

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

CONTENTS

Section 1	Introduction	2
Section 2	What is a complaint	3
Section 3	How your complaint will be handled	5
Section 4	Getting help to make your complaint	6
Appendix 1	Quick guide to our complaint procedure	7

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

SECTION 1. INTRODUCTION

The Water Industry Commission for Scotland values complaints and we use information from them to help us make improvements to the way we operate. If something goes wrong or you are dissatisfied with our services, please tell us. This procedure describes how to make a complaint and how it will be handled. It also tells you about our service standards and what you can expect from us.

We do not deal with individual consumer complaints or enquiries about water companies or individual water bills.

If you are concerned about the service you are receiving from your water supplier, or the bills you are receiving, you must first discuss these concerns with the water provider. Following this, if you remain dissatisfied, you must contact the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) who will be able to help and advise.

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

SECTION 2. WHAT IS A COMPLAINT

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction by one or more members of the public about the Commission's action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by or on behalf of the Commission.

What can I complain about?

You can complain about things like:

- 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; or
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one concern or be about someone working on our behalf.

What can't I complain about?

There are some things we cannot deal with. Some examples are noted below:

Example 1: A non-domestic customer is dissatisfied with their licensed provider and claims he/she has not been billed correctly. This must be routed through the licensed provider and their own internal complaints process must be followed. The customer can then contact the SPSO as noted above, should they remain dissatisfied.

Example 2: A domestic customer is unhappy with their water supply or has no water at all. This should be routed via Scottish Water. Again, should the customer remain dissatisfied, they can contact the SPSO for further assistance and advice.

Who can complain?

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

How do I complain?

You can complain in writing, by e-mail, by phone or in person.

When complaining, tell us:

- your full name and address;
- as much as you can about the complaint;
- what has gone wrong; and
- how you want us to resolve the matter.

How long do I have to make a complaint?

Normally, you must make your complaint within **6 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.

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

Contact details

You can contact us:

- (1)** By e-mail to complaints@watercommission.co.uk. Please title the e-mail "Complaint against WICS".
- (2)** In writing to: Complaints, Water Industry Commission for Scotland, Moray House, Forthside Way, Stirling FK8 1QZ
- (3)** By phone on 01786 430200.

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

SECTION 3. HOW YOUR COMPLAINT WILL BE HANDLED

What happens when I have complained?

Our complaints procedure has two stages:

Stage One – First stage resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly. This could mean an explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem. We will give you our decision at Stage 1 in **5 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 2. You may choose to do this immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

Stage Two – Investigation

Stage 2 deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage 1 and those that are complex and require detailed investigation. When using Stage 2 we will:

- acknowledge receipt of your complaint within **3 working days**;
- where appropriate, discuss your complaint with you to understand why you remain dissatisfied and what outcome you are looking for; and
- give you a full response to the complaint as soon as possible and 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 look at it.

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) is the final stage for complaints about public services in Scotland. This includes complaints about the Scottish Government, NDPBs, agencies and other government sponsored organisations. If you remain dissatisfied with an organisation after its complaints process, you can ask the SPSO to look at your complaint. The SPSO cannot normally look at complaints:

- where you have not gone all the way through the Commission's complaints handling procedure;
- more than 12 months after you became aware of the matter you want to complain about; or
- that have been or are being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO:

In Person:

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

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

Online contact: www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us

Website: www.spsso.org.uk

By Post:

Freepost SPSO (you don't need to use a stamp)

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

SECTION 4. 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 on your behalf.

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

In line with our statutory equality duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to be able to access us. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, such as large font, or Braille, tell us in person by contacting us on 01786 430200.

EXTERNAL COMPLAINTS HANDLING PROCEDURE

APPENDIX 1: QUICK GUIDE TO OUR COMPLAINT PROCEDURE

COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

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

We have a **two-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 quickly, within **5 working days** if we can.

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 some complaints immediately at this stage, if it is clear that they are complex or need detailed investigation.

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 complaint, you remain dissatisfied with our decision or the way we have handled your complaint, you can ask the SPSO to consider it.

We will tell you how to do this when we send you our final decision.