

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201401186, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained that the board had failed to provide his partner (Mr A) with appropriate and timely treatment for a needlestick injury (when the skin is accidentally pierced by a needle), when he attended the A&E department at the Southern General Hospital. He said that Mr A had to wait for two and a half hours to see a doctor and that other people who arrived after him were seen before him. Mr C complained that they refused to give Mr A post exposure prophylaxis (PEP - short-term antiretroviral treatment to reduce the likelihood of HIV infection after potential exposure), despite the fact that the needle had been discarded close to the home of an HIV positive drug user. He also said that Mr A was not offered a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) test (a test that can be used to identify HIV) which can be done around ten days after the exposure.

After obtaining independent advice from our medical adviser, we found that the care and treatment provided to Mr A had been reasonable, appropriate and in keeping with standard care. Patients with a community-acquired needlestick injury are not treated as a priority when they attend A&E. It was not unreasonable that some patients with other conditions who arrived after Mr A were assessed before him. The board had acted in line with their guidelines in relation to providing PEP and it was not given because any benefit would have been outweighed by the risk of side effects. It was also appropriate that a PCR test was not used, as another test was available. In view of all of this, we did not uphold the complaint.