NHS Scotland procedure for handling complaints

In NHS Scotland, the procedure for handling a complaint against a GP practice is

a two-stage process that begins with the practice itself, and can be escalated to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO). This process is governed by the Patient Rights (Scotland) Act 2011.

Stage 1: Early, local resolution

For most complaints, the first step is to contact the GP practice directly.

* Who to contact: You can speak to a member of staff involved in your care, the practice manager, or write a formal complaint letter.
* Response timeframe: The practice should acknowledge any written complaint within three working days and aim to provide a full resolution within five to ten working days.
* Resolution goals: For straightforward issues, this stage aims for a quick, on-the-spot resolution, which may include an apology, an explanation, or immediate corrective action.
* Moving to Stage 2: If the complaint is complex or you are not satisfied with the outcome at Stage 1, you can request that the matter be moved to Stage 2.

Stage 2: Investigation

If your complaint is not resolved locally, it can be escalated to a formal investigation.

* Acknowledgement: The practice must acknowledge receipt of a Stage 2 complaint within three working days.
* Investigation and response: The practice will conduct a detailed investigation and aim to provide a full written response within 20 working days.
* Case complexity: For more serious or complex complaints, this investigation may take longer than 20 working days. In such cases, the practice must inform you of the reason for the delay and provide regular progress updates.

Escalation to the Ombudsman

If you are still dissatisfied after the practice's final decision, you can take your complaint to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO).

* Role of the SPSO: The SPSO is the final stage for complaints about public services in Scotland, and its service is free, independent, and impartial.
* Investigation by the SPSO: The Ombudsman can investigate whether there was evidence of service failure or poor administration.
* Time limit: You must normally contact the SPSO within 12 months of becoming aware of the issue.

Independent help and support

You can get free, confidential advice and support at any point during the complaints process.

* Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS): This independent service is provided by [Citizens Advice Scotland](https://www.google.com/url?sa=i&source=web&rct=j&url=https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/health/nhs-healthcare-s/nhs-complaints-s/&ved=2ahUKEwjw4auetq2PAxUFS0EAHTA7OnoQy_kOegYIAwgAECI&opi=89978449&cd&psig=AOvVaw2KcE4nKQJXNmRgbFkm44-f&ust=1756467705418000) and can help you with your complaint, including drafting letters and explaining your rights.
* PASS contact: You can contact PASS by calling 0800 917 2127 or visiting your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Making your complaint effectively

To help with the process, remember to include specific details when you make your complaint:

* Your full name and address.
* The patient's name, address, and date of birth if you are complaining on their behalf (with their consent).
* A clear description of what happened, when it happened, and who was involved.
* How you would like the matter to be resolved.