

SPSO decision report



Case: 201807280, Highland NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: policy / administration
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C complained about a decision that was taken by the board to refuse out-of-area funding for a paediatric consultant for her child's (Child A) care. Mrs C said that the process leading up to the decision, how the decision was communicated to her and how the board handled her complaint was unreasonable.

We took independent advice from a consultant paediatrician (a doctor who specialises in child medicine) and found that the board followed the correct process in reaching a decision regarding the referral and, therefore, did not uphold this part of the complaint.

However, we identified that the board had failed to provide Mrs C with a clear explanation of the process that they followed and the rationale for their decision; to give correct information to Mrs C regarding a third doctor's involvement; to correct their error when communicating with Mrs C; and to provide relevant information to SPSO in this regard in response to our enquiries. We upheld these aspects of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mrs C for failing to provide clear explanations, for providing her with erroneous information; failing to correct this error; and for the complaint handling failings. The apology should acknowledge the impact this has had on Mrs C. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets

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

- Notifying clinicians and families should receive a full explanation of the outcome of funding requests, including information on the evidence used to reach that decision.
- Complaints should be handled in line with the model complaints handling procedure. The model complaints handling procedure and guidance can be found here: <http://www.valuingcomplaints.org.uk/handling-complaints/complaints-procedures/nhs>