

Complaint case study (August 2019)

**Mrs M raised a complaint about the difficulty she had in accessing follow-up care.**

Mr M attended the Emergency Department (ED) on the advice of her GP, having been diagnosed with a kidney infection. She was treated with intravenous antibiotics overnight and then attended the ambulatory unit for an ultrasound scan, which identified an issue with her kidney. She was discharged home, understanding that she would be referred on to the urology service for further care.

Having waited a few weeks, Mrs M contacted the hospital to find out what was happening. She made multiple telephone calls, being passed between different staff, leaving messages and promises of being called back were never completed. Mrs M was informed that the required 'documentation' had been lost.

Following a further telephone call to the acute medical unit, Mrs M was assured that the doctor had just contacted urology and that Mrs M should call the department to make her appointment. On calling urology, the staff told Mrs M that they had not heard of her or the doctor. Mrs M complained about the lack of follow-up care she received following her initial attendances.

**Our findings**

This complaint was reviewed by the Clinical Director for Acute Medicine and Geriatrics. Following investigation, the complaint was upheld.

Apologies were offered to Mrs M for the delays she experienced with her referral to urology and that despite her numerous contacts with the Trust, no-one had taken a pro-active approach to resolving the issue for her.

The referral to urology was made by a doctor over the telephone and was documented in the electronic discharge notification. Unfortunately, this was not processed and it was only after contact was made with the acute medical unit, that this was resolved. On receipt of your complaint, an appointment in the urology clinic was arranged for Mrs M.

With regards to the difficulties Mrs M experienced with the numerous telephone calls and messages not being returned, her experience was discussed with the urology administration team. As a result of the complaint, it was agreed that telephones should be diverted to colleagues when a member of staff is away from their desk and that answerphone messages would be checked twice daily. The team also implemented a secretarial buddy system to ensure that telephone lines are always covered in the event of staff being on leave or unavailable to answer calls due to their workload.