

SPSO decision report

Case: 202002582, Lothian NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained about the clinical care provided to their child (A) by the board, specifically, that a Chiari malformation (where the lower part of the brain pushes down into the spinal cord) was visible on a magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) scan performed by the board and that the abnormality was not noted until they insisted on a further MRI scan being carried out many years later.

A suffered from a number of symptoms including headaches, tinnitus (ringing or buzzing in the ears), vertigo (a sensation of loss of balance or that objects around you are spinning) and drop attacks (sudden falls to the ground) for a number of years. A had MRI scans performed by the board to try to determine the cause of these symptoms. A had a further MRI scan performed by a different health board and it was found that A had a Chiari malformation.

We took independent advice from a consultant radiologist (a doctor who specialises in diagnosing and treating disease and injury through the use of medical imaging techniques such as x-rays and other scans). We found that it was reasonable to ask only about a possible tumour, and that it would not be possible to make a definitive diagnosis of Chiari malformation from the first MRI images. We concluded that the MRI scan performed then was performed and reported to a reasonable standard. We, therefore, did not uphold the complaint.