of the board's failure to meet the target, we upheld the complaint but we did not make any recommendations as the board have introduced a new system for appointments, with the aim of ensuring that target times are met in future.