

SPSO decision report

Case: 201303619, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments/admissions (delay, cancellation, waiting lists)
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C was referred for hospital physiotherapy treatment but, as he had not received an appointment after two months, he complained to the board. In their response, the board acknowledged that their waiting list for routine physiotherapy appointments was much longer than they would like it to be. They apologised to Mr C and explained the steps they were taking to try to reduce the waiting list. They also confirmed that they had sent him a separate letter offering him an appointment. However, as Mr C did not receive this, he was unable to respond to the offer, and because of this he was removed from the waiting list and discharged. When he contacted the board to ask why he had not heard anything, he found out he had been discharged and brought his complaint to us.

Our investigation found that although the board do not keep copies of appointment letters, they had recorded on their system that a letter had been sent to Mr C and the date it was sent. They also provided us with evidence that they had notified Mr C's GP of his discharge. We obtained independent advice from our medical adviser, who is a GP. The adviser confirmed that this was reasonable and that the onus was then on Mr C to get in touch. We noted that, despite having been told by the board that an appointment letter had been sent, he waited over six months to get in touch with them to tell them he had not received it. When he did get in touch, the physiotherapy service phoned him to explore the possibility of reinstating his referral but Mr C indicated that he no longer wished an appointment.

As we considered the board's response to the initial complaint to have been reasonable, and as Mr C himself appeared to have delayed in querying why he had not received the appointment letter, we did not uphold the complaint.