



Enquiries, Comments & Complaints Policy

The Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire LEP (SSLEP) welcomes all general enquiries. We would also like to hear from you if you have a suggestion on how we can improve or if you have been particularly happy with any part of the service you received from the SSLEP

You can make an enquiry to the LEP at the following contact details:

- 01785 719000
- Email: contactus@stokestaffslep.org.uk
- Website: www.stokestaffslep.org.uk – Contact Us
- Address:

Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire LEP
Judges Chambers
County Buildings
Martin Street
Stafford
ST16 2LH

All members of the SSLEP team will do their best to respond to enquiries promptly. However, should you send your enquiry to any point of contact at the SSLEP other than the above; we cannot guarantee that you will receive a response.

Please note that the SSLEP receives a large number of emails, letters and phone calls each day and we will try to reply to you as quickly as possible. However, please note that general enquiries, including emails, are dealt with in the order in which they are received.

We will respond to your written enquiry within 5 working days of receipt.

If you leave a voice message at the SSLEP, we will call you back within 5 working days of the message.

If your enquiry is in relation to general business support and where you can go to get help in growing your business you may wish to contact the Business Helpline directly. This is the SSLEP's "One-Stop-Shop" for business information, loans, grants, advice and support.

- businessenquiries@stokestaffslep.org.uk

- 0300 111 8002

Comments received by the SSLEP will be logged and reviewed regularly in order to help inform how we can improve.

If you have a compliment in relation to service received by the SSLEP, please include the name of any relevant members of the team in your correspondence so that we can ensure that your feedback reaches them.

Media Enquiries

Any media enquiries for the SSLEP should be directed to communications manager Alison Thomas on 01785 719000: Email: contactus@stokestaffslep.org.uk or alison.thomas1@staffordshire.gov.uk

Invitations

If you would like to invite the SSLEP to attend an event you are holding, or invite one of our Board Members to speak at an event, please send as much information as possible on the event to us in writing at the following address:

contactus@stokestaffslep.org.uk

We will acknowledge your invitation and let you know when we will be able to respond. Please note that the SSLEP receives a large number of invitations to speak at events and, whilst we will always try to accommodate event invitations, this will not always be possible.

If you would like a SSLEP Board Member to speak at an event you are running, it is recommended that you contact us with as much advanced notice as possible.

Complaints

Our aim

We take complaints very seriously. While we try to provide a good service, we know that sometimes things go wrong. We have developed a complaints procedure in response to this.

We aim to sort out complaints quickly and fairly and we will try to sort out any mistake or misunderstanding straight away. Sometimes it may take longer, but we will tell you how long it will take.

What we learn from complaints

We keep records of all the complaints we receive and monitor them regularly. This helps us to:

- identify areas of service where we need to make changes and improvements; and
- make sure we are dealing with complaints effectively and consistently.

What should I do if I want to make a complaint to the SSLEP?

- **Stage one**

The people who can best deal with a complaint are those who provide the service. You should speak or write to the member of the team that you have been dealing with and explain the reasons you are unhappy with the SSLEP. We can usually sort out mistakes and misunderstandings quickly and informally at this stage.

We will acknowledge your complaint in five working days. We will investigate your complaint and we will respond within 28 clear working days. If we cannot do this, we will let you know when you can expect a reply.

Our response will include details of who to complain to if you are not happy with the response at stage one.

- **Stage two**

If you are not happy with the response provided at stage one, you can complain to the LEP senior management team at:
chair@stokestaffslep.org.uk

It is best to let the manager know which parts of our response at stage one you are not happy with and what you expect from a further review.

We will investigate your complaint and a member of the senior management will respond to you within 15 clear working days. An investigation may take longer than this but if it does we will explain the reasons why and let you know when you can expect a full reply.

- **Stage three**

If you're still not happy, we can convene a panel of three LEP Board members who have not been involved in the issue to consider your complaint and propose a response.

Do we deal with all enquiries and complaints in this way?

No. We cannot investigate your complaint if it is something you knew about more than 12 months before contacting us for the first time. However, we may make an exception in some circumstances.

