

**SCOTTISH
PUBLIC
SERVICES
OMBUDSMAN**



People Centred | Improvement Focused

How the SPSO handles your complaint

This leaflet explains what happens when you bring your complaint to the SPSO.

You should have gone through the organisation's own complaints process first.

If you have any questions about the complaints process, please contact us.

We can make a decision at any stage of our process, taking into account:

- whether your complaint is one we can consider by law
- what has already been done to investigate and put things right, and
- whether there is more we can realistically do

1

Assessment and Guidance

We will assess if your complaint is ready for us

What we may do includes:

- advise you on how to complete the complaints process of the organisation you are complaining about
- ask you to give us more information
- signpost you to another organisation
- move your complaint to the next stage

2

Triage and Early Decision

We will check if your complaint is one we can and will consider further

What we may do includes:

- take action to fix the problem if we can
- return your complaint to the organisation for further work/action
- signpost you to another organisation
- close your complaint if:
 - it is not in our remit
 - the organisation has already taken or offered appropriate action
 - we cannot do anything more for you or the outcome you are looking for is not achievable
- write to you with our decision and send the organisation a copy
- move your complaint to the next stage. We will prioritise complaints that are urgent or from people in vulnerable situations

3

Preliminary Investigation

We will carry out preliminary investigations to consider your complaint in more detail

What we may do includes:

- take action to fix the problem if we can
- return your complaint to the organisation for further work/action
- signpost you to another organisation
- get independent advice on your complaint
- close your complaint if:
 - it is not in our remit
 - the organisation has already taken or offered appropriate action
 - we cannot do anything more for you or the outcome you are looking for is not achievable
- write to you with our decision and send the organisation a copy
- move your complaint to the next stage

4

Investigation

We will investigate your complaint and decide whether to uphold it

What we may do includes:

- agree with you on the issues that we will look at
- contact you and the organisation for further information
- get independent advice on your complaint
- take action to fix the problem if we can
- send you and the organisation a draft of our decision for comment on accuracy
- write to you and the organisation explaining our decision to uphold or not uphold your complaint
- make recommendations and follow up on them
- publish an anonymised summary or report of your complaint

Getting help and consent

We want to make sure that our service is easy for you to use. If you need help with your complaint, you can ask someone you trust. This could be a friend, family member, councillor, or MSP. They can support you or speak on your behalf. You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau can also help you make your complaint.

Citizens Advice Scotland

Website: www.cas.org.uk

Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance

Tel: **0131 510 9410** Email: enquiry@siaa.org.uk Website: www.siaa.org.uk

For complaints about the NHS: Patient Advice and Support Service

Tel: **0800 917 2127** Website: www.cas.org.uk/pass

If someone is making a complaint for you, we will need your written permission unless you are unable to give it. If you have given permission, we may share information with that person.

We know that things can change. If you find you need support at any stage of the process, please let us know.

Your information

We are committed to protecting your privacy. We use information given to us about you and your complaint for its intended purpose and in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the SPSO Act 2002. We may need to collect and share information with a number of sources to carry out our investigation and we may do this orally, in hard copy or by email. We may publicly report on the outcome of the investigation. When we do so we do not name individuals. We may also use information we collect to compile statistics and undertake research and analysis. There may be public interest benefits in reusing information for these purposes. Information is completely anonymised.

Your views are valuable to us, and we may contact you again to invite you to take part in our surveys for research purposes.

To find out more about how we handle your information and your rights, see **www.spsso.org.uk/privacy-notice**. If you have any concerns about what we do, please let us know straight away.

Review requests

If you are unhappy with our decision there are specific circumstances where you can request a review. The Ombudsman generally looks at all review requests. The Ombudsman will only change a decision if you:

- send new information, and/or
- demonstrate information we used was wrong

AND

- it has an impact on the original decision.

The Ombudsman will not change a decision or reopen a case simply because you disagree with the outcome of your complaint. If we have issued a public report these review rights will not apply.

Our Customer Service Standards

We are committed to offering a high standard of service to everyone who uses our service.

We have customer service standards. These outline the service you can expect from us and how we will carry it out. If you feel we have not met these standards, you have the right to complain. Find out how to do this at **www.spsa.org.uk/our-customer-service-standards** or by contacting us.

Working with us: respecting each other

We are committed to providing a fair and accessible service. We believe that everyone who contacts us has the right to be treated with respect and dignity.

Tell us if something is going wrong

- We want to fix problems and to know if you are unhappy.
- Please tell us. We will check what we have done against our standards and make changes if we can.

We will do our best to engage with you positively and use the best method for you.

Remember we are people too

- Our staff have the same rights to be treated with respect and dignity as our users, and we must provide a safe working environment for them.
- We must also provide a service to all our customers.

This means we need to handle any situation or actions which could have a negative impact on our staff or our ability to work.

We may need to speak with you about this or we may need to change the way we engage with you. If this happens, we will explain what we are doing and why. Find our policy at www.spsso.org.uk/engagement-policy, or we can send you a copy of this policy on request.

How to contact the SPSO



A freepost envelope can be sent to you. Please call us if you need one.



SPSO, Bridgeside House, 99 McDonald Road, Edinburgh EH7 4NS

Opening hours: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday 9am – 5pm,
Tuesday 10am – 5pm

If you would like to visit our office in person, you must arrange an appointment first by phoning 0800 377 7330 or using our online contact form.



Freephone **0800 377 7330**

This line is open during the following hours: Mon, Wed & Fri 9am-1pm,
Tues & Thurs 1pm-5pm

Calls outside of these hours can be arranged by appointment using our online contact form.



Website **www.spsso.org.uk**



Online contact form **www.spsso.org.uk/contact-form**

You can fill in our complaints form online at **forms.spsso.org.uk/spsso**

Calls to and from SPSO phone lines may be recorded to check the quality of our service and help us do our job to help you. More details are in the privacy notice: **www.spsso.org.uk/privacy-notice**. Please ask if you want to confirm if a call is or is not being recorded or if you would like to know what options may be available to you if you do not wish to be recorded.

Please contact us if you would like this leaflet in another language or format (such as large print, audio, BSL or Braille).