SPSO decision report

SPSO Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

Case:	**201505499, A Medical Practice in the Highland NHS Board area**
Sector:	health
Subject:	clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome:	upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C, who is an advice worker, complained to the practice about a lack of urgency in acting on Ms A's concerns about a problem with her young daughter's hip. She said that Ms A reported that her daughter's left leg was longer than her right leg and that one of the GPs failed to thoroughly examine her daughter. In addition, it was only after Ms A continued to report her concerns that her daughter was referred to hospital. However, one of the GPs marked the referral as non-urgent and Ms A had to ask the practice again to make an urgent referral. Her daughter was diagnosed as having a dislocated hip.

The practice apologised for the delay and said they had learned from the complaint. They were now aware that they can directly ask for an ultrasound scan of the hip in such circumstances. The GPs were more aware of the signs to look for and would mark any referrals as urgent. The practice apologised for the distress which was caused.

We took independent advice from a medical adviser who noted that the response from the practice to Ms A's complaint was thorough and explained the shortcomings which they had identified. The practice said that their GPs were now more aware of the referral options, the need for urgency and the later signs of congenital dislocation of the hip. However, we identified further failings by one of the GPs in regards to the inadequate examination and recording of findings related to Ms A's daughter and a failure to stress the urgency of the situation in the hospital referral letter, so we upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

We recommended that the practice:

- apologise to Ms A for the failings identified;
- discuss the complaint as part of the GP's annual appraisal; and
- explain their criteria for carrying out a significant event analysis and explain why one was not performed in this case.