

SPSO decision report

Case: 201403265, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C was transferred between prisons and, as is routine for new arrivals, had a GP appointment at his new prison's health centre the day after he arrived. The GP decided to reduce and later stop Mr C's headache medication. This was because in the first prison Mr C had been found to have less of the medication in his possession than he should have had, and so he was in breach of prison protocol about this.

Two days after his GP appointment, Mr C was found to be concealing his medication in his mouth, rather than swallowing it. This was also in breach of a protocol, which said that if a prisoner was found to be concealing medication that they were being given on a supervised basis (as in Mr C's case), the clinical need for it would be reassessed. On reassessment, it was decided to stop the medication with immediate effect. The medical records indicated that Mr C was offered an alternative but declined. Mr C complained that the decisions to reduce his medication on arrival at the new prison and to stop his medication after reassessment were both unreasonable.

We took independent advice from one of our medical advisers and found that on both occasions medical staff acted appropriately. The medication in question was one which is often abused in a prison environment (for example, by prisoners selling it to other prisoners). Drug security in prison is very important and the NHS have to have firm policies for such security and follow them.