

SPSO decision report

Case: 201403195, A Dental Practice in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: complaints handling
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C complained to us about her dental practice's handling of a complaint she made. She said that the practice's response to her complaint was inadequate, as it failed to address all the questions she had asked, and did not include comments from two of the three dentists she had complained about.

After investigating the matter, we upheld Miss C's complaint. We found that the staff member who dealt with Miss C's complaint had only sought comments from one of the dentists involved, and the other two had been given no opportunity to comment. The staff member also failed to check the response, to ensure that it addressed all of the relevant points of the complaint. While the dentist who did respond answered Miss C's questions relevant to the care he provided, and apologised appropriately for some aspects of treatment, the lack of coordination meant that the overall response was poor.

We also found that the complaints handling policy used by the practice appeared to be out of date and did not meet the Scottish Government's requirements for managing complaints about health services. This meant that the practice had failed to meet relevant requirements, such as including information in their acknowledgement letter about the complaints handling process and Miss C's right to bring her complaint to us. The policy also had incorrect information on where to direct customers if they remained dissatisfied, as it said that complaints could be directed to the board (instead of us).

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- issue a written apology to Miss C, acknowledging the failings our investigation found;
- review staff training needs, to ensure complaints are appropriately coordinated and responded to; and
- review their complaints procedure to ensure that it reflects the requirements of the Scottish Government's 'Can I Help You?' guidance.