

SPSO decision report

Case: 201902396, A Medical Practice in the Fife NHS Board area
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained that their partner (A) was inappropriately prescribed a strong opiate painkiller by their GP, that they developed severe mental and physical health problems as a result of being kept on this medication for too long, that A was not appropriately reviewed while on this medication, and that their requests for help were not acted upon.

We took independent advice from a GP, who considered whether the prescribing to A was reasonable in the circumstances. They found no evidence to support that the long-term prescribing of the medication contributed to the deterioration in A's mental and physical health. They noted there was evidence of regular review and discussion of A's pain and pain relief. We accepted this advice and did not uphold this complaint.

However, we noted some complaint handling issues. The practice did not initially request consent from A to enable them to take C's complaint forward. Additionally, there were subsequent delays in preparing their response and they did not keep C updated or agree an extension to the target timeframe. We advised the practice to review their handling of C's complaint and ensure mechanisms are in place to ensure compliance with the NHS Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure.