

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201501488, Scottish Ambulance Service  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the way he was treated by an ambulance crew who attended his home following a fall. He felt that the crew had handled him badly, and said that they did not fit a neck brace or transport him to the ambulance using a stretcher. On arrival at hospital it was established that Mr C had suffered a fracture of the second vertebra. The board explained that the crew had carried out a thorough assessment and could not detect any tenderness to the vertebrae of Mr C's neck or back, and there were no signs of nervous system damage. There was some mild tenderness on the left side of the neck but this was over the soft tissue area. Current UK guidelines say immobilisation is not required if there is no central spinal tenderness. The crew decided there was no requirement for a neck brace based on the symptoms reported, and no detectable signs of spinal injury at the time.

We sought independent advice from a medical adviser with experience in the training of paramedics. The adviser had no concerns about the actions of the ambulance crew, and was satisfied that they had acted in accordance with the guidelines concerning the treatment of patients with neck and back injuries.