

## SPSO decision report

**Case:** 201900199, Tayside NHS Board  
**Sector:** Health  
**Subject:** Communication / staff attitude / dignity / confidentiality  
**Decision:** upheld, recommendations

### Summary

C, a support and advocacy worker, complained on behalf of their client (A). A, whose first language is British Sign Language (BSL), was admitted to Perth Royal Infirmary with concerns about their heart and lungs. During their admission, A's spouse (B) had to translate for them, which they found extremely difficult as B is severely deaf and BSL is their preferred method of communication. C said that this was contrary to the board's policy on their interpretation and translation service and showed a lack of deaf awareness.

We took independent advice from a specialist in equality. We found a number of failings that had an impact on the board's ability to meet A's communication requirements effectively which caused distress to A and B. These failings included misleading information about the level of the interpretation translation service provided to patients and staff; and that the level of the aforementioned service was inadequate and not in line with the board's policy. We upheld the complaint.

### Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to A for the failings identified in this investigation and inform C of what and how actions will be taken to prevent a future reoccurrence. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at [www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets](http://www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets).

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

- Ensure the board's Interpretation and Translation Policy is implemented effectively by clinical staff.

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.