

SPSO decision report

Case: 202006236, Scottish Ambulance Service
Sector: Health
Subject: Clinical treatment / Diagnosis
Decision: not upheld, no recommendations

Summary

C's spouse (A) became unwell with severe lower abdominal pain and vomiting. C phoned for an ambulance and was told by the Scottish Ambulance Service (SAS) that A's symptoms did not warrant an emergency attendance and transferred the call to NHS 24. A's condition worsened over the next couple of days and A was taken to hospital, where they were found to have a perforated bowel (hole in the bowel) and kidney failure. A was given palliative care and died in hospital shortly afterwards.

C complained about the SAS decision not to dispatch an ambulance to A and considered that the call out system failed to save A's life. We took independent advice from a paramedic. We found that the telephone assessment conducted was reasonable and that appropriate questions were asked. From the responses provided, it was reasonably determined that there were no immediately life threatening symptoms that required dispatch of an emergency ambulance at that time. On this occasion, it was reasonable to transfer the call to NHS 24 for secondary triage to allow a more in depth line of questioning to be carried out to try to understand more about presentation of A's complaint. We, therefore, did not uphold the complaint.