

Growth Hub Newsletter

September 2025

Support for your business

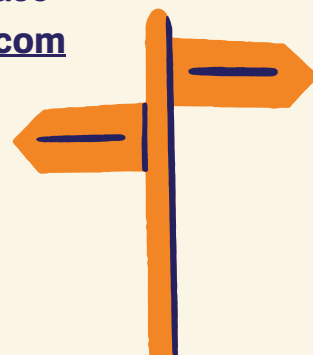
We offer SMEs within Oxfordshire fully funded businesses support. Complete the Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Support Tool today, to get started and receive your business support plan signposting you to profit boosting, market growing business support.

Get started...

Complete Enterprise Oxfordshire's Business Support Tool:

[Business Support Tool](#)

If you have any questions or requests for support please email us directly at: **business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com**



Marketplace and Celebration Event 2025

With thanks to our Headline Sponsor, Darcica Logistics, as well as our award sponsors and event supporters and Headline speaker Velocity Cycle Couriers.

We are looking forward to welcoming over 250 businesses to this year's Marketplace and Celebration Event. This year marks the second year of our Marketplace and Celebration which is made possible by the generous support of our clients as award sponsors, event supporters and marketplace exhibitors.

We extend our thanks to everyone who has engaged with and supported the event, your contributions are invaluable. We also appreciate the numerous business nominations received for the awards and are delighted by the enthusiastic response we have received.

[Marketplace and Celebration 2025](#)

[Marketplace Stall Holders](#)

[Our Sponsors](#)

It is our intention to continue hosting the Marketplace and Celebration event annually, designed to highlight the achievements, ambitions, and collaboration of Oxfordshire's business community. If your organisation is interested in becoming a sponsor or supporter of this exciting and vibrant event, please contact us at: business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com and we'd be delighted to discuss options with you.

Tickets for this event have now closed and we are delighted to say we have received a huge amount of interest. If you would like to attend but have not booked a ticket, please email business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com



Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Directory

Join our fast growing Oxfordshire Business Directory.

Enterprise Oxfordshire have developed a Business Directory platform for businesses to support each other and promote themselves.

[Business Directory](#)

Oxfordshire Networking Groups

Looking to make valuable connections and boost your business success? Discover the best ways to find networking groups and events near you.

[Oxfordshire Networking Groups](#)

Other Resources available to businesses

As part of Enterprise Oxfordshire's ongoing commitment to provide the best possible service to Oxfordshire's SMEs we always try ensure that other services and grant opportunities which may be available to business within Oxfordshire are highlighted and signposted on our 'External Resources' website page.

[External Resources](#)

Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

Aspirations Day: 13th October 2025 - Expression of Interest to Exhibit

Oxfordshire Careers Hub are running their annual careers event for students with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) on 13th October 2025 at Leonardo Royal Hotel from approximately 9:00am – 2:00pm. This event was born out of Oxfordshire special schools feeling their students needed a more bespoke and quiet careers fair type event. The event is now held annually and is attended by most of the special schools in Oxfordshire, with over 200 students attending last year.

Events like this are key to supporting this group of students to become successful adults. Students with SEND are more likely than their peers to become NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) at post-16 and post-18. There has been some interesting research around the positive impact of work on people's quality of life and mortality. The statistics for adults with SEND who are in employment are poor - 65% of people in the UK with learning disabilities want to work, yet only 4.8% are actually employed.

The Aspirations Day gives these students a better idea about the progression opportunities available to them in Oxfordshire, which helps them and their support networks to make decisions around their next steps after school/college. The students attending will be around Year 10 (14-15 years old) and have a range of abilities and skills. Many will not obtain GCSEs and so Oxfordshire Careers Hub are looking for a variety of organisations who can offer opportunities, information and support to them.

Together with the schools, Oxfordshire Careers Hub will be pulling together some information to help prepare and support exhibitors to have the most meaningful interactions with the students.

Expression of Interest

If you have any questions, please email eleanor.gordon-martin@oxfordshire.gov.uk.



Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

Apprenticeship Levy Pledge Initiative

Enterprise Oxfordshire is excited to announce the extension of its Social Contract Programme to September 2025 - including the popular Apprenticeship Levy Pledge Initiative.

The initiative which has seen just under £5m in pledges to date supports apprenticeship levy-paying businesses within the county to commit their unused funds to support other Oxfordshire businesses to take on apprentices. To date, just under £4m of these funds have been optimised to facilitate new apprenticeship starts within the county.

Employers in the county with an annual pay bill of £3m+ pay 0.5% of this as an apprenticeship levy and can pledge up to 50% of their levy funds annually. Levy can be pledged to Oxfordshire based small and medium sized enterprises (and other levy paying business who have fully utilised their funds), charities and social enterprises to help fund apprenticeship training and assessment.

