

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201402081, Forth Valley NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C told us that she suffers from fibromyalgia (a long-term condition that causes pain all over the body) and attends a pain clinic. In 2012, she began to experience further pain, which she did not believe was as a result of fibromyalgia. She said that she was virtually suicidal but that clinicians failed to investigate alternative sources for her pain and continued to treat her for fibromyalgia. She said that she should have been x-rayed or scanned and that the board's failure to do so meant that the true nature of the problems with her spine were not identified.

We took independent medical advice from consultants in rheumatology and orthopaedics. We found that while it was more than likely that Mrs C had fibromyalgia, her diagnosis had not been confirmed by a specialist. When Mrs C began to suffer further pain, advice was taken from another practitioner who admitted that this was not his area of expertise. Our advisers said that while the subsequent advice given to Mrs C was mostly correct, it may have been misleading and advice should have been sought from a specialist. Doctors did not carry out further investigations into her pain to exclude either another diagnosis or a further illness.

Although our advisers did not agree that Mrs C needed an x-ray or scan, we upheld her complaint, as we found that the board had failed to carry out an appropriate investigation into her pain.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- make a formal apology for their shortcomings;
- review their system for diagnosing fibromyalgia and confirm to us that they are satisfied that it is fit for purpose and sufficiently robust;
- ensure that details of the complaint are brought to the attention of the speciality doctor and the associate specialist concerned; and
- consider our adviser's comments about including reference to cervical spondylosis (neck pain caused by age related wear and tear) in the diagnosis.