

SPSO decision report

Case: 201501940, Orkney NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: complaints handling
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C had a history of bowel problems. He had surgery at Balfour Hospital to rectify a twisted bowel and hernia. Mr C was concerned that his bowel was perforated during the operation, which meant it leaked and was slow to heal, affecting his ability to work. Five months later he had further surgery to repair the damage, after which the healing process was quick. Mr C complained that the board did not provide adequate reasoning for the delay in carrying out the second surgical procedure.

We took independent medical advice on this case from a consultant colorectal surgeon. Whilst we recognised the significant impact that Mr C's post-operative problems had had on his life, we found that he had experienced a recognised complication of this type of surgery. He had developed a fistula (a tube-shaped hollow between organs) possibly caused by one of his stitches opening. We were satisfied that a period of time had to be left between the two surgeries to allow the fistula to repair itself and prevent further damage. The second operation was, therefore, not delayed and we found no evidence of failings by the medical team.