

SPSO decision report

Case: 201904901, Highland NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C, a support and advocacy worker, complained on behalf of their client (A) who was diagnosed with cervical cancer whilst they were undergoing fertility treatment. C complained that the board failed to investigate A's symptoms which they had been experiencing for a number of months, and that this led to a delay in diagnosis. C also complained that the board failed to carry out a reasonable investigation of the complaint as their response did not demonstrate that any real analysis was undertaken of the care and treatment provided to A.

The board confirmed their view that appropriate investigations were carried out. They explained that A had a type of cancer (endophytic, where there is no obvious cancer as it is within the body of the cervix) which is more difficult to diagnose.

We reviewed the clinical records and took independent advice from a consultant in gynaecologic oncology (a specialist in the diagnosis and treatment of cancers of the female reproductive system). We found that the referrals, tests and assessments were in line with best medical practice and within reasonable timeframes. As such, there was no missed opportunity to diagnose the cancer sooner. We also found evidence that the board's internal investigation of the complaint was thorough and reasonable. We did not uphold C's complaints, however, we did provide feedback on the board's handling of the complaint.