

Staffordshire LINK: Complaints Policy

1. Purpose

Staffordshire LINK is committed to investigating complaints promptly and thoroughly. A complaint is defined as a clear expression of dissatisfaction about the standard of LINK service, the behaviour of a LINK participant or the LINK organisation as a whole.

To gain and maintain credibility with the wider public which the LINK serves and is accountable to, it is vital that there are simple and transparent processes for making constructive use of complaints in order to learn and improve.

Staffordshire LINK will:

- Deal with complaints efficiently and fairly
- Keep complainants fully informed of progress relating to their complaint
- Seek to achieve a resolution which is satisfactory to both the complainant and Staffordshire LINK

2. Informal Process

Sometimes, misunderstandings can occur and, in these cases, the LINK wishes to resolve issues and settle complaints efficiently and informally and it is hoped that the vast majority of concerns can be dealt with by way of an informal process. If this is not the case, then the process for lodging formal complaints is followed.

3. Formal Process

a. Lodging a Complaint

- Complaints about Staffordshire LINK, any of its participants or participant organisations should, where possible, be made in writing and forwarded to the Co-ordinating Group via the LINK Support Team
- Complaints about the Chair of the Co-ordinating Group should, where possible, be made in writing to the LINK Support Team and will be referred to the Local Authority Lead at Staffordshire County Council
- Complaints about the LINK organisation as a whole should, where possible, be made in writing to the LINK Support Team and will be referred to the Local Authority Lead at Staffordshire County Council
- Complaints about the Host organisation staff should be made to the Chief Executive of the Host organisation and will be dealt with through the Host organisation's own complaints procedure
- Complaints about the Host organisation should be made to the Local Authority Lead at Staffordshire County Council.

b. How the Staffordshire LINK deals with complaints

Where possible, individuals should make their complaint in writing so that the LINK has a formal written record of the complaint. If a complainant is unable to write to the LINK, other arrangements will be made to ensure equality of access to the complaints process.

Stage 1

Step 1

- The complaint will be recorded by the LINK Support Team. Receipt of the complaint will be acknowledged in writing within 5 working days by the Support Team. It will then be referred to the Legislation, policy and governance lead of the Co-ordinating Group for consideration.

Step 2

- The appointed representative will make the initial decision on whether an investigation is appropriate. If it is, the form of investigation and timescale will be agreed and communicated in writing to all parties concerned.
- If the complaint relates to a LINK participant they will be informed of the nature of the complaint and given an opportunity to put forward their own case at an interview arranged at a mutually convenient time (LINK Standards of Conduct policy and procedure applies)
- A full investigation of the circumstances of the complaint will be carried out by the Panel of the Co-ordinating Group, supported by the LINK Support Team and written record will be kept of these proceedings.

Step 3

- A response will be sent to the complainant within twenty working days. Recorded delivery will be used for this notification.
- A letter will also be sent to the participant concerned detailing the actions that have been agreed by the Co-ordinating Group.

Stage 2

- If a complainant is not satisfied with the Co-ordinating Group's decision, an independent facilitator will be offered to provide mediation.