

Child Friendly Complaints

Ensuring children's rights and needs are met by public service complaints procedures in Scotland

As you are aware, the SPSO is currently working on a new approach to handling complaints that involve children. We are doing this by working with children & young people from a range of backgrounds, and from across Scotland, to co-design this new approach and ensure it is a system fit for purpose. We have also enlisted the help of a wide range of parents, advocates, and professionals that work with children in the public sector, to test and refine the approach and ensure it will work in a practical setting. We would like to extend our sincere gratitude and thanks to everyone who has helped us in this work so far.

We now have a first draft of a guide that will ultimately be implemented by all public bodies under our remit. This guide will set out how existing complaints processes can be adapted when a child or young person is involved. It will aim to ensure that their rights under the UNCRC are met throughout the complaints process and that their concerns are handled in a way that they have told us meets their needs.

We had initially planned to carry out a public consultation around now, aiming towards publishing the guide under our model complaints powers and requiring all relevant public bodies to have their own version in place by 1 April 2023. Following feedback from our engagement and testing work, we have decided to carry out a more targeted pilot first.

The pilot will focus on key services provided to children and young people, such as schools, social work services, and children's health services. The aim of this work will be to test the new approach in practical settings, both to ensure it results in the right outcomes for children, and that it is efficient, practical and workable for the public sector bodies managing the process.

We will still hold a full public consultation before publication of the final guidance, but this will now take place after the pilots are complete and any changes made. We are still in the process of refining the pilot, and will provide further updates on the timeline and launch when we have definite dates. We will also be aiming to share further details of the approach before the 1 April 2023, so that all relevant bodies, including those not involved in the pilot, will have a better understanding of what to expect.

If your organisation would like to be involved, or you would like further information about what your involvement might entail, please contact us at CSA@spsso.gov.scot and we will do our best to help.