

SPSO decision report



Case: 202102199, Forth Valley NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Admission / discharge / transfer procedures
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment that their parent (A) received from the board.

A and their partner (B) both contracted Coronavirus (COVID-19). A had a history of diabetes and had previously had a stroke. After contracting COVID-19, A began to display signs of delirium. Concerned for A's welfare, B contacted the GP who in turn arranged for the COVID-19 team to visit at home. The COVID-19 team attended and recommended that A be admitted to hospital for review that day. A was discharged the same day.

A's condition worsened at home and the COVID-19 team was called back to visit. A was readmitted to hospital, where their condition continued to deteriorate. A was transferred to the Intensive Care Unit (ICU) where they later died. C considered whether it was appropriate for A to have been discharged home after the first hospital visit given the extent and nature of A's condition.

In response to the complaint, the board believed that the plan of care for A was appropriate, but recognised that communication with A's family could be improved with respect to arrangements for A's discharge.

Following the complaints response, C and family members met with representatives of the board to discuss concerns. The note of the meeting records shows that the board acknowledged and apologised that no phone call was made to obtain information about A's circumstances at home. The board also recognised that the decision to discharge may have been queried had a consultant understood B was unwell at home. C disputes the account of the meeting and believed all present agreed with the position that A should not have been discharged.

We took independent advice from a geriatrician (doctor who specialises in treating older patients). We found that it was reasonable to determine that A was clinically fit for discharge. We noted that this was a complex situation and A had not stated concerns about the decision to discharge. We also noted that there was no indication in the records that, at the time of discharge, A's family were unhappy with the decision made at the time. We therefore did not uphold the complaint. We did, however, provide some feedback to the board with respect to their complaints handling in this case.