

SPSO decision report

Case: 201707816, Grampian NHS Board
Sector: health
Subject: policy / administration
Decision: some upheld, recommendations

Summary

Mrs C, an advocacy and support worker, complained on behalf of her client (Mr A) who is in the process of gender transition. Mr A heard that a consultant in the Gender Identity Clinic (GIC) was going on extended leave, with no cover being provided, and therefore requested an out of area referral. He had been advised by his psychiatrist to seek the extra-contractual referral for medical reasons. Mrs C complained that the board failed to address Mr A's request in their response to his complaint and failed to provide an adequate service.

After Mrs C brought the complaint to us, the board wrote to Mr A and apologised for not having addressed his query about extra-contractual referral when they originally responded to the complaint. They explained that they would not support a referral to another board because they were continuing to offer the same level of service as previously. Given that the board had not addressed this referral request at the time it was made, we upheld this aspect of Mrs C's complaint.

In relation to the complaint about service provision, we took independent advice from a psychiatric adviser (a medical practitioner who specialises in the diagnosis and treatment of mental illness). We found that the level of service at the GIC had not changed and that there were plans in place and enacted to cover the period of leave taken by the existing consultant. We also noted that given there were no additional risk factors identified such as major mental or physical illness, there would be no indication to go outwith the normal process followed by the board. We considered that the board had gone to significant effort to ensure their service was not adversely affected by the period of leave and provided Mr A with a reasonable service. We did not uphold this aspect of Mrs C's complaint.

Recommendations