

SPSO decision report

Case: 201305083, Greater Glasgow and Clyde NHS Board - Acute Services Division
Sector: health
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C's late sister was extremely ill and was admitted to hospital. Ms C, who had travelled from abroad to be with her, wanted to stay with her sister on the receiving ward but was asked to leave as it was outwith ward visiting times. Ms C complained that the nurse who had asked her to leave failed to treat her with appropriate compassion. Ms C's sister died three days after being admitted.

After taking independent advice from our nursing adviser, we upheld the complaint. Our adviser said that the notes showed that Ms C's sister's condition was deteriorating and indicated that she was nearing the end of her life. She said that it did not appear that this was taken into account, and pointed out that staff should be able to assess when it is appropriate to be flexible with policies such as visiting. Our adviser also criticised the language in the medical notes for being rigid, not compassionate and not in keeping with the Nursing and Midwifery Council Code and Patient Rights Act.

Recommendations

We recommended that the board:

- discuss this incident with the relevant staff members and senior managers involved as a learning exercise;
- review their policy in light of this complaint and examine the ethos of relative/patient involvement in the admissions unit; and
- apologise to Ms C and her late sister's family for the distress caused.