

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201508821, A Dentist in the Lothian NHS Board area  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained about the treatment provided by her dentist. Mrs C said the treatment she received was unsatisfactory and as a result she had been left with problems with her teeth for which she held the practice responsible.

Mrs C had attended for a review appointment, where she complained of tenderness above an incisor tooth when she pressed on the gum. No treatment was provided by the dentist and Mrs C was advised to book a further review appointment at a later date.

We took independent advice from a dental adviser who said Mrs C's symptoms were suggestive of an infection. The adviser said the dentist should have carried out some form of investigation, as a minimum an x-ray, in order to determine the cause and confirm a diagnosis. There was no evidence that they did so.

The adviser said that remedial treatment may then have been appropriate or arranging a further review appointment if it was considered that the problem would resolve without further treatment. The adviser considered that the dentist had not provided Mrs C with appropriate treatment. We accepted that advice and upheld Mrs C's complaint.

The adviser also commented that because Mrs C saw the first dentist with an available appointment whenever she contacted the practice, she was seen and treated by six different dentists in the practice over several months. The adviser said this may have resulted in a failure in communication in that Mrs C was not provided with consistent messages and advice about her treatment, so we made a recommendation about this.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the dentist:

- issue Mrs C with an apology for failing to undertake treatment when they saw her;
- reflect on the comments of the adviser in relation to ensuring that they can confirm any clinical findings with an accurate diagnosis before providing advice to a patient; and
- work with other dentists in the practice to give consideration to ensuring that, where a patient is seen and treated by more than one dentist, appropriate processes are in place so that the patient is given consistent messages and advice about their dental treatment.