

SSRO

Single Source
Regulations Office

Complaints Policy 2018

for the Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO)

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1. Purpose and scope of policy

- 1.1 The Single Source Regulations Office (SSRO) is an executive non- departmental public body that supports the effective operation of the scheme of regulation of single source defence contracts established by Part 2 of the Defence Reform Act 2014. The Ministry of Defence (MOD) is the Sponsoring Department for the SSRO. We are independent and aim to be as transparent as possible in the delivery of our statutory functions. When carrying out our duties under the Defence Reform Act 2014 (the 'Act') and Single Source Regulations 2014 (the 'Regulations') our intention at all times is to deal with people fairly and properly. If you feel that we have not met that standard, please let us know. Where there is reason to believe our conduct has fallen short, we want to be able to resolve any issues and learn from what has happened so that we can continuously improve.
- 1.2 This document explains how the SSRO deals with complaints about its conduct from all external parties, such as members of the public and parties to qualifying defence contracts or qualifying sub-contracts.
- 1.3 This policy does not cover complaints made by an external party relating to the conduct of a defence contractor or the Ministry of Defence. If you wish to comment on the performance or behaviour of a defence contractor or the Ministry of Defence, you should raise it directly with that organisation, using their own complaints procedure.

2. What is a complaint?

- 2.1 We will treat any expression of dissatisfaction about our conduct as a complaint. However, we ask you to contact us in writing as set out in the next section, so that we can consider the matter properly.
- 2.2 This policy covers complaints about:
 - how you or others have been treated by the SSRO;
 - the SSRO's conduct in performing our statutory functions in line with our legal duties under the Act and Regulations;
 - the SSRO's conduct and compliance with its own procedures processes and policies as described in relevant SSRO guidance; and
 - the behaviour of SSRO staff, the SSRO Board and its members, or Referrals Committee members.
- 2.3 The policy covers general complaints. It does not cover matters that are subject to special procedures, which include the following:
 - Dissatisfaction or disagreement with opinions or determinations handed down by the SSRO. For example, determinations of price adjustments (s16 of the Act) and final price adjustments (s21); determinations of allowable costs (s20); declarations about the examination of records (s23); decisions further to investigation into confidentiality obligations (s27); determining whether a contract is a qualifying sub contract (s29); decisions as to whether the Regulations should cease to apply to a sub-contract (s30); determinations of matters relating to a penalty notice (s32); opinions and determinations under s35 of the Act; monitoring functions under s36; and any procedures adopted by the SSRO under paragraph 10 of Schedule 4 of the Act.
 - Responses to SSRO public consultations, including where you disagree with the SSRO's approach, views or procedures in the consultation.
 - Requests, or refusals for requests, for information under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 or Data Subject Access Requests under the General Data Protection Regulation. For more information please visit [our website](#).

- General enquiries about the SSRO's work, including requests for clarification, advice or further information on all issues related to the work of the SSRO and its statutory functions. Such enquiries are handled by the SSRO helpdesk.
- Concerns raised by staff or members of the SSRO which are dealt with under our Whistleblowing policy.

2.4 In every case set out above, a complaint can be made under this policy regarding our conduct and how you were treated by the SSRO or whether we followed our own procedures and guidance.

3. How to complain

3.1 The SSRO's contact details are available on our website. A complaint may be emailed to complaints@ssro.gov.uk, or sent by post to SSRO, 3rd Floor Finlaison House, 15-17 Funnival Street, London EC4A 1AB. It will help us to deal quickly and fully with your complaint if you can state that you are making a complaint, set out your concern in writing as clearly as possible, and provide your contact details.

4. What you can expect from us when handling a complaint

4.1 Our policy is to take legitimate complaints seriously and deal with them according to the procedures set out in this policy, and the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman's Principles of Good Complaint Handling.

Our service standards

4.2 We aim to deal with complaints promptly and sensitively, and be courteous and helpful at all times. All complaints received will be dealt with confidentially and in accordance with the requirements of the General Data Protection Regulation.

4.3 We will keep full and accurate records of all complaints we receive so that we can monitor the types of problems reported to us, the best way to resolve them and how long we are taking to deal with complaints. This also helps us to take a closer look at how we can improve in the future.

4.4 If you make a complaint, we will investigate it thoroughly and impartially, without discrimination or prejudice. We aim to resolve matters as promptly as we can, but if a complaint gives rise to serious issues, we may need to take extra time in order to investigate it fully and properly so that, wherever we can, we resolve the issue first time and learn from it and make improvements.

4.5 We will ensure that all decisions we make are proportionate, appropriate and fair given the circumstances of each individual complaint.

Stage one

4.6 If you have supplied your contact details, we will send an acknowledgment of your complaint within five working days. Your complaint will then be passed to an appropriate person who was not involved in the events which led to the complaint and who is in a position and has the relevant experience to consider the complaint. We will aim to respond as soon as possible, and in any event within 20 working days. We may need to contact you to ask for more information or clarity before making a final response.

4.7 If we cannot provide a final response within 20 days, we will contact you to provide an update, an explanation of the delay, and an indication of when a final response can be expected.

- 4.8 When we provide you with a final response, we will clearly set out the steps we took in investigating the complaint along with our views and reasons for this. Where we identify mistakes in our approach we will acknowledge those mistakes, set out details of remedial steps or changes we think are appropriate in the circumstances, and explain what we will do to prevent the problem from reoccurring. We will also indicate your right to request a review of your complaint if you are not satisfied with our response.
- 4.9 In complaints involving the SSRO Chair, the Chair of the Audit Committee will consider if there is a sufficiently serious prima facie case and, if so, shall send it to the Permanent Secretary at the Ministry of Defence for consideration.

Stage two

- 4.10 We expect most complaints to be resolved at stage one. However, if you consider the response you have received is not fair or appropriate, you may contact us to request a review of your complaint by the SSRO's Chief Executive, or SSRO Chairman if the complaint involves the Chief Executive or Board. You should do this within 20 working days of receiving a stage one response unless there is special reason for doing so later.
- 4.11 We will acknowledge your request to review the complaint within five working days. Again, we may need to contact you to ask for more information or clarity before making a final decision. If we cannot provide a final response within 20 working days, we will contact you to provide an update, an explanation of the delay, and an indication of when a final response can be expected.
- 4.12 If, on review, you are still not satisfied with the handling of your complaint, you can contact the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman.

5. Complaints not warranting detailed investigations

- 5.1 It may be the case that we receive correspondence that in our view does not fall under our definition of a complaint (2.2) or does not raise any issue that calls for in depth investigation. This applies, for instance, to:
- correspondence regarding a matter listed in section 2.3 above;
 - complaints which object to steps, recommendations or decisions we have taken in compliance with a legal requirement, or with a procedure established in compliance with the law after proper consultation;
 - disapproval of the SSRO's refusal to take action in a matter where we have no legal power to act; or
 - malicious, repetitive or vexatious claims such as harassment of staff or repeated submissions of a complaint to which a response under stage two of our complaints procedure has been provided.
- 5.2 We will not reply to rude or abusive emails, calls or letters. In all other cases we will give brief reasons for our views but having done so once will not normally engage in further correspondence on the merits of the position we have taken.

6. Other information

- 6.1 The SSRO Board is informed of any complaints received about the SSRO or its staff at each meeting.
- 6.2 The SSRO welcomes any comments or suggestions about our complaints procedure, to make sure it operates as efficiently and effectively as possible. Please send any comments to us by email or post.
- 6.3 Please ask us if you would like a copy of our complaints policy in large print.

