



How we investigate your complaint

After an assessment of the evidence you have provided on your case, we may decide to investigate further in order to reach an investigation decision. Once we decide to do this, we'll discuss with you the wording of the complaint that we will ask the organisation about. The wording will be clear, so that everyone understands what we will, and will not, be issuing a decision on. We may summarise a number of issues and it's possible that some issues you raise with us will not be included in this wording. In exceptional cases, if we cannot reach an agreement with you about this, we will either have the final say where we are clear about your complaint, or close it without making a decision.

Investigation decisions

We make our decisions by taking into account relevant evidence of what happened, any independent specialist advice, and the views and opinions of both the person making the complaint and the organisation being complained about. It is then for us to weigh up the evidence we have and make a decision. Before we make our final decision on your complaint, we will either send you and the organisation our provisional decision or share a draft of our public investigation report.

This is your opportunity to tell us if you think we have relied on inaccurate information, or if you have new information that you think changes our provisional views. We will then make a final decision taking into account any comments. Your complaint may be upheld in full, some upheld, or not upheld.

Recommendations

We usually make recommendations where we find that something has gone wrong, to help put things right and to try to stop the same thing happening to someone else.

Here are some things we might recommend:

- A proper written apology
- Review a decision
- Change a process

- Put in place a procedure they should have had
- Comply with their complaints process

If we make recommendations, we'll follow them up to make sure they have been carried out.

More information about our recommendations can be found on our website.

Publishing our decisions

We publish our decisions to tell other people about what we find and what we've asked organisations to do to put things right. Our investigations and recommendations can lead to improvements in public services as a whole, not just in the organisation you have complained about.

Decision reports – when we investigate a complaint, we usually report our findings and conclusions in what we call a decision letter. These findings are published as decision reports.

Investigation reports – in some cases that meet our public interest criteria, we lay the full report of the investigation before the Scottish Parliament and publish it online as an investigation report.

We keep all complaints private. Before we publish our decisions we remove any information that could be used to identify you or other people. We usually name the organisation involved but we won't name you. We will not name anyone else, unless we have good reasons. We may not publish a decision at all if we think what it says may identify someone. Every month, we send reports of our decisions to the Scottish Parliament and to Ministers in the Scottish Government. We also publish the reports on our website and in other communications, like newsletters. The media sometimes report our decisions. You can read all our public decisions on our website: www.spsso.org.uk/our-findings.

Your information

We are committed to protecting your privacy. We use information given to us about you and your complaint for its intended purpose and in line with the Data Protection Act 2018 and the SPSO Act 2002. We may use information we collect to compile statistics and undertake research and analysis. There may be public interest benefits in reusing information for these purposes. Information is completely anonymised.

Your views are valuable to us, and we may contact you again to invite you to take part in our surveys for research purposes.

To find out more about how we handle your information and your rights, see www.spsso.org.uk/privacy-notice. If you have any concerns about what we do, please let us know straight away.

How to contact the SPSO



A freepost envelope can be supplied if this is required



SPSO, Bridgeside House, 99 McDonald Road, Edinburgh EH7 4NS

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



Freephone **0800 377 7330**

This line is open during the following hours: Mon, Wed & Fri 9am-1pm,
Tues & Thurs 1pm-5pm



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



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

You can fill in our complaints form online at **forms.spsso.org.uk/spsso**

Calls to and from SPSO phone lines may be recorded to check the quality of our service and help us do our job to help you. More details are in the privacy notice: **www.spsso.org.uk/privacy-notice**. Please ask if you want to confirm if a call is or is not being recorded or if you would like to know what options may be available to you if you do not wish to be recorded.



Please contact us if you would like this leaflet in another language or format (such as large print, audio, BSL or Braille).