

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 202002008, Tayside NHS Board  
**Sector:** Health  
**Subject:** Clinical treatment / diagnosis  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C complained about the board's decision to discontinue the prescription for gluten free foods for their adult child (A). The board explained that as A did not have a confirmed diagnosis of coeliac disease, that they would not be expected to prescribe gluten free foods. To make a diagnosis, a patient would be required to include gluten in their diet for a number of weeks prior to testing. C said that due to A's additional needs and the distress that they would suffer from the symptoms associated with taking gluten, it would be reasonable for the board to take a flexible approach when applying their policy on the matter.

We took independent advice from both a GP adviser and a gastroenterologist (a doctor specialising in the treatment of conditions affecting the liver, intestine and pancreas). It was noted that it was agreed by all parties that it would be distressing to A to require them to include gluten in their diet in preparation for testing. We considered that a more flexible approach should be taken to the application of the relevant policies and guidance and that a diagnosis could be made by probability. We found that principles of realistic medicine and patient-centred care should be applied and we recommended that consideration is given to other means of non-invasive tests to determine the presence or absence of coeliac disease in A's case. As such, we upheld the complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- The board should explore and discuss with C other means of non-invasive testing to determine the presence or absence of coeliac disease in A's case.