

SPSO decision report

Case: 201304138, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: upheld, action taken by body to remedy, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C, who is an advice worker, complained on behalf of her client (Mrs A) about the care and treatment given to Mrs A's late husband (Mr A) before he died. Mr A had bowel cancer and his prognosis (the forecast of the likely outcome of his condition) was not good. He was discharged home from hospital into the care of his GP and the district nursing service. After being at home for a short while, Mr A died. Mrs A complained about the various agencies involved in her husband's care and was particularly unhappy because she considered that district nurses had failed to properly care for her husband in the final weeks and days of his life and that levels of support, communication and standards of care had been poor. In responding to her complaint, the board agreed that there were failures in the support and care offered to Mr and Mrs A, and apologised for this, but Mrs A remained concerned that lessons had not been learned nor had procedures been put in place to prevent this happening again. She also complained about the way in which her complaint had been handled.

We took independent advice on this case from our nursing adviser, an experienced registered nurse. Our investigation confirmed that the board had admitted that there were shortcomings in Mr A's care, and we found that they took too long to deal with her complaint. We, therefore, upheld the complaint, while noting that the board had put processes in place to address the problems with Mr A's care and had apologised sincerely to Mrs A for the failings. As our investigation also found that the board had taken Mrs A's concerns most seriously and that the processes put in place provided a good response to them, we did not find it necessary to make any recommendations.