

## **SEPA Complaints Handling Procedure A Guide for Customers**

The Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) is committed to providing high-quality customer services.

**We value complaints and use information from them to help us improve.**

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

### **What is a complaint?**

SEPA's definition of a complaint is:

*"An expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about SEPA's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of SEPA"*

### **What can I complain about?**

A complaint may relate to:

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

This list does not cover everything. Your complaint may involve more than one service provided by SEPA or someone working on our behalf.

### **What can't I complain about?**

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

- a routine first-time request for a service
- requests for compensation
- a disagreement with a decision where an alternative right of appeal exists, for example where SEPA has determined and issued a regulatory license.

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

## Who can complain?

Anyone who requests or is affected by our services can make a complaint; 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 in person at any of our offices <https://www.sepa.org.uk/contact/office-locations/> or by phone, in writing, or email, please see 'Contact details' section below.

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them swiftly and directly to the office/team concerned. So please talk to a member of our staff at the service you are complaining about. Then they can try to resolve any problems on the spot.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address
- 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 you have a reason to complain, but normally 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.

## Contact details

Telephone: 08456 124124

Email: [ComplaintsAdministrator@sepa.org.uk](mailto:ComplaintsAdministrator@sepa.org.uk)

In writing to: Customer Service, SEPA, Strathallan House, Castle Business Park, Stirling, FK9 4TZ

Further details on SEPA's Complaint Handling Procedure can also be found on the SEPA website <https://www.sepa.org.uk/media/118406/sepa-complaints-handling-procedure.pdf>

## **What happens when I have complained?**

### **We will record your complaint**

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint.

We will learn through reporting and publishing complaints information

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

### **Stage one – frontline resolution**

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and in the proximity to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology an explanation if something has clearly gone wrong and immediate action to resolve the problem. We will give you our decision at Stage 1 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. You can ask us to look at your complaint again by taking your complaint to Stage 2. If you wish to exercise this right, you must write to SEPA.

### **Stage two – investigation**

Stage 2 deals with four types of complaints: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1, those that are complex in nature and require detailed investigation, serious complaints and high risk cases.

When using Stage 2 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 normally within 20 working days

If the investigation is particularly complex and we need longer than 20 working days to resolve the problem, 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 have dealt with your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to look at it.

The SPSO **cannot** normally look at:

- A complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure. You must have been informed of the outcome of your complaint at Stage 2, before raising it with 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 at:**

**By Post:** FREEPOST SPSO

**In Person:** SPSO  
Bridgeside House  
99 McDonald Road  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4NS.

**Freephone:** 0800 377 7330

**Telephone:** 0131 225 5300

**Online contact:** [www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us](http://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us)

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

**Mobile site:** <http://m.spsso.org.uk>

On Line complaint form <https://www.spsso.org.uk/complain/form/start/>

## Getting help to make your complaint

We understand that you may be unable, or reluctant, to make a complaint yourself. We can 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 on your behalf. If you require specific support, such as learning difficulties, people who are deaf or hard of hearing, or you require information in large font, braille or a foreign language please contact us where suitable arrangements may be put in place, if appropriate. The following links may be helpful to you

- <http://www.k-international.com/translation/government-translation/>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/inclusive-communication/accessible-communication-formats>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/contacting-hmrc-deaf-and-hard-of-hearing-customers>

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

### **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance**

London House  
20 -22 E London Street  
Edinburgh  
EH7 4BQ

Tel: 0131 524 1975

Fax: 0131 550 9819

Email: [enquiry@siaa.org.uk](mailto:enquiry@siaa.org.uk)

Website: <https://www.siaa.org.uk/>

## Quick guide to our complaints procedure

### COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

You can make your complaint in person, by phone, by e-mail, or in writing

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 a detailed investigation, we will tell you and keep you updated on our progress.



### STAGE 1: FRONTLINE RESOLUTION

We will always try to resolve your complaint as quickly as possible.

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 complaints at stage 2 if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation due to their seriousness or high risk.

We will acknowledge your complaint within **3 working days**. We will 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.



### THE SCOTTISH PUBLIC SERVICES OMBUDSMAN

If, after receiving our final decision on your Stage 2 complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your Stage 2 complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it. We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision on your complaint.