



STOKE-ON-TRENT AND STAFFORDSHIRE

LOCAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

17 April 2019

Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub

1. Introduction

The Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub was established in April 2014 and was part of the Wave 2 Growth Hub network funded by Regional Growth Fund money via Lancaster University. The Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub is funded by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (BEIS) and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) and both have monitoring and evaluation requirements on a quarterly, six monthly and annual basis. The Stoke on Trent & Staffordshire Growth Hub is a partnership model between Staffordshire County Council, Stoke on Trent City Council, and the Staffordshire and Greater Birmingham Chambers of Commerce.

The Growth Hub's main purpose is to improve the co-ordination, efficiency and effectiveness of business support across Staffordshire. The core Growth Hub consists of the Staffordshire Business Helpline and 8 geographically based qualified Business Advisors working with businesses to find them the practical assistance they need to start, grow or diversify their business. The Business Helpline answers straight-forward enquiries immediately but often businesses are signposted to specialist support such as to the Department for International Trade for exporting advice, one of the local colleges for help getting an apprentice or to a scheme to help a business take the next step such as Let's Do Mentoring. If a business has more complex needs, a referral will be made to the Growth Hub Advisors who will undertake a Business Diagnostic before making referrals to specialist schemes.

2. Performance

From 1st April 2014 to 5th March 2019 the Growth Hub has achieved the following:

- 6616 businesses engaged with the Growth Hub Advisors
- 9746 referrals made for businesses by the Hub Advisors
- 9349 businesses engaged with the Business Helpline
- 10237 signposts made for businesses by the Business Helpline
- 2204 businesses assisted from the manufacturing sector
- 1229 businesses assisted from the Information & Communication Sector
- 1348 three-hour Business Diagnostics undertaken by the Hub Advisors

The Growth Hub runs a small grant scheme which assists businesses with the purchase of capital equipment and machinery that will help them to grow their business. From the scheme launch in November 2016 up to 28th February 2019 all the £811,000 funding pot of up to £10,000 per business has been allocated to Staffordshire businesses. To date 135 new jobs have been promised in return for the grants.

3. SME Engagement - Events and Activities

The Growth Hub organises events, business support clinics and workshops across the City and County areas.

Free to attend workshops which are sponsored by the Growth Hub and provided by private and public sector partner organisations are proving to be very popular with local businesses. The organisations who support the Growth Hub in providing them specialise areas such as marketing, social media, manufacturing processes and investment readiness. Access to finance workshops prove to be the best attended and marketing workshops are the most requested. A new workshop called the 7 Secrets of Successful Business Networking was booked by 51 people and the feedback was excellent. A Growth Hub Celebration Event has been arranged for 29th March where businesses will talk about their business support journeys and an Innovation Event has been arranged in conjunction with West Midlands Universities for 20th September. A full calendar of events and workshops is available on the Growth Hub website www.stokestaffsgrowthhub.co.uk and a new booking system has been developed to make the system more efficient for businesses and the Hub staff. Events can also be viewed and booked through Eventbrite.

The Hub Advisors arrange and attend business support clinics every month on industrial and business parks and they provide businesses with pre-arranged appointments or drop in sessions to talk about their next steps.

4. Governance and Partnership Working

The Growth Hub is a managed through joint working arrangements across the four key partner organisations. Regular Operational and Steering Group Meetings ensure targets are met and progressive plans made for the future. A quarterly SME Engagement Group has been established with the LEP SME Champions to help provide the Growth Hub with more intelligence on business opinion.

The Enterprise Round Table is a bi-monthly gathering of all other partners including business support organisations working in Staffordshire and District Council Business Development Officers. With over 60 members it is an excellent platform for knowledge sharing and promoting partnership working to the benefit of local businesses. The Growth Hub Advisors also attend a bi-monthly Knowledge Session which partner organisations are invited to attend in turn to help the Advisors be as up to date as possible about available business support programmes.

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