

SPSO decision report

Case: 201705298, Lanarkshire NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C complained that there was an unreasonable delay in being offered an ophthalmology (the branch of medicine concerned with the study and treatment of disorders and diseases of the eye) appointment at Hairmyres Hospital following a referral by his optician with possible glaucoma (a common eye condition where the optic nerve becomes damaged).

We took independent advice from a consultant ophthalmologist. We found that it had been an unreasonable for Mr C to wait for seven months for the appointment. We noted that the board had apologised to Mr C for the unacceptable length of time he had had to wait for the appointment. We also found that there was a lack of documentation of the triaging process (a process in which things are ranked in terms of importance or priority) used by the board for referral to secondary ophthalmic care which made the auditing of the triage decisions impossible. We upheld Mr C's complaint.

Recommendations

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

- Cases of possible glaucoma who have optic disc and visual field changes typical of glaucoma should be seen within four to six weeks.
- Triage systems for referral to secondary ophthalmic care should be transparent and auditable and should specify the desired appointment time in weeks.