

SPSO decision report

Case: 201306286, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C said he had been referred to the ear, nose and throat clinic by his GP. He had been offered an appointment at a Raigmore Hospital which was too far from his home and had requested an appointment at Belford Hospital closer to where he lived. Despite this he had been offered a second appointment at Raigmore Hospital, before being offered an appointment at Belford Hospital. Mr C complained he was seen outside the waiting time guarantee of 18 weeks from referral to treatment. Mr C also complained that he had been offered an appointment with psychological services some 18 months after his referral, which also breached the referral to treatment target.

We found the offer of an appointment to Mr C of an appointment at Raigmore was within the board's published policies for appointment management. The board had mitigation in place due to the distances patients had to travel to attend these appointments. When Mr C refused this appointment, he was no longer covered by the Scottish Government waiting time target, so we did not uphold his complaint about delay for the ear, nose and throat clinic. We found there was an unreasonable delay in providing an appointment with psychological services and upheld his complaint about this. The board had, however, provided evidence that they had made significant improvements to their waiting list management and that waiting times had consequently been substantially reduced.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise for the failure to properly explain the actions they had taken to improve patient access to psychological services.