



Complaint

# How to complain about a public service

Tell the organisation that you are unhappy and you want to complain. This will give them the chance to put things right.

You can complain in person at any of the organisation's public offices. You can also complain to them by phone, by letter or by email. Ask for their complaints leaflet or procedure. It is important to follow their procedure so they know you are making a complaint.

This leaflet explains the process of complaining and gives an example of what to put in a complaint letter if you want to complain in writing.

## Getting help

People can help you make a complaint. You could ask a friend, a relative, a councillor, your MSP, an advocate, or anyone else you trust to make the complaint 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](http://www.cas.org.uk)

Or check your phone book for your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

### **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**

Tel: **0131 556 6443** Fax: **0131 550 9819** Website: [www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

# How to complain: A step by step guide

## Stage 1: Frontline Resolution

Make your complaint directly to the organisation. You can do this in person, by phone, by letter or email. The organisation will try to resolve your complaint within **5 working days** if they can. They may respond to you by phone or in person to try and resolve things. If you are unhappy with the response, you can ask the organisation to consider your complaint at stage 2.

## Stage 2: Investigation

At stage 2 you should receive an acknowledgement of your complaint within **3 working days**. You will be given a decision as soon as possible. This should be after no more than **20 working days** unless there is clearly a good reason for needing more time. If your complaint is complex or needs more detailed investigation, the organisation may look at your complaint immediately at this stage without going through stage 1.

Please note that the two-stage process applies to nearly all public service organisations but there are some exceptions, for example, social work complaints. We recommend that you always check with the organisation directly about their complaints procedure.

## Still unhappy?

If you are still unhappy with the organisation after your complaint has gone through their full complaints procedure, you can take it to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. The SPSO is an independent and free service.

You will need to give the SPSO the organisation's final letter, which should contain details about how to contact the SPSO. If the organisation does not give you this letter, you should contact them for advice on what to do next. Alternatively, call the SPSO's advice line.

SPSO advice line: freephone **0800 377 7330**

# Example of what to put in a complaint letter

Please keep a copy of your complaint letters.

**To: Name**  
**Job title**  
**Public service organisation**  
**Public service organisation's address**

**Your name**  
**Address**  
**Phone number**  
**Date**

*Dear* \_\_\_\_\_

## **COMPLAINT**

*I would like to complain about your service.*

- Give details of what has gone wrong and tell them what you think would resolve the problem.
- Clearly explain what you would like to happen as a result of your complaint. Do you want an apology, a change in policy, a service that should have been provided?
- You can ask the organisation to explain how they made their decision.
- Include information about what you have already done to try to sort things out. You may also find it helpful to include copies of previous letters, photos, statements etc.

*Please contact me so that I know that you have received my complaint. I would also like to know when you will send me a full reply.*

*Yours sincerely,*

**Your name**

## Advice from the SPSO

If you are unhappy after you have had your final response from the organisation, you can ask the SPSO to consider your complaint. The SPSO's advice team is happy to help with any questions you may have. You can call them on **SPSO advice line: freephone 0800 377 7330**. You can also visit the SPSO office.

## How to contact the SPSO



You can write to us at **Freepost SPSO** – you don't need a stamp



SPSO  
4 Melville Street  
Edinburgh  
EH3 7NS



Advice line freephone **0800 377 7330** or call **0131 225 5300**



Fax **0800 377 7331**

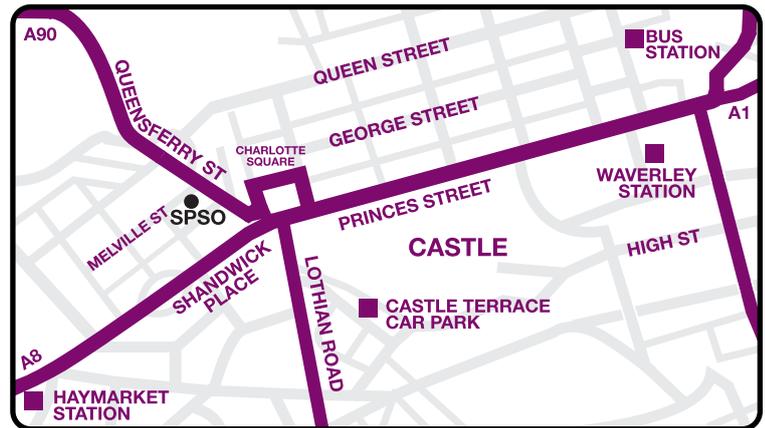


Website **www.spsso.org.uk**

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



You can fill in our complaints form online at:  
**www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form**



### Opening hours:

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

