

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201604039, Highland NHS Board  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Decision:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mr C complained about the care and treatment his wife (Mrs A) received at Dunbar Hospital. Mr C and Mrs A had just moved to the area and had not yet registered with a local GP practice when Mrs A became unwell with flu-like symptoms. NHS 24 advised her to attend Dunbar Hospital, where she was diagnosed with a respiratory infection and prescribed antibiotics. Mrs A had two further attendances and phone contact with the hospital, before registering with a local GP. The GP diagnosed pneumonia, prescribed a new course of antibiotics and subsequently arranged an emergency admission to a different hospital for treatment.

Mr C complained that the doctor who initially assessed Mrs A at Dunbar Hospital failed to diagnose her pneumonia. He also complained that Mrs A was assessed by nursing staff on her subsequent attendances at the hospital and not a doctor, despite his understanding that the plan was for further medical review. In addition, he complained that the nurse Mrs A spoke to when she phoned Dunbar Hospital did not make appropriate arrangements for her to be seen by a doctor and simply advised her to register with a local GP.

We took independent advice from both a GP and a nurse. Both advisers considered that the respective assessments of Mrs A were reasonable and they considered it appropriate for her to have been advised to register with a local GP. They noted that the out-of-hours service at Dunbar Hospital is for emergency care when GP surgeries are closed. They also noted that routine follow-up and the arrangements of tests is usually carried out by the GP. The GP adviser considered that Mrs A's initial diagnosis and treatment were appropriate and noted that the treatment would have been the same if pneumonia had been suspected initially. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Mr C also raised concerns that the board's response to his complaint contained a number of inaccurate and misleading statements. In particular, he considered that it inappropriately contained continual reference to the GP registration issue and that the response did not justify the poor quality of care that he considered was provided by Dunbar Hospital. We reiterated that we found the advice to register with a GP to have been appropriate and we found no evidence to support Mr C's concerns that the detail of the board's response was inaccurate or misleading. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.