



The Scottish Parliament
Pàrlamaid na h-Alba

How to make a complaint

The Scottish Parliament is committed to providing high-quality customer services.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our staff or services, please tell us. This document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also tells you about how we will handle your complaint and what you can expect from us.

We value complaints and use them to help us improve our services.

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

Who can complain?

Anyone who receives, requests or is directly affected by our services can make a complaint to us. This includes the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service (for example, a relative, friend, advocate or adviser). If you are making a complaint on someone else's behalf, you will normally need their written consent. See the section '**Getting help to make your complaint**' below.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- our failure or refusal to provide a service
- inadequate quality or standard of service, or an unreasonable delay in providing a service
- the conduct, treatment by or attitude of a member of staff or a contractor (**unless** there are arrangements in place for the contractor to handle the complaint themselves)
- our failure to properly apply law, procedure or guidance when delivering services
- our failure to follow the appropriate administrative process
- dissatisfaction with a [Scottish Parliamentary Corporate Body \(SPCB\) policy](#) or its impact on the individual; or
- disagreement with a decision taken by [the SPCB](#). (There are exceptions, for example where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision, or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector.)

Your complaint may involve more than one service or be about someone working on our behalf.

What is not considered as a complaint?

There are some things we can't deal with through our complaints handling procedure. These include:

- a routine first-time request for a service
- a request for compensation only
- abuse or unsubstantiated allegations about our organisation or staff
- an attempt to reopen a previously concluded complaint or to have a complaint reconsidered where we have already given our final decision

There are some things that are dealt with through other procedures. These include:

- complaints about [Members of the Scottish Parliament or their staff](#)
- complaints about [Scottish Ministers](#) or Scottish Government policies
- concerns about the actions or service of a different organisation (**unless** it is delivering services on our behalf)
- a concern about a child or an adult's safety
- issues that are in court or have already been heard by a court or a tribunal (If you decide to take legal action, you should let us know.)
- a request for information under the Data Protection or Freedom of Information (Scotland) Acts
- a decision where there is a statutory procedure for challenging that decision (such as for freedom of information and subject access requests), or an established appeals process followed throughout the sector
- a grievance by a staff member or a grievance relating to employment or staff recruitment
- a concern raised internally by a member of staff which was not about a service they received (such as a whistleblowing concern)

If other procedures or rights of appeal can help you resolve your concerns, we will give you information and advice to help you.

How do I complain?

You can complain in person, by phone, by email, by letter or online through our complaints form at www.parliament.scot/complaints.

You can make your complaint in any language, including Gaelic and by video in British Sign Language (BSL).

It is easier for us to address a complaint if you make it quickly and directly to the service concerned, so please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve the issue.

When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name and contact details
- as much as you can about the complaint
- what has gone wrong; and
- what outcome you are seeking.

Getting help to make your complaint

If you are unable or reluctant to make a complaint yourself, we can accept your complaint from a representative such as a friend, relative or advocate, if you have given your consent for them to complain on your behalf.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**:

Tel: 0131 510 9410

Email: enquiry@siaa.org.uk

Website: www.siaa.org.uk

You can find out about advisers in your area through **Citizens Advice Scotland**. Look at www.cas.org.uk or check your phone book for your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

How long do I have to make a 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 we should consider your complaint after the time limit, please tell us why.

What happens when I have complained?

We will tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages.

Stage 1: Frontline response

We aim to respond to complaints quickly – where possible, when you first tell us about the issue. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, or immediate action to resolve the issue.

We will give you our decision at stage 1 on-the-spot or within **five working days**, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If you are not satisfied with the response we give at this stage, we will tell you what you can do next. If you choose to, you can take your complaint to stage 2 either:

- within six months of the event you want to complain about or finding out that you have a reason to complain; or
- within two months of receiving our response to your complaint at stage 1 (if this is later).

In exceptional circumstances, we may be able to accept a stage 2 complaint after the time limit. If you feel that we should consider your complaint after the time limit, please tell us why.

Stage 2: Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint:

- where the customer remains dissatisfied after stage 1; and
- complaints that clearly require investigation and so are handled directly at this stage.

If you do not wish your complaint to be handled at stage 1, you can ask us to handle it at stage 2 instead.

At stage 2:

- we will acknowledge receipt of your complaint **within three working days**
- we will confirm our understanding of your complaint and what outcome you are looking for
- we will try to resolve your complaint where we can (In some cases we may suggest using an alternative complaint resolution approach, such as mediation.); and
- where we cannot resolve your complaint, we will give you a full response as soon as possible, **normally within 20 working days**.

If our investigation will take longer than 20 working days, we will tell you. We will tell you our revised time limits and keep you updated.

What if I'm still dissatisfied?

If you are dissatisfied with our final decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO is an independent organisation that investigates complaints. It is not an advocacy or support service (but there are other organisations who can help you with advocacy or support).

You can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint if:

- you have gone all the way through our complaints handling procedure
- it is less than 12 months since you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; and
- the matter has not been (and is not being) considered in court.

The SPSO's contact details are:

By post: FREEPOST SPSO

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

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

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

SPSO

Bridgeside House

99 McDonald Road

Edinburgh

EH7 4NS

(If you would like to visit in person, you must make an appointment first.)

Our contact details

You can contact us by the following means:

Email: info@parliament.scot

Online: parliament.scot/complaints

Address:

Public Information (Complaints)

The Scottish Parliament

Edinburgh

EH99 1SP

Telephone: 0800 092 7500 or 0131 348 5000

0131 348 5395 (Gàidhlig)

We also welcome calls using the Text Relay service or in BSL through contactSCOTLAND-BSL.

We are committed to making our service easy to use for everyone. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help you access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as BSL, Gaelic, large print or Braille, please tell us.

We will use any personal details you provide only in order to deal with your complaint. To find out more about how we handle your information, see parliament.scot/dataprotection or contact us.



A quick guide to our complaints procedure

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by email or by letter or through our online form.

We have a **2-stage complaints procedure**. We will always try to deal with your complaint quickly. But if it is clear that the matter will need investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.

Stage 1: Frontline response

We will always try to respond to your complaint quickly, within **five working days** if we can.

If you are dissatisfied with our response, you can ask us to consider your complaint at stage 2.

Stage 2: Investigation

We will look at your complaint at this stage if you are dissatisfied with our response at stage 1. We also look at some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they need investigation.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **3 working days**. We will confirm the points of complaint to be investigated and what you want to achieve.

We will investigate the complaint and give you our decision as soon as possible. This will be after no more than **20 working days** *unless* there is clearly a good reason for needing more time.

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO)

If, after receiving our final decision on your complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

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