

SPSO decision report

Case: 202006668, Tayside NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / diagnosis
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment that they received from Tayside NHS Board following treatment in the A&E of Ninewells Hospital. C attended the A&E after sustaining an injury to the little finger of their right hand caused by a serrated knife. They were diagnosed and treated for mallet finger (a deformity of the finger when the tendon that straightens the finger is damaged at the fingertip), of which treatment involved the application of a splint to the injured finger.

C complained to the board that their injury had failed to heal correctly. C complained that they were not given an x-ray, that the splint was too big and that they were given insufficient information to allow them to care for their injury. C also complained that they had not been provided with a face-to-face physiotherapy appointment timeously.

We took independent advice from an emergency medicine adviser. We found that C's injury was wrongly diagnosed and that, consequently, the application of a splint in C's case was not the appropriate treatment. We found that the A&E should have referred C to a hand surgeon. We upheld this aspect of C's complaint.

We found that it was the responsibility of C's GP practice to arrange a timeous referral to physiotherapy. We, therefore, did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for the failings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Patients attending the A&E with this type of injury should receive appropriate diagnosis and treatment.
- The board have said that they will ensure C's feedback was used within the A&E to ensure that any ill-fit of splints is explained fully in future as part of the aftercare advice.

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.