

SPSO customer service complaints procedure

The SPSO is committed to offering a high standard of service. We take any complaints about our service seriously and aim to address any areas where we have not delivered to the standards we expect of ourselves. **We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve our services.**

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 not satisfied 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

www.spsso.org.uk/customer-service-standards

What is a service complaint?

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

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 the service complaints process?

There are also some things we can't deal with through our service complaints handling process. This would include where you are unhappy about our decision on your complaint about a public service organisation. These issues are dealt with through our decision review process.

The following are not covered by our service complaints process:

- an expression of disagreement about our decision on a complaint or the evidence taken into account in reaching that decision
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded service complaint or to have a service complaint reconsidered
- a request for information
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal

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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 (www.spsso.org.uk/customer-service-standards).

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

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. We will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made 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 font 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 feel that the time limit should not apply to your complaint, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?

Our service complaints process has two stages:

Stage one: 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 will try to take immediate action to resolve the problem whenever this is possible.

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

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Stage two: investigation

Stage two deals with complaints that have not been resolved at stage one and those that are handled at stage two straight away. This includes those that are perhaps 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 service complaint will be investigated by a member of our Senior Management Team. If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you and we will keep you updated on progress.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

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

Our contact details

You can contact the SPSO:

In Person:

SPSO
4 Melville Street
Edinburgh
EH3 7NS

By Post

SPSO
Freepost EH641
Edinburgh
EH3 0BR

Freephone: **0800 377 7330**

Online contact: **www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us**

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

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

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Quick guide to our complaints procedure

Complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email or in writing.

We have a **two-stage service complaints process**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. If it is clear that the matter will need a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage one: early resolution

We will always try to resolve your complaint quickly, within **five working days** if we can. Occasionally we may extend this by up to five working days.

If you are unhappy with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at stage two.

Stage two: investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage one. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage if it is clear that they are complex, need detailed investigation, or it is otherwise appropriate to do so.

We will acknowledge your complaint **within three working days**. We will give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** unless this is not possible. In such circumstances we will advise you and keep you updated on our progress.

The Independent Customer Complaints Reviewer

If, after receiving our final decision on your service complaint, you remain unhappy with our response or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the Independent Reviewer to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final response.