The above process covers the general complaints and enquiries procedure for the SSLEP. We have separate procedures for a number of areas as follows:

- Where third parties and members of the public wish to make complaints confidentially our policy is set out below
- Complaints in relation to specific funding programmes which you may be involved in will, generally, follow the same process as outlined above. However, there may be some differences to this procedure, including the relevant evaluation panel reviewing your complaint and in these cases, if there are differences to the above procedure, the appropriate process for complaints will be notified in the relevant guidance document for the funding stream to which you are applying
- Complaints or enquiries in relation to the SSLEP's accountable bodies (Stoke-on-Trent City Council and Staffordshire County Council) will need to follow standard Council procedures. This will include enquiries such as Freedom of Information Requests. Further detail on the Councils' policies can be found at:
 - [Staffordshire County Council Compliments, Comments and Complaints](#)
 - [Stoke-on-Trent City Council Customer Feedback](#)
- Any complaint regarding the conduct of Board Members or associated governance processes (e.g. meeting process) should be sent directly to the LEP Chairman at: chair@stokestaffslep.org.uk (confidential, restricted access email address), essentially commencing the complaints process at Stage Two. Any complaints regarding the conduct of the LEP Chairman should be marked for the attention of the Partnership Manager and sent to confidential@stokestaffslep.org.uk (confidential, restricted access email address)

Who can help me make a complaint?

If you would like help making a complaint, you can contact your local councillor or MP. You can also get help from a specialist advice agency or organisation which represents people, such as a citizens advice bureau (CAB).

Confidential reporting of complaints

The LEP is committed to creating a work environment with the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability. In view of this commitment we encourage employees and others with serious concerns about any aspect of the LEP's work to come forward and voice those concerns without fear of reprisal. For employees and those working closely with the LEP, please follow the [whistleblowing policy](#) on our [Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire LEP](#) website. For third parties and members of the public, please follow the confidential complaints procedure outlined below.

However, if a member of the public or third party believes that their complaint fits the description below; they can elect to report their concerns through the [whistleblowing policy procedure](#).

Whistleblowing - where an individual who has concerns about a danger, risk, contravention of rules or illegality provides useful information to address this. In doing so they are acting in the wider public interest, usually because it threatens others or impacts on public funds. By contrast, a grievance or private complaint is a dispute about the individual's own position and has no or very limited public interest.

Confidentiality

If a member of the public or a third party wants to make a confidential complaint or raise a concern, it will be treated in confidence and every effort will be made to protect the person's identity if they wish to remain anonymous. The LEP will investigate all complaints or allegations.

Anonymous allegations

The LEP takes all complaints and concerns raised by members of the public and third parties seriously. We will investigate anonymous allegations. However we remind complainants that when people put their names to an allegation the ability to investigate and therefore reach firm conclusions is strengthened. Concerns expressed anonymously will be considered at the discretion of the LEP. When exercising this discretion the factors to be taken into account would include:

- the seriousness of the issue raised;
- the credibility of the concern; and
- the likelihood of confirming the allegation from attributable sources.

The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government may request information arising from this process if they have concerns regarding a LEP or have been approached with similar complaints. The expectation is that this

information will be provided on an anonymous basis. However it may be necessary to provide personal details to progress a complaint.

Where details are gathered, the LEP will put in place appropriate data protection arrangements in line with the [Data Protection Act 1998](#).

Confidential Complaints Procedure

The LEP is aware that the organisation's ordinary complaints procedure may not be suitable if someone wants the complaint to remain confidential.

If you would like to make a confidential complaint please email:
confidential@stokestaffslep.org.uk

or write to:

Stoke-on-Trent and Staffordshire Local Enterprise Partnership, Judges Chambers, County Buildings, Martin Street, Stafford ST16 2LH

Please state that you want the complaint to remain confidential.

Action taken by the LEP

The designated complaints officer will raise your concern and investigate the complaint. You can expect the officer to:

- Contact you within 10 clear working days to acknowledge the complaint and discuss the appropriate course of action.
- Write to you within 28 clear working days with findings of the investigation. If the investigation has not concluded within 28 clear working days, the officer will write to you to give reasons for the delay in resolving the complaint.
- Take the necessary steps to rectify the issue.

If you are unhappy with the outcome of the complaint or the complaint involves those responsible for the confidential complaints procedure:

- You can escalate your concerns through other organisations mentioned in the normal complaints procedure e.g. the LEP's Accountable Body which is Staffordshire County Council These organisations will have their own confidentiality procedures.

If you are either unable to raise the matter with the LEP or you are dissatisfied with the action taken you can report it direct to the Cities and Local Growth Unit in the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy, at the following email address: LEPPolicy@communities.gsi.gov.uk or by writing to: LEP Policy Deputy Director, Cities and Local Growth Unit, Fry Block, 2 Marsham Street, London,

SW1P 4DF. You should clearly mark your email or letter as “Official - complaints”.