

SPSO decision report



Case: 202209316, Fife NHS Board
Sector: Health
Subject: Nurses / nursing care
Decision: upheld, recommendations

Summary

C complained about the care and treatment that their sibling (A) received whilst in hospital following a fall. C also raised complaints about communication issues with the board. The board accepted that there had been poor communication with A's family but did not indicate any concern regarding the care and treatment of A. C and their family were dissatisfied with the board's responses and brought their complaints to the SPSO.

We took independent advice from a nursing adviser. We found that A did not receive timely medical intervention due to documentation and assessment gaps, particularly in relation to A's positioning, their need for increased oxygen support, falls prevention and support for hydration. We upheld this part of C's complaint.

In relation to communication and complaints handling, we found that the board did not respond within reasonable timescales. We also found that it was unreasonable that the board did not apologise for the time taken to provide their response, that they did not take action to prevent any recurrence, that they included an inaccurate statement and that they did not respond to all of the complaints that they had clarified with C. We upheld these parts of C's complaint.

Recommendations

What we asked the organisation to do in this case:

- Apologise to A's family 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.
- Apologise to C that they did not respond reasonably to their complaints. The apology should meet the standards set out in the SPSO guidelines on apology available at www.spsso.org.uk/information-leaflets.

In relation to complaints handling, we recommended:

- The board review the handling of C's complaint to understand why there had been a delay in the drafting and approval of the response and devise an action plan to prevent any recurrence.

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.