

SPSO decision report



Case: 202101546, A Medical Practice in the Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board area
Sector: Health
Subject: Complaints handling
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

C is a former patient of the medical practice. C complained to the practice that they failed to address their enquiries about their healthcare, which they submitted to the practice in writing and by email. The practice decided that they could not meet C's expectations and concluded that there was a breakdown in the doctor/patient relationship. The practice subsequently removed C from their patient list. C complained to the practice but were dissatisfied with the response that they received.

C complained that the practice failed to respond to C's complaint and earlier correspondence, and that the practice did not follow reasonable process when removing C from their patient list.

In respect of how they responded to C's correspondence, we agreed that the situation became complex. While C did not always get a response to their correspondence, we concluded that the practice acted reasonably overall. We recognised that the practice were trying to meet the individual needs of their patient, but the situation had become untenable. We did not uphold this aspect of C's complaint, however we provided feedback to the practice on their handling of the complaint.

With regard to the decision to remove C from the patient list, we concluded that the practice failed to follow General Medical Council (GMC) guidelines as they did not warn C that they were considering removing C from the patient list. We upheld this aspect of the complaint and recommended that the practice apologise to C and take steps to ensure they have an appropriate policy in place.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to C for failing to follow GMC guidelines and warn them that they were considering de-registering them from the patient list. 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:

- All staff should be familiar with the requirements of the GMC guidelines for ending the professional relationship with a patient.

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.