



Language barriers could have led to child neglect allegations

We use people's stories to highlight problems, and encourage the NHS to change and improve its services.

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Healthwatch Calderdale was asked to find out about the experiences of Syrian refugees when they **try to access health services. This is one family's story, which was told with the help of an interpreter...**

Mr D lives in Halifax with his wife and three children, and was struggling to get treatment for his one-and-a-half-year-old daughter who had a high temperature and was very flushed. He took her to the **hospital where they said she had a virus. They didn't give her any medication, but said that if she** became worse or her temperature became very high, he should bring her back to the hospital.

She didn't get better so he took her to the out-of-hours surgery but they didn't give her any medicine either, he was just told to take off her clothes and give her water. She deteriorated and as her temperature was still high, he took her back to the hospital. Her temperature did eventually go down but the redness remained.

Then when he took her to her day nursery he was told to go back to the GP for something to treat the redness on her arms and legs. When he saw the GP the next day he was told to stop using the skin cream he had been using, and given a prescription for two different ointments. His supporter then explained to him how he needed to use the new medication, and once his daughters skin was treated with the prescribed treatment in the correct way her condition improved.

Their support worker said 'The family were not able to understand what the GP was saying or vice versa, medication was given but they did not understand how and when to use it. As the child's condition was not improving the nursery thought it might be due to neglect, which could have led to safeguarding issues being raised. When I explained fully to the family how to use the medication the problem was sorted out, and the nursery realised that the problem had been due to the language barrier and not neglect.'

What did this mean for Mr D, his daughter, and the NHS...?

Mr D found the support he got from A&E, the out-of-hours surgery, and his GP, confusing and inadequate

There was a basic lack of communication when the GP did not use an interpreter

Without the support workers help Mr D's daughters condition might have led to mistaken allegations of child neglect

Healthwatch Calderdale will contact Calderdale Local Medical Committee and Calderdale Clinical Commissioning Group regarding the feedback about GP Practices, and Calderdale and Huddersfield Foundation Trust regarding the feedback about hospital services, to ask them how they plan to address the issues identified.



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