

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201300612, Scottish Ambulance Service

**Sector:** health

**Subject:** clinical treatment / diagnosis

**Outcome:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

Mr C, who is a doctor, complained about the Scottish Ambulance Service's response to a call he made to them when his wife (Mrs C) awoke one night with an irregular heartbeat. Mr C reviewed her condition and was concerned that her symptoms indicated she needed immediate medical assessment and possibly treatment. He called for an ambulance, but was not happy with the response. He was taken through the standard triage procedures, despite explaining that he was a doctor and was with the patient. After a discussion with a clinical adviser, a non-emergency ambulance was sent, and Mrs C was taken to hospital.

The service said that they had a protocol for calls from doctors, but as Mr C was not practicing at the time of the call, they treated him as if he were a member of the public, and took him through the normal triage procedures. They also explained that they were in the process of redesigning their triage process for calls from health professionals, and would take this case into consideration during that process.

We obtained independent advice on the complaint from a paramedic, who said that the service should have taken greater account of Mr C's assessment of his wife's condition. This would have enabled the clinical adviser to override normal protocols, and request an emergency ambulance for Mrs C. As they did not do this, we upheld the complaint.

### Recommendations

We recommended that the service:

- provide an action plan for the re-design of protocols for handling ambulance calls from health care professionals; and
- apologise to Mr C for not handling his call more appropriately, and for not sending an emergency ambulance.