

SPSO decision report

Case: 201403916, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: nurses / nursing care
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Miss C's MP complained to us on her behalf. Miss C was admitted to Aberdeen Royal Infirmary with an infected appendix, which was removed. She complained about aspects of her nursing care, including that she was not provided with anything to eat or drink on the day of her admission. She also complained that she was not given sufficient information on discharge. In addition, she was unhappy with the time the board took to respond to her complaint and she said their response contained inaccuracies, including the board's view that she was given tea and toast on the evening of her admission.

We took independent advice from one of our nursing advisers, who observed that there was no record of any food or fluids being given to Miss C on the evening of her admission. She said if tea and toast were provided she would have expected this to have been recorded. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

While the adviser noted that, in light of Miss C's anxiety, the board could perhaps have provided her with extra information and reassurance, she considered that a reasonable level of information was provided to her at the time of her discharge. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

We noted that there was a considerable delay in the board responding to Miss C's complaints correspondence. It appeared as though they had overlooked the complaint. We also noted that information relevant to their investigation was not contained within their complaint file, including notes of key discussions. Further, they failed to address all the points of complaint Miss C raised and some of the information they provided in their response did not appear to be supported by the available evidence. We, therefore, upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- remind nursing staff of the importance of good record-keeping;
- remind complaints handling staff of the importance of issuing full, evidenced and timely responses to complaints;
- remind complaints handling staff that complaint files should contain a complete record of their investigations, including notes of relevant discussions; and
- apologise to Miss C for the complaints handling failures this investigation has identified.