

## What can the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) decide?

They can decide:

- to change part or all of the council's decision
- to tell the council to make a new decision, or
- not to change the council's decision in any way

They won't reduce or take away any award the council has given you.

## How long will the SPSO take to reach a decision?

After you have asked for an independent review, the SPSO will start work straight away. The SPSO will ask you and the council for the information they need. Getting this information can take time. They will aim to give you their decision within the following times:

- For Crisis Grants, one working day from when they get all the information they need.
- For Community Care Grants, 21 working days from when they get all the information they need

If the SPSO cannot keep to these times, they will let you know why.

## Contacting the SPSO

You can ask for an independent review only after the council has given you their decision on their review. For advice, you can contact the SPSO:

- By phone on 0800 014 7299. Calls are free to this number, even from mobiles
- Write to this address: FREEPOST SPSO. You don't need to use a stamp
- Website: [swf.spsa.org.uk](https://swf.spsa.org.uk)

## Other Sources of Help

The Scottish Government has released the following website which provides helpful information for those struggling in the current cost crisis. The website also details the benefits you may be entitled to:

<https://costofliving.campaign.gov.scot>

**Citizens Advice Scotland** also provide support and advice on things like debt and money, housing and benefits. You can call Scotland's Citizen's Advice Helpline for free on **0800 028 1456**, and find your local Citizens Advice Bureau here:

[www.cas.org.uk/bureaux?postcode](https://www.cas.org.uk/bureaux?postcode)

Your Local Authority should also be able to refer you to other relevant organisations local to your area.

**You may be eligible for an Advance Payment or a Hardship Payment from the Department for Work and Pensions.**

The Scottish Government has established Social Security Scotland to administer a number of benefits for the people of Scotland.

These benefits are for people on low incomes, disabled people, carers, young people entering the workplace and help for people to heat their homes.

You can find out more and on how to apply at: <https://www.mygov.scot/organisations/social-security-scotland>

Find out more by visiting:

[www.mygov.scot/scottish-welfare-fund](https://www.mygov.scot/scottish-welfare-fund) or search Welfare Fund on your local council's website.



Scottish Government  
Riaghaltas na h-Alba

# The Scottish Welfare Fund



## Challenging decisions

Local councils are responsible for making decisions on Scottish Welfare Fund (SWF) applications. This leaflet tells you what you can do when you think a decision is wrong.

### The Scottish Welfare Fund

Delivered by local councils in partnership with the Scottish Government

## First Tier Review

### Where you have received a decision on your application

#### I have been refused an award, or I disagree with the award, what can I do?

You can ask your local council to look at the decision again. This is called a review.

Someone in the local council, other than the person who made the original decision, will look at your application again.

#### Is there a time-limit for requesting a review?

Yes. Requests should normally be within one month from the date of the original decision.

#### How do I make a request for a review?

You must normally make your request in writing by email, or letter and, include:

- date and reference number from your decision letter
- reasons why you think the decision is wrong
- any information that might make a difference to the decision, e.g. a change in your circumstances

You may in exceptional circumstances ask for a review in person, or by telephone.

#### What happens if I provide new information?

The local council will look at your case again, taking into account all new information.



#### How long should it take for the council to complete my review?

Councils aim to deal with Community Care Grant reviews within 15 working days and Crisis Grant reviews within 2 working days. They will notify you in writing of their decision. This should include an explanation of their decision, and information about what you can do if you are not happy with the review decision.

#### What decision can a council reach?

The review can decide to:

- uphold, or agree with, the original decision
- change the original decision

They cannot reduce the award, or take it away.

## Independent Review

### When you have received a decision on your first tier review

#### I'm still unhappy after the first tier review. Is this the final step?

No. If you are unhappy with the council's decision, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) for an independent review.

#### When can I ask for an independent review from the SPSO?

You can ask for an independent review only after the council has given you their decision on their review.

#### Is there a time limit for me to ask for an independent review?

Yes. You should ask the SPSO for an independent review within one month of the first tier review decision. In some circumstances you may be able to ask for a review after this. You should contact the SPSO for advice.

#### How do I ask for an independent review?

You can ask the SPSO for an independent review over the phone or in writing. If you prefer, they will send you a form in the post, or you can print it off their website or fill it in online.

You will need to tell the SPSO that you have received the council's first tier review decision. If someone is asking for an independent review on your behalf, you will need to tell the SPSO that you are happy for this to happen.

#### What will the SPSO do?

The SPSO will consider whether the council made a reasonable and fair decision. They will check that the council:

- followed Scottish Government guidance regulations and any relevant council policies
- considered information that was accurate relevant and complete
- made appropriate enquiries to get that evidence
- made their decision fairly, based on relevant evidence and your own individual circumstances, and
- in making their decision, treated you with dignity and respect