

Independent review

How to complain about the SPSO's customer service

We are committed to offering a high standard of service. We take complaints about our service seriously. We aim to put things right when we fall below the standards we set ourselves. **We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our service.**

Our customer service standards set out our commitment to:

- work in an open and fair way, and
- carry out our duties competently and responsibly.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our service, please tell us. You have the right to complain if you feel we have failed in the service we have provided to you.

Our customer service standards and service complaints form are available on our website.

What is a service complaint?

A service complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction from one or more customers or members of the public about our standard of service.

You can complain about things like:

- failure to provide a service, or inadequate standard of service
- how we met your needs
- how we communicated with you
- how long we took to deal with your case
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- failure to follow the appropriate administrative process.

This list does not cover everything.

What isn't covered by our service complaints process?

There are also some things we can't deal with through our service complaints process. This includes where you are unhappy about our decision on your independent review of your Scottish Welfare Fund application. We deal with these issues through our reconsideration process.

Also, the following are not covered by our service complaints process:

- Disagreement with our decision on an independent review or the evidence we took into account in reaching that decision.
- Trying to reopen a previously concluded service complaint or to get a service complaint reconsidered.
- A request for information.
- Issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal.

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is unhappy with our service.

How do I complain?

You can complain by phone, in writing, by email or by completing our 'Service Complaints Form', which you can download from our website.

To help us respond to your complaint appropriately and as quickly as possible, we recommend you complete our service complaints form.

We're committed to making our service easy to use for everyone. We'll always ensure we make reasonable adjustments to help customers access and use our services. If you have trouble making a complaint or want this information in another language or format (such as large print, audio or Braille), please contact us.

How long do I have to make a service complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within six months of the event you want to complain about, or finding out that you have a reason to complain.

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a complaint after the time limit. If you think the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?

Stage 1: early resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong. We'll try to take immediate action to resolve the problem whenever this is possible.

It's easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the person or section of our service concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff who will try to resolve any problems on the spot.

We'll respond to your complaint at stage 1 within five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances. Occasionally, we may extend this timeline by up to five working days. We'll only do so when this will make it more likely that we can resolve your complaint at stage 1.

Stage 2: investigation

Stage 2 deals with complaints that have not been resolved at stage 1 and those that are handled at stage 2 straight away. This includes those that are complex and require more detailed investigation or where we feel it is otherwise appropriate to do so. When investigating your complaint we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three working days, unless we have already discussed this with you
- contact you, where we think this is necessary, to understand why you are unhappy and what outcome you are looking for
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and usually within 20 working days.

Your complaint will be investigated by a member of our Senior Management Team. If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we'll tell you and keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

After we have responded to your complaint, if you are still unhappy you can ask the Ombudsman's Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer to investigate. Our final response letter to you will include contact details for the Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer. You should contact them within one month of receiving our decision.

Contacting the SPSO

You can contact us:



by phone on 0800 014 7299 – calls are free to this number, even from mobiles



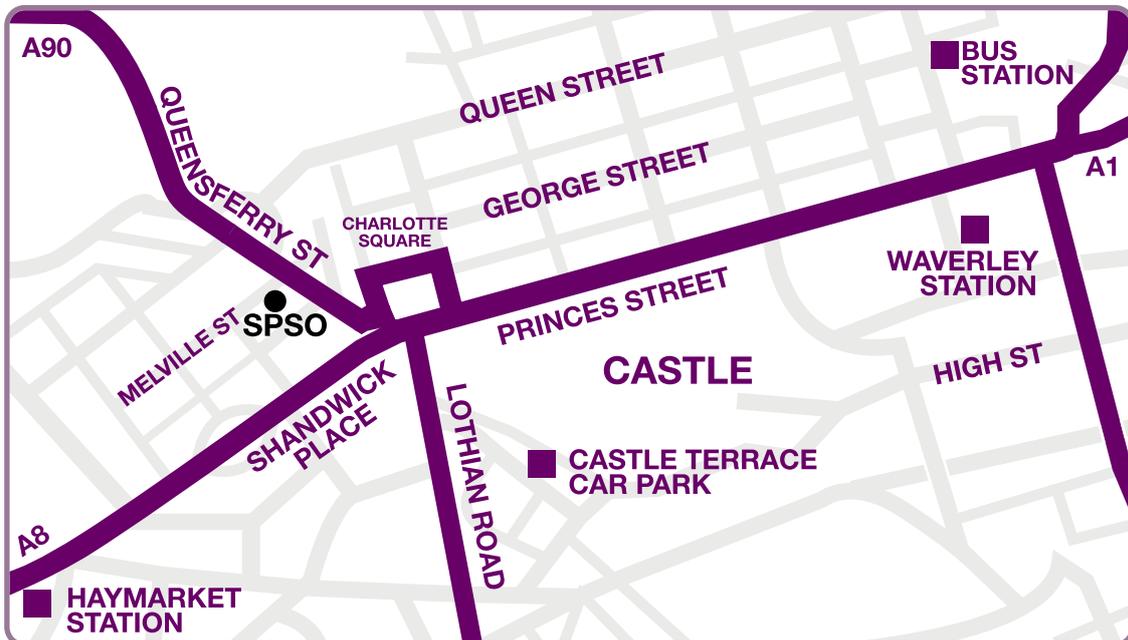
by writing to us at FREEPOST SPSO. You don't need to use a stamp.



through our website: www.spsso.org.uk/scottishwelfarefund

SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

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



We can give you this leaflet in other languages and formats (such as large print, audio or Braille).



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 Public
 Services
 Ombudsman