

SPSO decision report

Case: 201801272, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C had been in contact with mental health services for a number of years and was informed by his current psychiatrist (a medical practitioner who specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness) that he had a diagnosis of borderline personality disorder. Mr C complained that his previous psychiatrist had failed unreasonably to diagnose him with this and provide the appropriate treatment.

We took independent advice from a medical adviser. We found that the standard of communication in relation to the diagnosis was unreasonable and that this led to uncertainty and distress for Mr C. While, we did not find this had an adverse effect on his management or treatment, we recognised that not learning of his diagnosis until recently led to a great deal of uncertainty and distress. On balance, we upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for the failings in record-keeping and communication. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/leaflets-and-guidance.

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

- The clinician involved should reflect on this complaint and findings at their next appraisal.
- The board should ensure that clinicians follow the relevant guidance when diagnosing and discussing personality disorders with patients.