

SPSO decision report

Case: 201305854, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained to us on behalf of her client (Ms A). Ms A met with a health visitor after registering with a local GP. Ms A advised the health visitor that her child had issues with feeding and as a result, had not really been introduced to solid foods. The health visitor noted that Ms A's child was well above the range of weight and length expected for a child of that age. A number of issues relating to the family resulted in the health visitor making contact with the social work department. Ms A's child was voluntarily put into the care of the child's father following a meeting with a social worker and a paediatrician.

Ms A complained about the health visitor's actions and said that she held the health visitor predominantly responsible for the child being removed from her care. Ms A also complained about the way that the board handled her complaint. The board said that the health visitor had carried out her role appropriately and explained that a health visitor cannot be responsible for the removal of a child from its mother's care as they do not have this statutory duty.

We took independent advice from one of our advisers, who is a health visitor. Our investigation found that the health visitor's actions were reasonable on the basis of the information available to her. Some issues around record-keeping were highlighted for professional development but the adviser had no concerns about the health visitor's actions. We did, however, find that the board's handling of Ms A's complaint was unreasonable as they had not fully addressed all her concerns in their response and had not followed their complaints handling procedure.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- highlight the issues regarding record-keeping to the health visitor for professional development;
- apologise for failing to follow their complaints handling procedure in this case; and
- take steps to ensure the investigation and written response to a complaint is in line with their complaints handling procedure.