**Complaints Handling Procedure**

The Scottish Human Rights Commissionis committed to providing a high-quality complaints handling procedure.

We acknowledge that complaints may occur from time to time. Where appropriate we will use information from complaints to help us improve our procedures.

If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our work please tell us. This document describes our complaints procedure and how to make a complaint. It also indicates what you can expect from us.

Please note:

We cannot give individuals legal advice and we do not operate an advisory service. When we are contacted for advice by an individual we aim to record the issue brought to our attention and signpost enquirers to an organisation that may be able to offer advice, support or assistance with the situation. We record issues that are brought to our attention so that we can take account of these when planning and carrying out our work to promote and protect human rights in Scotland. For information about the work we undertake to promote and protect human rights please visit our website [www.scottishhumanrights.com](http://www.scottishhumanrights.com)

**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.

**What can I complain about?**

You can complain about things like:

* Delays in responding to your enquiries.
* Our standard of work.
* Our policies.
* Treatment by or attitude of a member of staff.
* Our failure to follow proper procedure.

**What can’t I complain about?**

You cannot complain about things like:

* Our inability to give legal advice or take on individual cases.
* A complaint that you may have about a third party. This is because we are not a complaints handling body.
* Things that are covered by a right of appeal.

**Who can complain?**

Anyone can make a complaint to us, including the representative of someone who is dissatisfied with our service. Please also read the section on ‘Getting help to make your complaint’.

**How do I complain?**

You can complain by phone, in writing or by email. It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly at the point of contact where the complaint arose. So whether you are contacting us by phone, email or are attending one of our events and you wish to make a complaint please talk to a member of our staff at the point of contact that you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

* Your full name and contact details.
* As much as you can about the complaint.
* What has gone wrong.
* How you want us to resolve the matter.

**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, but no longer than 12 months after the event itself.

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.

You can contact us in the following ways:

By email [**hello@scottishhumanrights.com**](mailto:hello@scottishhumanrights.com)

By phone **0131 244 3550**

By post SHRC, **Governor’s House, Regent Road, Edinburgh, EH1 3DE**

**What happens when I have complained?**

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

**Stage One: Frontline Resolution**

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to the office function where the complaint arose. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at Stage One within five working days or less, unless there are exceptional circumstances.

If we can’t resolve your complaint at this stage, we will explain why and tell you what you can do next. We might suggest that you take your complaint to Stage Two. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

**Stage Two: Investigation**

Stage Two deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage One and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage Two we will:

* Acknowledge receipt of your complaint within five working days.
* Where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied 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.

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

**What if I’m still dissatisfied?**

After we have fully investigated, if you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way we dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to examine the complaint.

The SPSO **cannot** normally look at:

* A complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (**so please make sure it has done so before contacting the SPSO**).
* Events that happened, or that you became aware of, more than a year ago.
* A matter that has been or is being considered in court.

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.spso.org.uk/contact-us**

Website [**www.spso.org.uk**](http://www.spso.org.uk)

Mobile site [**http://m.spso.org.uk**](http://m.spso.org.uk)

**Getting help to make your complaint**

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We accept complaints from the representative of a person who is dissatisfied with our service. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you. You can find out about advocates in your area by

contacting the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance.

**Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**

Tel: **0131 260 5380** Fax: **0131 260 5381** Website: [**www.siaa.org.uk**](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

We are committed to making our service easy to use. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help people 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 large font, or Braille contact us on 0131 240 2989 or email us at hello@scottishhumanrights.com

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