

SPSO decision report

Case: 201911000, Glasgow City Health and Social Care Partnership
Sector: Health and Social Care
Subject: Communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care that they received from the partnership when they were visited by a health visitor following the birth of their baby. C declined the health visitor's offer to observe their latch while breastfeeding. C felt that the health visitor did not understand the importance of obtaining C's consent and that they had not respected their right to decline. In the partnership's response, they said that health visitors are required to identify any breastfeeding problems but that they apologised for how the health visitor had communicated with C.

During our investigation, we took independent advice from a midwife. We found that it was appropriate that the health visitor offered to observe C while breastfeeding but that if a patient declines any offer of care, this should be respected. We found that the health visitor's communication with C had been unreasonable and we, therefore, upheld C's complaint. We found that the partnership had already taken appropriate steps to address the health visitor's communication with C, however, we found that their response had not clearly addressed C's right to refuse care and we made recommendations about that.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for not properly addressing this aspect of their complaint. 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:

- Complaint responses should address all relevant issues and should clearly explain the relevant clinical position (in this case, that patients have the right to refuse care).

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.