

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201800487, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division  
**Sector:** health  
**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Decision:** not upheld, no recommendations

### Summary

Mrs C complained to us about the failure of staff at A&E at the Queen Elizabeth University Hospital to arrange a x-ray when she reported that she had hurt her back. Mrs C was given painkillers and encouraged to mobilise before being discharged home. Mrs C asked whether she should have an x-ray, but was advised that it would be unlikely to show anything and that she had probably torn muscles in her stomach and back. Mrs C was subsequently referred to physiotherapy by her GP and, after a few months, the physiotherapist sent her for a x-ray which revealed that she had suffered a fracture of her back. Mrs C felt that an x-ray should have been arranged at the initial hospital presentation and that, if this had happened, she may have avoided months of pain.

We took independent advice from a consultant in emergency medicine. We found that Mrs C had had a thorough examination on attendance at A&E and that it was appropriate to have prescribed her painkilling medication for suspected torn muscles in her stomach and back. Mrs C was encouraged to mobilise and given advice to contact her GP if the symptoms persisted or deteriorated. It is a matter of clinical judgement whether an x-ray should have been taken, but we considered that it was not unreasonable for the staff not to have arranged an x-ray in the circumstances, given Mrs C's presenting symptoms. It was also noted that, had an x-ray been arranged on initial presentation, then the treatment plan would not have altered. We did not uphold the complaint.