

## Handling complaints: A quick guide to communication

### DO

- ✓ Include a page on your website that clearly sets out your complaints handling process. It should have details of how to submit a complaint:
  - online
  - by post
  - by telephone
  - in personAnd a number to call for an update on progress.
- ✓ Tell complainants how to progress their complaint to stage 2 if they're still unhappy after your stage 1 response.
- ✓ Acknowledge complaints at stage 2 – confirm receipt and the timescales involved.
- ✓ Ensure you understand the complaint, and what they want as an outcome.
- ✓ Contact the complainant if you can't respond to their complaint within published timescales. Explain the reason for the delay and give an expected response date.
- ✓ Communicate your stage 2 decision in writing and tell the complainant that they have the right to ask the SPSO to consider the complaint.\*

### DON'T

- ✗ Insist that complaints be put in writing – a complaint can be submitted in person, by phone, by email or by letter.
- ✗ Be afraid to apologise when something's gone wrong. SPSO has [guidance on making a meaningful apology](#).
- ✗ Signpost to SPSO if you're simply writing to extend the timescale of an investigation.
- ✗ Include SPSO's telephone number as the *only* advertised contact number on your complaint web page - make sure there's a number for complainants to contact you directly as well.
- ✗ Be afraid to respond to a complaint at stage 1 if you've been directly involved – many complaints can be resolved early by an on-the-spot explanation or apology.

\*Standard wording is included in the Model Complaints Handling Procedure. This is available on our website: [www.spsso.org.uk](http://www.spsso.org.uk).