

SPSO decision report

Case: 201405328, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained about the way in which his pain relief medication was handled by the prison health centre. Mr C has osteoporosis (a condition causing weakness of the bones) and had been prescribed tramadol (a strong opioid painkiller). He was unhappy that there was little discussion or information about why it was being stopped. He was also unhappy that the board failed to provide relevant information in their response to his complaint.

We took independent advice from a medical adviser who is a GP. We found that, when reviewing Mr C's medication, the health centre acted in line with Scottish national guidelines on the management of chronic pain and on prescribing. Tramadol was not the only type of painkiller that could be used to treat Mr C's pain, and there is a lack of evidence for the long-term use of opioids for chronic pain. We considered it reasonable that the health centre tried alternative painkillers on the basis that further review took place.

We concluded that reasonable attempts were made by the health centre, and in the board's complaint response, to explain why the medication was being reduced and then stopped.