

SPSO decision report

Case: 201204983, Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: policy / administration
Outcome: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C had cognitive and communication problems. Following poor experiences with her GP practice, she asked to be deregistered. However, she subsequently found it difficult to register with a new practice. Before registering with a new GP, Ms C sought reassurance that they would make reasonable adjustments in light of her disabilities to allow her to access the services she required. On each occasion, the local GP practices asked her to register first so that her needs could be assessed and adjustments put in place. Ms C was reluctant to do so and asked the board for help. Whilst the board provided details of local practices, they also advised that she should register first to allow a needs assessment.

Ms C complained that the board did not make reasonable adjustments to help her access services in her community. She also complained about their handling of her correspondence and that they labelled her a vexatious complainant.

We were satisfied that the board acted reasonably by signposting Ms C to local GP practices and advising her to register. We found that equalities legislation requires practices to make such adjustments as are necessary, reassuring patients that adaptations will be made to allow them to access services.

We were critical of the board's handling of Ms C's correspondence, so we upheld this aspect of her complaint. Her correspondence was treated as a complaint but was not progressed through the formal complaints process. However, we did not find that Ms C had been categorised as a vexatious complainant.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- apologise to Ms C for the poor handling of her correspondence;
- review their handling of Ms C's correspondence and consider how best to progress matters that are addressed outwith the formal complaints procedure; and
- remind their staff of the importance of adhering to the NHS Scotland complaints procedure.