

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201601670, Highland NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)  
**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Ms C, an advocacy and support worker, complained on behalf of Mr A. Mr A was referred by his GP to orthopaedics for a knee problem from which he was suffering. He waited around 13 weeks to be seen and was told he required a replacement knee. Mr A also had an active skin condition which the orthopaedic consultant said would need to be controlled as it increased the risk of infection following surgery.

Mr A was not added to the surgery waiting list. His GP was asked to make a dermatology referral. After a further 12-week wait, Mr A saw a dermatologist and was referred on to a more local facility for phototherapy for his skin condition. The phototherapy was successful but the good effects were short-lasting. Mr A had still not been placed on the waiting list and had to undergo a further pre-assessment and round of dermatology treatment before his surgery took place, meaning that he had to wait 15 months from the time he was referred until he received treatment. We upheld Ms C's complaint.

We found that more could have been done in the chain of communication, and that a degree of difficulty in scheduling surgery around such a skin condition might have been predicted.

We also found a letter between two departments had not been sent to a named consultant and there was no evidence it had been actioned.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise to Mr A for the breakdowns in communication and lack of forward planning.