**NHS Scotland Complaints Handling Procedure**

**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. If we decide that, because of the time that has passed since the incident occurred, we cannot

consider your complaint, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) to review our decision.

**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 – early, local resolution**

We aim to resolve complaints quickly and close to where we

provided the service. Where appropriate, this could mean an

on-the-spot apology and explanation if something has clearly gone wrong, and immediate action to resolve the problem.

Sometimes we will have to make some enquiries before we can respond to your complaint. We will give you our decision at Stage one in five working days or less, unless there are exceptional

circumstances.

If we cannot 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 two. You may choose to do this

immediately or sometime after you get our initial decision.

**Stage two – investigation**

Stage two deals with two types of complaint: those that have not been resolved at Stage one and those that are complex and require detailed investigation.

When using Stage two 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; 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?**

If you are still dissatisfied with our decision or the way in which we have dealt with your complaint when we have sent you our full

response, you can ask the 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; or

- a matter that has been or is being considered in court.

You can contact the SPSO:

 In Person: By Post

SPSO SPSO

Bridgeside House Freepost EH641

99 McDonald Road Edinburgh

Edinburgh EH7 4NS EH3 0BR

Freephone: 0800 377 7330

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

Website: [www.spso.org.uk](http://www.spso.org.uk/) Mobile site: [http://m.spso.org.uk](http://m.spso.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 as long as the person has given their permission for us to deal with that person. We can take complaints from a friend, relative, or an advocate, if you have given them your consent to complain for you.

The Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) is an organisation that provides free and confidential advice and support to patients and other members of the public in relation to NHS Scotland. The service promotes an awareness and understanding of the rights and responsibilities of patients and can advise and support people who wish to make a complaint to the NHS. Further information and contact details can be found on the PASS web site:

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

We are committed to making NHS services 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 you to access and use our services. If you have trouble putting your complaint in writing, or want this information in another language or format, tell us in person or contact us by phone.

**Our contact details**

Bangholm Med. Centre, 25 Bangholm Loan, Edinburgh EH5 3AH