

SPSO decision report



Case: 201802028, A Medical Practice in the Borders NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained on behalf of her child (Child A). After being assessed at a gender identity clinic, Child A was diagnosed with transsexualism and it was recommended that they be prescribed Sustanon (a hormone injection). The gender identity clinic wrote to Child A's GP to ask for arrangements to be made for Sustanon to be prescribed and administered. However, the practice advised that they would not prescribe or administer the medication for an initial period. Instead, they considered it appropriate for the gender identity clinic to prescribe the medication and make arrangements for it to be administered until Child A was stabilised, at which point the practice would take over. The practice stated that this decision was due to a lack of professional knowledge in this area and concerns about the GP's indemnity cover as Sustanon is classed as an unlicensed medication for this purpose. Ms C complained that the practice unreasonably declined to prescribe the medication and that they failed to communicate reasonably. Ms C stated that no GPs had been in contact to discuss the situation and there had been a lack of clarity about the practice's decision-making.

We took independent advice from an adviser with a background in general practice. We found that General Medical Council guidance supported the practice's position that they should not prescribe medication or initiate treatment if they do not consider themselves professionally competent to do so. We considered it appropriate, and in line with relevant guidance, for the practice to refer the matter back to the gender identity clinic for them to arrange treatment. In addition to this, we were satisfied that the reasons provided by the practice to Ms C were valid considerations for the practice to take into account. Therefore, we did not uphold this aspect of Ms C's complaint.

In relation to communication, we considered that it would have been helpful if a GP from the practice contacted Ms C or Child A to discuss their concerns. However, we noted that the practice's position was accurately conveyed by the practice manager. On balance, we considered the practice's communication to be reasonable. Therefore, we did not uphold this aspect of Ms C's complaint.