

SPSO decision report

Case: 201407063, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: policy / administration
Outcome: not upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that the board refused to fund his stay at a residential facility for patients receiving cancer treatment at Aberdeen hospitals. He attended Aberdeen Royal Infirmary for radiotherapy every weekday for around seven weeks but only received funding for the last two weeks of his stay. He complained that he was initially given the impression that his full stay would be funded and he said that he did not find out this was not the case until a few days into his stay.

The board confirmed that funding is available for patients from Orkney and Shetland, and also those with an IV postcode. As Mr C's postcode lay outwith these areas, he did not meet the main criteria for a fully-funded stay. The board advised that there is provision for funding patients from other postcodes where their physical condition makes it impossible for them to travel long distances. Mr C did not suffer from any of the listed qualifying conditions, except for radiotherapy-induced incontinence which automatically qualifies patients for funding for the last two weeks of their stay only. Mr C received this funding.

As it appeared that Mr C's funding application was appropriately assessed in line with the board's normal criteria, we focussed on whether the position was made clear to him in advance of his stay. We found no evidence of Mr C being incorrectly advised that he would receive funding for his entire stay. Therefore, we did not uphold the complaint. However, we noted that the board did not have a formal policy in place setting out their qualification criteria for funded places. We considered that such a policy would be helpful for staff and patients alike and we made a recommendation in this regard.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- develop a formal policy, clearly setting out their criteria for funding accommodation at the residential facility involved in this complaint, and ensure this policy is communicated to relevant staff.