

SPSO decision report

Case: 201507926, Fife NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: policy / administration
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mrs C was required to travel outwith the board area for treatment of a rare condition from which she suffers. She complained that the board's policy of reimbursing after travel, rather than paying upfront, caused her financial hardship. The board confirmed that it was their policy only to reimburse on production of receipts and Mrs C's request for upfront payment was refused. We were satisfied that the board acted in line with their documented procedure and we did not uphold the complaint.

However, the board acknowledged a need to consider exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis. They subsequently reviewed their procedure and established that other health boards have an ability to make payment in advance. They updated their procedure to include a provision for making upfront payments where exceptional circumstances are deemed to exist. We considered this action reasonable and had no further recommendations to make.

Mrs C raised further concerns that the board had refused to pay her the associated costs of travel, such as the cost of meals and childcare. We did not take this forward as the board's procedure clearly set out that only the costs of travel and accommodation are eligible for reimbursement. In addition, Mrs C complained that the board had communicated poorly with her and, while we noted there were occasions where they delayed in responding to her requests for information, we were satisfied that they had already explained, and apologised for, these delays.