SPSO decision report

Case:	**201909475, Scottish Ambulance Service**
Sector:	Health
Subject:	Clinical treatment / Diagnosis
Decision:	not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C complained about the actions of Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) staff when they attended to their adult child (A) following an epileptic seizure (bursts of electrical activity in the brain that temporarily affect how it works and can cause a wide range of symptoms). A was moved onto a chair to be taken out of the house to an ambulance. When A arrived at hospital they were found to have broken vertebrae (individual bones that interlock with each other to form the spinal column). C complained about the manner in which staff had transferred A and about their clinical assessment of A.

SAS said that staff carried out a risk assessment on how to get A to the ambulance; the moving and handling skills applied were based on the clinical assessment of A and access difficulties at the scene.

We took independent advice from a paramedic. We found that the history assessment and energy involved with A's mechanism of injury made it extremely unlikely to cause a significant spinal injury. Given the age and medical history obtained, there were no risk factors which would lead the paramedic to suspect spinal injury. This, coupled with the restricted space within which they were working, made the use of a carry chair a reasonable means of transferring the patient. Therefore, we did not uphold this complaint.

In relation to the clinical assessment, we found that while A complained of back pain, this was not considered to be a spinal injury. We considered the assessment and management were reasonable for a patient suffering a 'seizure now stopped'. We noted that the paramedic used the finding of motor, sensation and circulation of lower limbs in their risk assessment to help rule out/in spinal injury. Given the history and assessment findings, we considered the care provided was reasonable. As such, we did not uphold this complaint.

We noted there had been complaints handling issues, but SAS had taken appropriate steps to address this and had apologised to C.