

Guide to Complaints

This guide is designed for the use of the NHS, Teachers', Firefighters' and Police pension schemes

Foreword

Our complaints handling procedure reflects the Scottish Government's commitment to serving the public. It seeks to resolve issues at the point of service delivery, and where necessary, to conduct thorough, impartial and fair investigations of complaints.

The procedure introduces a standardised approach to handling complaints across government, which complies with the Scottish Public Sector Ombudsman's guidance on a model complaints handling procedure. This procedure aims to help us 'get it right first time'. We want quicker, simpler and more streamlined complaints handling with local, early resolution by capable, well trained staff.

Complaints give us valuable information that we can use to improve customer satisfaction. Our complaints handling procedure will enable us to address dissatisfaction and should also prevent the problems that led to the complaint from occurring again. For our staff, complaints provide a first-hand account of the customer's views and experience, and can highlight problems we may otherwise miss. Handled well, complaints can give our customers a form of redress when things go wrong, and can also help us continuously improve our services.

The complaints handling procedure will help us do our job better, improve relationships with the people we serve and the work of the Scottish Public Pensions Agency.

Chief Executive
SPPA

What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action lack of action, or about the standard of service we provide.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like (but are not limited to):

- delays in responding to your enquiries and requests
- failure to provide a service
- our standard of service
- treatment by or attitude of a member of staff
- our failure to follow proper procedure

Your complaint may also involve more than one service.

What can't I complain about?

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

- things that are covered by the Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure
- a decision about the amount of pension you receive
- the application of scheme regulations
- matters relating to policy
- requests for compensation
- Freedom of Information request decisions
- legal proceedings or judgements

Who can complain?

Anyone can make a complaint - a member, prospective member, representative or anyone who receives requests or is affected by our services

How do I complain?

You can complain in person at our office, by telephone, in writing, by email or online.

Address: SPPA, 7 Tweedside Park, Tweedbank, Galashiels, TD1 3TE

Telephone: 01896 893000

Website: www.pensions.gov.scot

Email: SPPAcustomercare@gov.scot

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly. Talking to a member of our staff can help try to resolve any problems straight away.

When complaining, please tell us:

- your full name and address
- as much as you can about your 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 the time limit should not apply, 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 – (1) Frontline resolution and (2) Investigation.

(1) Frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly. This could mean an on the spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong. We will, where possible, take immediate action to resolve the issue.

Frontline resolution means we will give you our decision in 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 the next stage. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

(2) Investigation

Investigation deals with two types of complaint - those that have not been resolved at frontline, and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When investigating, we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within three 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 am still dissatisfied?

After a full investigation, 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 look at it.

SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a matter that is being dealt with through our Internal Dispute Resolution Procedure
- a complaint that has not been completed by our complaints procedure
- 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 SPSO:

in person	SPSO, 4 Melville Street, Edinburgh, EH3 7NS
by post	Freepost SPSO (this is all you need to write on the envelope, and you don't need to use a stamp)
by Freephone	0800 377 7300
online	http://www.spsso.org.uk