

SPSO decision report



Case: 201808987, Lothian NHS Board - Acute Division
Sector: Health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C has autistic spectrum disorder (a developmental disability that affects how a person communicates with, and relates to, other people). After attending an advice clinic, Mr C was assessed by a psychologist. He was then referred to a community mental health service to see if they could help him with social skills and managing anxiety. The community mental health service did not consider they could meet Mr C's specific needs; and they explained that he might be able to access support from a charity instead.

Mr C complained that after his psychology assessment, he was not referred for care and treatment suitable to his needs. We took independent advice from a psychologist. We found that Mr C was appropriately assessed and referred for help with social skills. We found that the community mental health service gave the referral careful consideration. We also found it was reasonable that they refused it, as the charity was better equipped to meet Mr C's needs. We did not uphold this aspect of the complaint.

Mr C also complained that the board failed to handle his complaint in a reasonable manner. We found that the board did not communicate clearly with Mr C about his complaint, in particular in relation to the scope of their investigation. We upheld this aspect of the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Mr C for failing to handle his complaint in a reasonable manner. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The board should communicate with complainants in a way that is clear and easy to understand.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.