

SPSO decision report

Case: 201701595, Ayrshire and Arran NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about the care and treatment provided to her late father (Mr A) at University Hospital Ayr. Mr A was elderly and had a visual impairment. Mrs C complained that nursing staff failed to take into account her father's visual impairment when communicating with him and that they failed to recognise he needed extra assistance when reaching for food and drinks. Mrs C also complained about the handling of the discharge process. She felt that the nursing staff did not give accurate information to the social work department about Mr A's mobility, which resulted in difficulties in managing his care at home. Mrs C also raised concerns about the board's handling of her complaint.

The board acknowledged their communication with Mrs C could have been better and that they should have consulted with her more regarding her father's discharge planning. The board also acknowledged that nursing staff communication with Mr A was not acceptable. Mrs C remained unhappy and brought her complaints to us.

We took independent nursing advice. We found that the nursing care provided to Mr A was below an acceptable standard and that the discharge planning could have been improved by holding a case conference. We upheld these two aspects of Mrs C's complaint. However, we found that the board did take adequate steps to ensure that Mr A received appropriate post-discharge care at home. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Regarding complaints handling, we found that the board did not handle Mrs C's complaint in line with their complaints handling procedure. We upheld this part of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Staff should be more aware of how to take into account and accommodate the individual needs of visually impaired patients and should ensure these needs are recorded appropriately in the records.
- The board should recognise the importance of personalised discharge planning, particularly when patients are elderly and frail and are already receiving complex care at home.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.