



SOLENT
LOCAL
ENTERPRISE
PARTNERSHIP

Enquiry and Complaints Policy

Solent Local Enterprise Partnership

February 2017

TOGETHER.STRONGER

Solent LEP Enquiry and Complaints Policy

Enquiries, Comments and Compliments

The Solent LEP 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 Solent LEP

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

- 02392 68 8924
- info@solentlep.org.uk
- Enquiries
Solent LEP Office
Ground Floor
Building 1000
Lakeside North Harbour
Western Road
Portsmouth
PO6 3EZ

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

Please note that the Solent LEP 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 Solent LEP, 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 Solent Growth Hub directly in advance of awaiting a response. The Solent Growth Hub is the Solent's "One-Stop-Shop" for business information, loans, grants, advice and support. Further information and contact details for the growth hub can be found at: www.solentgrowthhub.co.uk

Comments received by the Solent LEP 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 Solent LEP, 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 Solent LEP should be directed to:

Amy Grinstead

Email: amy@carswellgould.co.uk
Direct Dial: 023 8011 9717
Tel: 023 8023 8001

Invitations

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

events@solentlep.org.uk

We will acknowledge your invitation within 5 working days of receipt and let you know when we will be able to respond. Please note that the Solent LEP 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 Solent LEP Director to speak at an event you are running, it is recommended that you contact us with as much advanced notice as possible.

Complaints

We aim to provide the best possible service to customers for the benefit of the entire Solent region. However, if we get it wrong, we want to know about it and will try to put things right as quickly as possible.

- **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 Solent LEP?

- **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 Solent LEP. We can usually sort out mistakes and misunderstandings quickly and informally at this stage.

We will acknowledge your complaint in three working days. We will investigate your complaint and we will respond within 10 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 Solent LEP senior management team at: policyandcommunicationsmanager@solentlep.org.uk

It is best to let the manager know which parts of our response at stage one you are not happy with.

We will investigate your complaint and the head of service will respond to you within 15 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.

In our response to your stage two complaint, we will provide contact details for the Chief Executive's Office – you will need to contact them if you are not happy with our response.

- **Stage three**

If you're still not happy, you can contact the Chief Executive's Office. They are independent of the service you are complaining about and can carry out a full review of your complaint. It will help the investigation if you explain why you are not satisfied and what you expect from a further review. The Chief Executive's Office will reply within 20 working days. They will let you know if there are any delays.

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 Solent LEP. We have separate procedures for a number of areas as follows:

- Complaints of a serious nature regarding concerns of illegal activity (such as fraud, theft, misappropriation of public funds or bribery), will be handled by Portsmouth City Council's Audit and Counter Fraud Unit. Any complaints of this nature should ordinarily be submitted in line with stage three of our complaints process. However, in the event that you have a complaint which you are uncomfortable sharing with the Solent LEP directly, we have established a process whereby this can be raised directly with the Audit and Counter Fraud Unit at Portsmouth City Council as the accountable body for the Solent LEP. Further information in relation this can be found in the following section of this document.

- Complaints or enquiries in relation to the Solent LEPs accountable body (Portsmouth City Council) will need to follow standard Council procedures. This will include enquiries such as Freedom of Information Requests and Environmental Information Regulation requests. Further detail on Portsmouth City Council's policies can be found at: www.portsmouth.gov.uk Information in relation to the Council's Freedom of Information Policy and how to submit a Freedom of Information request can be found at: <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/the-council/freedom-of-information.aspx> Information in relation to the Council's Environmental Information Regulation policy and how to submit a Environmental Information Regulation request can be found at: <https://www.portsmouth.gov.uk/ext/the-council/transparency/environmental-information-regulations.aspx>
- 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.
- The Solent LEP Board of Directors, Members and Corporate Governance framework adhere to the Articles of Association of Solent Local Enterprise Partnership Limited. The Company's Articles of Association are available at: www.solentlep.org.uk/uploads/documents/Solent_LEP_Articles_of_Association.pdf. Any enquiry or complaint in relation to the conduct of Directors, Members or associated Governance processes (such as LEP Panels or Panel Members) should be directed to:

Richard Jones
 Head of Policy, Communications and Partner Engagement
 Solent Local Enterprise Partnership

02392 834 893

policyandcommunicationsmanager@solentlep.org.uk

Head of Policy, Communications and Partner Engagement
 Solent LEP Office
 Ground Floor
 Building 1000
 Lakeside North Harbour
 Western Road
 Portsmouth
 PO6 3EZ

Please note that complaints or enquiries of this nature will be shared with the Solent LEP's Company Secretary at Paris Smith LLP.

