

SPSO decision report

Case: 201703523, A Medical Practice in the Grampian NHS Board

Sector: health

Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis

Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained to us about the fact that his medical practice had not carried out a home visit. He had phoned twice on the same day with severe back pain. The duty GP made a diagnosis over the phone and recommended a course of action, but did not arrange a home visit. The next day, Mr C's back pain persisted and he experienced numbness after suffering a fall. The GP on duty that day arranged for a home visit to be carried out and Mr C was transferred to hospital and subsequently diagnosed with cauda equina syndrome (a disorder that affects the nerves). This required surgery which has left him with ongoing difficulties. Mr C feels that the consequences may not have been as severe had the original GP arranged for a home visit to be carried out. In addition to this, Mr C complained about some aspects of the practice's complaints handling.

We considered the information provided by Mr C and the information provided by the practice. We also took independent advice from a GP adviser. We found that the original duty GP's actions were appropriate on the basis of Mr C's presenting symptoms. When further symptoms developed, it was appropriate to arrange a home visit but it was reasonable not to on the basis of the original phone calls. We concluded that the original duty GP's actions were in line with the relevant guidance and regulations. We did not uphold this aspect of Mr C's complaint.

In respect of the practice's complaints handling, we agreed that there were some measures they could put in place to improve the customer experience. However, we considered their handling and response to Mr C's complaint to be reasonable on the whole. Although we did not uphold Mr C's complaint about this, we did offer some feedback to the board about how they can improve their complaints handling.