

SPSO decision report

Case: 201404965, A Dentist in the Fife NHS Board area
Sector: health
Subject: communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality
Outcome: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mr C raised concerns about the care and treatment he received when he attended the practice in 2014. In particular, he complained that the practice had failed to take reasonable account of his hearing condition. He said the dental nurse had spoken to him while standing behind him and, as a result, he had been unable to lip read. In addition, she had roughly moved his head. He also complained about the handling of his complaint.

During our investigation we found no evidence that the dental nurse had roughly moved Mr C's head or spoken to him while standing behind him. We were satisfied that, in line with the practice's policy, the dental nurse was required to wear a mask during the treatment. We were pleased that the dental nurse had re-read the relevant guidelines to try to prevent a similar situation occurring in the future. However, we considered that had a translator been present, as detailed in Fife NHS Board's policy, Mr C's communication needs would have been fully met.

We were also critical of the handling of Mr C's complaint and we made a number of recommendations to improve how the practice communicates with patients, and how they deal with complaints.

Recommendations

We recommended that the dentist:

- reiterate the apology offered in a letter to this office to Mr C;
- review the Disability Policy to ensure that the communication needs of patients are being met in line with Fife NHS Board's policy on Equality and Human Rights;
- apologise for the failures identified in this case in relation to complaints handling; and
- review procedures to ensure that the practice deals with complaints in accordance with the NHS complaints procedure.