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).

Portsmouth City Council Audit and Counter Fraud Unit

The Solent LEP is a Limited Company and all public funding flows through the accounts of Portsmouth City Council as the Accountable Body for the Solent LEP. Further information on this relationship and how public funding is administered is available in our published [Assurance Framework](#).

Whilst the Solent LEP is not in direct receipt of any public funds, we recognise our key role in administering public funds and are committed to working with our Accountable Body to ensure that appropriate policies are in place.

In our role directing public funding, we have a duty to cooperate with our colleagues at Portsmouth City Council, to protect the public resources we are responsible for. Both the Solent LEP and Portsmouth City Council take this responsibility seriously, and expects everyone acting on its behalf to do the same.

The Solent LEP and council are committed to achieving the highest possible standards of openness, probity and accountability and the highest possible standards of financial integrity are expected from LEP Board Directors, Panel Members, LEP and Council staff, and wider partners that do business with the LEP.

To achieve this aim we have a published this enquiry and complaints policy. In most instances, any concerns can be dealt with in line with our Complaints policy which allows us to quickly and fairly sort out any mistake or misunderstanding which may have taken place.

Complaints of a serious nature regarding concerns of illegal activity (such as fraud, theft, misappropriation of public funds or bribery), will be handled by Portsmouth City Council's Audit and Counter Fraud Unit.

We encourage anyone with genuine concerns of illegal activity (such as fraud, theft, misappropriation of public funds or bribery) to raise these with us immediately, including members of the public, representatives from external organisations, staff, directors and panel members. The earlier a concern is raised, the easier it is to resolve.

Any complaints of this nature should ordinarily be submitted in line with stage three of our complaints process. However, in the event that you have a complaint which you are uncomfortable sharing with the Solent LEP directly, we have established a process whereby this can be raised directly with the Audit and Counter Fraud Unit at Portsmouth City Council as the accountable body for the Solent LEP.

What to do if you have concerns regarding illegal activity

If you have any concerns of a serious nature which you wish to raise outside of our usual enquiries and complaints policy, you can raise these with the Audit and Counter Fraud Unit at Portsmouth City Council.

You do not need to have firm evidence before raising a concern, but we do need as much information as possible.

Provided that you raise the matter honestly, it does not matter if you are mistaken. Anyone raising concerns in good faith will be protected and your confidentiality can be protected unless that is impossible under the law.

You can of course raise any matter anonymously, but if you do not tell us who you are it will be much more difficult for us to look into the matter. It means we will not be able to clarify our understanding of the issues raised, or able to protect your position, or to let you know the outcome. We also will not be able to provide you with the same support and assurances.

Reporting any concerns is easy. You can contact the Chief Internal Auditor at Portsmouth City Council who is independent from the Solent LEP team and will be able to investigate the matter for you.

Portsmouth City Council Chief Internal Auditor:

- elizabeth.goodwin@portsmouthcc.gov.uk
- 023 92 83 4682

If you have any personal interest in the matter, we do ask that you tell us at the outset.

How we will handle the matter

Once you have raised your concern we will acknowledge that it has been received and confirm our understanding of the issues raised, to ensure that your concern is fully understood.

Initial enquiries will then be made to decide whether an investigation is appropriate and, if so, what form it should take. If we think your concern falls more properly within the Solent LEPs standard Complaints Policy, we will tell you.

If deemed appropriate, the concern raised may be:

- Investigated by Audit & Counter Fraud
- Referred to the Police
- Referred to Portsmouth City Councils External Auditor
- The subject of an independent inquiry
- A combination of the above

While we cannot guarantee that we will respond to all matters in the way that you might wish, we will handle the matter fairly and properly. We will not be able to disclose specific details of how this will be achieved. We will however give you limited feedback on the outcome of any investigation. Please note, that we will not be able to tell you about disciplinary or legal action, when it infringes a duty of confidence we owe to third parties.

The Solent LEP and Portsmouth City Council in issuing this policy are mindful of our responsibility under both the Data Protection and Freedom of Information Acts. These pieces of legislation impose an obligation on us to allow access to information held in relation to such investigations (subject to legal exemptions) whilst protecting the rights of individuals whom the data is about.