

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201405815, Scottish Ambulance Service  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** failure to send ambulance / delay in sending ambulance  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C phoned the Scottish Ambulance Service (the service) for an emergency ambulance as he was suffering from severe abdominal pains. He described his symptoms to one of the service's clinical advisors who told him to attend his local out-of-hours centre. He attended the centre and was examined by a doctor who immediately phoned for an ambulance and Mr C was taken to hospital where it was diagnosed that he had perforated ulcers. Mr C complained that the service should have sent an ambulance when he originally reported his symptoms.

We took independent advice from an adviser, who is a paramedic, and they explained that, although Mr C's condition was not immediately life threatening, the service's clinical advisor failed to ask sufficiently detailed questions about the character of the pain or associated symptoms. As a result, the service's clinical advisor failed to put himself in a position to safely judge whether or not to despatch an ambulance.

Although there was not a need to send an immediate ambulance, we upheld the complaint because there was a failure to assess Mr C's symptoms appropriately.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the service:

- apologise to Mr C for the failure to ask appropriate and relevant questions regarding his abdominal pain; and
- share our decision with the clinical advisor involved and consider whether a training need has been identified.