



What to do if you are a tenant of a Registered Social Landlord and have a complaint about them

We provide a free, independent and impartial service for dealing with complaints about public services in Scotland. You may feel that an organisation provided a poor service, delivered a service badly or failed to provide a service. If this has caused you hardship or injustice, we may be able to look into your complaint. We can normally only deal with complaints if you have already gone through the complaints procedure of the organisation that provided the service.

This leaflet tells you what you can do if you have a complaint about how a council or housing association has acted as your landlord. It also explains what we can and cannot do.

Information about Registered Social Landlords (RSLs)

RSLs provide social housing in Scotland. An RSL may be a council or a housing association. If you are a tenant of an RSL you may be able to complain to us if you remain unhappy after using their complaints procedure.

What should I do if I have a problem with a service?

If you are unhappy with the service you've received, you should report the problem to the organisation involved. They will consider your concerns and they should try to deal with them.

I reported the problem and am still unhappy. How do I complain?

You should complain to the organisation if they have still not dealt with the matter after you reported it. This doesn't just mean telling staff about the problem. It means making a formal complaint telling the organisation that they have not sorted it out.

You should approach them direct and ask for details of their complaints procedure.

Please remember that organisations often have more than one stage in their complaints procedure. We usually expect you to have gone through all the stages before we will look at your complaint. This gives the organisation the chance to try to put things right. If you're still unhappy after going through their complaints procedure, or if the time they're taking to look into your complaint is unreasonable, you can complain to us.

You should normally make your complaint to us within twelve months of realising that you think the organisation have done something wrong.

What we can look into

We can consider complaints about the council or housing association (or about contractors acting for them). For example:

- if repair or upgrading work wasn't properly carried out or wasn't carried out when you were told it would be
- if agreed services such as close-cleaning or gardening were not carried out
- if they failed to maintain common areas
- if you've had problems with your tenancy, or there's a threat of eviction, and they haven't followed the proper procedures
- if they failed to reply to your complaint or to handle it properly

However you should note that:

We can't look at how the amount of any rent or service charge was decided. And we can't make a council or housing association change their decision, or sack or discipline a member of staff.

We understand that this can be complicated so please call us if you want to ask whether your complaint is one that we're likely to be able to look at. Our opening hours and contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

How we put things right

If we find that something's gone wrong, then as well as putting things right for you we want to try and stop the same thing happening to someone else. That's why some of our decisions and reports also have recommendations. These may include recommending that the organisation apologise or change their procedures. We may ask them to return the situation to what it would have been if they'd acted correctly in the first place.

We will look carefully to see what happened and how you have been affected. Our complaints reviewer will check that the organisation carry out our recommendations.

We also make some of our investigations public. We do this to share what we have learnt from complaints and to help improve how public services are delivered in Scotland.

How to complain to SPSO

- Write to us and tell us what happened. It's best to use our complaint form if possible. You can find this on our website at **www.spsso.org.uk** where you can fill it in online or print it off to complete. Or phone our freephone helpline number on **0800 377 7330** and we will send you one.
- Tell us what went wrong, and what you would like to happen to get things put right.
- Send us copies of the main paperwork about your complaint. Please make sure you include the final response you received from the organisation after you complained. It also helps if you send us your original letter of complaint to them.

Can someone else make a complaint for me?

Yes, if you give them written permission. Phone us on **0800 377 7330** and ask for a consent form. You can get help from your local Citizens Advice Bureau, where an adviser can help you fill in a complaint form or complain for you. Your Member of the Scottish Parliament (MSP), councillor, Member of Parliament (MP), or a friend or relative may also be able to help.

More help and advice

Citizens Advice Scotland

Citizens Advice Scotland may be able to give you further advice and guidance. You can discuss your concerns with your local Citizens Advice Bureau. To find your nearest Bureau please visit **www.cas.org.uk**, or look in the phone book.

Shelter Scotland

Shelter Scotland have plenty of advice, including a benefits calculator, on their website. Or you can call their free national helpline for advice. Make sure you say you're calling from Scotland as advice for people living here will be different from that given for England and Wales.

Telephone helpline: **0808 800 4444**

Website: **<https://scotland.shelter.org.uk/>**

Law Society of Scotland

You may also wish to seek advice about whether there is a legal route for your concerns. The Law Society of Scotland may be able to help you find a solicitor.

Telephone: **0131 226 7411**

Website: **www.lawscot.org.uk**

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

Contacting us

If you're not sure whether we can look at your complaint, please contact us. You can also call us if you're not sure whether you have gone through the complaints procedure of the organisation you are unhappy with. If appropriate, we'll guide you through that.

You can contact us by phone, in writing or by visiting our office. Visits are by appointment only and can be arranged by calling the number below.

Our address is:
SPSO Bridgeside
House 99
McDonald Road
Edinburgh
EH7 4NS

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

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

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**

Complaints form: **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.

