

SPSO decision report

Case: 201406935, A Medical Practice in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained that when she first registered with her new GP she had difficulty in getting an appointment. When she first saw a GP, two weeks after joining the medical practice, she was refused a prescription for regular medication for various conditions as her medical notes had not yet been transferred from her old practice. Ms C also complained that she was removed from the practice list for alleged abusive behaviour, and that the practice failed to deal with her subsequent complaints.

We took independent advice from one of our GP advisers. They told us that records can sometimes take up to 12 weeks to be transferred between NHS practices when a patient changes GP. Therefore, it is common practice for basic information, including details of repeat medications, to be faxed over to the new practice to prevent any delays in prescriptions being issued. The adviser was particularly concerned that Ms C was on medication that can have serious withdrawal symptoms if stopped suddenly. We upheld this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

On the issue of Ms C being removed from the practice list, there was evidence that the staff at the practice found Ms C's behaviour, at times, to be unacceptable. While there does not have to be any intention to behave in an unacceptable way by the patient, where a GP considers that a patient's behaviour is unacceptable, they have the right to ask for that patient to be removed from their list. We did not uphold this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

In relation to the handling of the complaint, Ms C said that she had hand-delivered four letters of complaint between October and December 2014 but the practice said they had no record of the letters being received by any staff member. Following contact with our office, the letters were copied to the practice and were dealt with within the timescales laid down by the NHS guidance on complaints handling. We did not uphold this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- issue a written apology for the failings identified; and
- implement a system for contacting the previous practice of NHS patients transferring to them to obtain basic details of previous medical history and regular medications.