

SPSO decision report



Case: 201809351, Dumfries and Galloway NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: appointments / admissions (delay / cancellation / waiting lists)
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

Ms C complained to us about the time she waited for a psychology appointment from the board. While she waited, Ms C went back to see her GP because she felt her condition had worsened. Several months after her referral to the board, Ms C had a telephone assessment with a psychologist to assess her needs. Some months after that, Ms C was offered a psychology appointment. The board apologised to Ms C for the delay and explained that they were taking steps to reduce their wait times.

We took independent advice from a psychologist. We found that there was an unreasonable delay in carrying out Ms C's telephone assessment. We found that it was unclear why there was such a delay, as it was a relatively routine referral. We found that the delay meant the psychology service was unaware of the worsening in Ms C's condition and they missed the opportunity to offer her an earlier psychology appointment. We found this led to an unreasonable delay in offering Ms C a psychology appointment and we upheld the complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to Ms C for the failings identified. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets

What we said should change to put things right in future:

- Patients, who are on the psychology wait list, should be assessed promptly. This would allow the board to identify high-risk patients or identify where there is some other need for urgent treatment (e.g. pregnancy) and help the service to identify appropriate treatment options. It would also enable patients to be given timely information about sources of support/guidance while they wait to be seen; and give the patient reassurance and motivation.

We have asked the organisation to provide us with evidence that they have implemented the recommendations we have made on this case by the deadline we set.