

SPSO decision report

Case: 201703528, Fife NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Miss C complained about the time taken to refer her to a specialist in a different board area for her urology issues (urology is the area of medicine relating to the kidneys, bladder and urinary tract). She said she asked for this referral repeatedly, but that it took a number of months for the board to refer her. She also complained that the board did not send on some test results to her new consultant, so she was required to repeat these privately at her own cost.

In response to Miss C's complaint, the board said that referrals to another health board are not available on demand. They said that the consultant who reviewed Miss C's case and made the referral felt that it was appropriate to refer her on for more specialist advice at that time. The board acknowledged that they did not include a copy of the test results with the original referral, and they apologised for this. They said they had sent on the test results about two months later.

We took independent advice from a consultant urologist. We found that Miss C's condition was first investigated by gynaecology (the area of medicine that deals with the health of the female reproductive systems and the breasts) and, while Miss C did request a referral to the specialist during this time, she then agreed to continue with additional tests. Miss C then advised the gynaecology service that she was now seeing a private gynaecologist, and she was appropriately discharged from their care. About six months after this first urology appointment, Miss C was reviewed by urology, and there is no evidence in the medical records that she requested a referral to the specialist before this review. We considered that this time-frame was reasonable, and there was insufficient evidence to conclude that the board had failed to respond to her request for a referral. We did not uphold this aspect of Miss C's complaint.

In relation to the test results, we found there was evidence that the board did send these on two months after the referral (although it appeared they were never received by the specialist). We found the delay was unreasonable, but noted that the board had already apologised for this. We found that it was likely the specialist would have asked Miss C to repeat these tests in any case, so we did not recommend that the board refund this cost. We did not uphold this aspect of Miss C's complaint.