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HM INSPECTORATE OF CONSTABULARY IN SCOTLAND

# Complaints Procedure

September 2017

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# HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland

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HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland (HMICS) is committed to providing high-quality customer services.

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

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

## What is a complaint?

We regard a complaint as any expression of dissatisfaction about our action or lack of action, or about the standard of service provided by us or on our behalf.

## 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;
- our failure to follow proper procedure.

Your complaint may involve more than one service or be about 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;
- things that are covered by a right of appeal.

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 can make a complaint to us, 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 our office by appointment, by phone, in writing, by email or via our website [www.hmics.scot/contact-hmics](http://www.hmics.scot/contact-hmics)

It is easier for us to resolve complaints if you make them quickly and directly to the service 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 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.

### What happens when I have complained?

We will always tell you who is dealing with your complaint. Our complaints procedure has two stages:

#### ■ Stage one – frontline resolution

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we provided the service. This could mean an on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

We will give you our decision at **Stage 1** 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 **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 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 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 SPSO cannot normally look at:

- a complaint that has not completed our complaints procedure (so please make sure it has done so before contacting 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.

### SPSO contact details:

#### In person:

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman,  
4 Melville Street,  
Edinburgh,  
EH3 7NS

They are open: Monday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 9am-5pm; Tuesday 10am-5pm

#### By post:

Freepost SPSO (this is all you need to write on the envelope, and you don't need to use a stamp)

Scottish Public Services Ombudsman,  
4 Melville Street,  
Edinburgh,  
EH3 7NS

#### By telephone:

Freephone: 0800 377 7330  
Landline: 0131 225 5300

#### By fax:

0800 377 7331

#### Online contact:

<https://www.spsso.org.uk/contact-us>

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

#### Website:

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





## 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 for you.

You can find out about advocates in your area by contacting the [Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance](#) whose contact details are:

### The Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance contact details:

**By post:**

Mansfield Traquair Centre,  
15 Mansfield Place,  
Edinburgh,  
EH3 6BB

**By telephone:**

0131 260 5380

**By fax:**

0131 260 5381

**Online contact:**

<https://www.siaa.org.uk/us/contact-us/>

**Website:**

[www.siaa.org.uk](http://www.siaa.org.uk)

We are committed to making our service easy to use for all members of the community. In line with our statutory equalities duties, we will always ensure that reasonable adjustments are made to help customers access and use our services. 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.

### Our contact details:

**By post:**

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary for Scotland (HMICS)  
1st Floor West  
St Andrew's House Regent Road Edinburgh  
EH1 3DG

**By telephone:**

0131 244 5614

**By email:**

[hmics@gov.scot](mailto:hmics@gov.scot)

**Website:**

<http://www.hmics.scot>

**Online Contact:**

[www.hmics.scot/contact-hmics](http://www.hmics.scot/contact-hmics)





## Quick guide to our complaints procedure:





**HMICS** HM INSPECTORATE OF  
CONSTABULARY IN SCOTLAND

HM Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland  
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Edinburgh EH1 3DG

Tel: 0131 244 5614

Email: [hmic@gov.scot](mailto:hmic@gov.scot)

Web: [www.hmics.org](http://www.hmics.org)

### **About Her Majesty's Inspectorate of Constabulary in Scotland**

HMICS operates independently of Police Scotland, the Scottish Police Authority and the Scottish Government. Under the Police and Fire Reform (Scotland) Act 2012, our role is to review the state, effectiveness and efficiency of Police Scotland and the Scottish Police Authority. We support improvement in policing by carrying out inspections, making recommendations and highlighting effective practice.

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