

SPSO decision report

Case: 201508537, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Outcome: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

After suffering recurrent ear infections, a child had surgery to insert grommets in his ears (a small tube inserted into the ear to help drain away fluid in the middle ear and maintain air pressure) at a private hospital in 2013. He then attended the Royal Hospital for Sick Children from early in 2014 as he had been experiencing nose bleeds. The child had a number of procedures carried out in May of that year but soon afterwards experienced another ear infection. He was seen in hospital again and a further set of grommets were inserted in August. He was reviewed in November and it was planned to see him in six months but his appointment was brought forward as he had been suffering constant infections and pain.

In April 2015 after attending at hospital, a decision was taken to allow a three month period of 'watchful waiting' before taking a decision to insert grommets again. The child's mother (Miss C) was unhappy with this and arranged for him to be treated privately. She complained that the board had not treated her son appropriately.

We took independent advice from a consultant ear, nose and throat surgeon and we found that the child had been treated in accordance with established guidance. This was because the type of problem from which he suffered could often resolve spontaneously, and it was usual to recommend a period of 'watchful waiting' before taking a decision to proceed with surgery. For this reason we did not uphold Miss C's complaint.