

## **Patient waited five weeks to be seen by hospital psychiatrist**

A woman who complained about the time it took for a hospital consultant psychiatrist to treat her mother has had her complaint upheld by the Public Services Ombudsman.

The woman initially complained during her mother's stay at the Lagan Valley Hospital. She emailed the South Eastern Health and Social Care Trust voicing concerns that the nurses who had seen to her mother were unable to diagnose her underlying condition and provide appropriate treatment.

The Ombudsman's investigation into the complaint obtained independent professional advice from a consultant psychiatrist and an experienced senior mental health nurse experienced in older people mental health services.

The investigation found that the patient's medical team asked for assistance from their old age psychiatry colleagues shortly after her initial admission. Three weeks later the patient had still not been seen, prompting the complaint by her daughter to the Trust.

A consultant psychiatrist finally assessed the patient two weeks after this – a total of five weeks after she was admitted.

The Ombudsman found that the delay in assessment by a consultant amounted to a failure in care and treatment by the Trust.

The Trust was asked to apologise to the complainant. In order to improve the service it delivers, a recommendation was also made that it should conduct a review of the Psychiatry of Old Age Liaison Service, with a focus on the provision of consultant supervision, timely access to the service, and communication with patients and their families.