The programme offers support and guidance, which includes helping employers to pledge their unused apprenticeship levy and enabling smaller organisations to access these funds in order to start or develop their apprenticeship schemes. This support is already pre-funded so is at no cost to the employer.

Enterprise Oxfordshire are urging apprenticeship levy-paying businesses to pledge their unused levy, following the extension to the scheme and reminding those that have already pledged that it is possible to re-pledge further funds.

SMEs, social enterprises and charities in the county that are interested in taking on an apprentice or using apprenticeships to upskill their existing teams or fill skills gaps are also urged to engage with the programme, as they may be eligible to receive available transferred funds.

For more information on the Apprenticeship Levy Pledge Initiative and to find out if your business could be eligible to pledge or receive funds please contact:
skills@enterpriseoxfordshire.com

Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

Driving Talent Forward: Darcica Logistics' Apprenticeship Journey

In the heart of Bicester, Darcica Logistics is not only redefining sustainable logistics but also reshaping how small businesses approach workforce development. Founded in 2020 and built on strong family values, Darcica has rapidly grown into a respected name in storage, fulfilment and delivery services. But behind the electric vans and green awards lies a quieter revolution - one powered by apprenticeships.

Discovering apprenticeships: a strategic step forward

Darcica's apprenticeship journey began with a clear vision: to invest in people as much as in infrastructure. The company's Finance and HR Manager, Dominique Southwick, is a shining example of this ethos. Starting as Office Manager with Darcica in its infancy, Dominique has been integral to the company's growth. In turn, Darcica supported Dominique to further develop her knowledge and skills through undertaking a Level 3 Assistant Accountant apprenticeship in January 2022, training with BPP, which she successfully passed in July 2024.

As Founder and Director Anthony Tattersall shared, the decision to upskill current staff through apprenticeships was driven by a desire to 'grow our own talent' and 'future-proof the business'.

Professional and personal growth: a transformational journey

Dominique's apprenticeship has been a catalyst for both professional and personal development. Professionally, she has mastered new technical skills and taken on new responsibilities, including preparing monthly management accounts for board review and managing the company's bank account and cashflow. Her initiative led to the creation of a cashflow spreadsheet, implementation of Xero for invoice tracking and the introduction of a staff e-platform for HR and wellbeing.

Personally, Dominique has grown in confidence and adaptability. She now contributes actively in board meetings, confidently discussing financial figures -something she once found daunting. Her communication and problem-solving skills have flourished and she's become a key support to both the finance and transport teams. Her ability to adapt to the company's rapid growth and evolving challenges has made her a unifying force within the team.

Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

Apprenticeships in action: building skills and careers

Enterprise Oxfordshire's Social Contract Programme provides expert, impartial advice to help smaller employers access apprenticeship levy funds that have been pledged by levy-paying employers to support them with apprenticeship training costs. Melanie Tattersall, Darcica's Director of Sustainability & Communications, took up the offer of support to further develop apprenticeships at Darcica. Through the initiative, Darcica was matched with pledging employers and supported with sourcing suitable training providers.

As a result of this support and an apprenticeship levy pledge from B&Q, Dominique is about to start the next step in her apprenticeship journey, embarking on a Level 7 Accountancy Apprenticeship with BPP, the highest-level apprenticeship in the field, which is equivalent to a Master's degree.

Further support from Enterprise Oxfordshire and an apprenticeship levy pledge from the BBC has also enabled 5 other members of the Darcica team to develop their knowledge and skills, with 4 team members undertaking Level 5 Operations Management Apprenticeship and another team member embarking on a Level 3 Business Administration Apprenticeship, all learning in partnership with Ignite Training.

In addition to upskilling current staff, Darcica is also using apprenticeships to bring new talent into the business, having also recruited a new team member onto a Level 3 Customer Service Apprenticeship.



Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

Business benefits: more than just skills

For Darcica, the apprenticeship model has delivered far more than operational support. It has enhanced retention, as apprentices are deeply embedded in the company's culture; improved efficiency, introduced new ideas as the learning that apprentices undertake is applied in the workplace, boosted staff morals and supported sustainability.

Anthony and Melanie encourage other small businesses to embrace apprenticeships to develop and grow. Anthony advises: "Start small, but start. The support is there - from grants to training providers - and the return on investment is real."

Melanie adds: "There is such a variety of apprenticeships and training providers out there that you can find one that fits. Apprenticeships are a fantastic way of developing people from within in a way that's relatable to the job and at a more reasonable cost than other training options."

From the apprentice perspective, Dominique says: "Just go for it - I haven't looked back! You can gain hands-on experience and build new skills. Whilst you do have to put some work in, it's all worth it to achieve your goals and help improve your motivation and productivity whilst at the same time gaining industry-recognised qualifications. Your training provider will support you every step of the way, you'll meet new people in a similar position to you and the skills you'll learn will help with your career path. Doing an apprenticeship has given me more confidence, helped me to grow and enabled me to take on new responsibilities in my role. It's a way you can give back to your company you love working for."



Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

Looking ahead

With plans to continue expanding their apprenticeship programme and a growing reputation as a green logistics leader, Darcica is proving that small businesses can lead big change. Their journey is a testament to what's possible when purpose meets opportunity - and when businesses invest in people as their most valuable asset.

In 2025, Darcica proudly celebrated its 5-year anniversary, marking a milestone in its mission to deliver sustainable logistics and nurture local talent. As they look ahead, apprenticeships remain central to their strategy for growth, innovation and community impact.

[Read the Full Story](#)

Support for your business

Businesses interested in accessing apprenticeship support from Enterprise Oxfordshire are encouraged to contact the team at skills@enterpriseoxfordshire.com.

Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

OxGROW Virtual Mentoring and Learning Platform

Enterprise Oxfordshire are calling for individuals within the county who are looking for support to find employment or change career direction to sign up to their free online virtual mentoring and learning platform 'OxGROW' and connect with local business experts.

The news comes as the age restriction to access the service is lowered to 16, to support as many people as possible who may be struggling to find, or enter, employment in the county.

The platform produced in collaboration with virtual platform hosts, Connectr – provides free employment advice and support to individuals aged 16 and above, connecting them with professional mentors from different sectors in Oxfordshire. Mentors provide text-based, online mentoring tailored to individual needs, offering insights into the local job market and working environments.

Through the platform, mentees can choose multiple mentors based on needs or engage in longer-term conversations with a single mentor, access learning modules on topics like resilience, confidence building and interview skills and receive support on CV enhancement at their own pace. The certificate for completing the learning modules on the platform is recognised by the Department for Work and Pensions' Jobcentre Plus in Oxfordshire.

Kathryn Jackson – a Personal Development Coach who owns her own business in Oxfordshire – is a mentor for the programme and says of her mentoring approach: "I'll be supportive, I'll share what's in my career toolbox with you and I hope that builds confidence to take the first steps towards your goals. Sometimes we all just need that cheerleader that supports us and nudges us to take action and that might be exactly what you find in an OxGROW mentor."

OxGrow



Oxfordshire Net Zero Business Support

Visit our webpage for advice on how to make your business net zero. Read inspiring stories, find net zero support, and discover funding and grants available to support your net zero journey. Along with lots more.

[Net Zero](#)

Other Net Zero Support

Make your home more energy efficient with the Warm Homes: Local Grant
Oxfordshire County Council has been awarded government funding to help residents on a low-income make their homes more energy efficient.

Warm Homes: Local Grant is designed to provide fully funded energy efficiency upgrades for homeowners and private tenants on a low household income and at risk of fuel poverty. These upgrades, known as 'retrofitting', could help to reduce your energy bills and make your home more comfortable to live in.

You may qualify for the funding if:

- Your home has an Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) rating between D and G
If you've had an EPC survey in the last 10 years, you should be able to find your rating online:

[Find Your Rating](#)

And either:

- You have a total household annual income of £36,000 or less (before housing costs/bills)

Or:

- You receive a means-tested benefit, subject to approval.

Oxfordshire Net Zero Business Support

The following benefits are eligible for this programme:

- Housing Benefit
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income Support
- Pension Credit (savings and guarantee)
- Universal Credit

If your household income exceeds £36,000 annually, you may qualify instead for alternative schemes, and please contact the team.

If you have any questions or require further information contact Oxfordshire County Council's Retrofit Team: [Warm Homes: Local Grant](#) | Oxfordshire County Council) or register your interest here: [Register an interest in energy efficiency schemes - Oxfordshire County Council](#).

Oxfordshire Net Zero Business Support

Go electric with a new Government Electric Car Grant & extension to grants for electric vans and trucks!

If you are looking to buy a new electric car for yourself or your business, you could now save £1,500 - £3,750 on the purchase price, under a new £650 million Electric Car Grant (ECG) launched in July. To qualify, vehicles must be brand new, not second hand, and priced at £37,000 or below. You don't need to apply for the grant; the seller will apply this as a discount. A list of the first vehicles approved for the grant is here (as of 5th August) with more models to be added in the coming weeks:

Approved Vehicles

And there's further good news for electric vans and trucks. Government has announced in August an extension to the existing grant scheme for these vehicles until at least 2027. This scheme provides discounts of up to £2,500 for small vans, £5,000 for large vans, £16,000 for small trucks, and £25,000 for large trucks, to support the uptake of electric vans and trucks by businesses and fleets. A list of eligible vehicles is here:

Eligible Vehicles

Are you thinking about installing electric charging points at your business? The Workplace Charging Scheme helps with the upfront costs of buying and installing one or more electric car charge points. The grant covers up to 75% of the total cost of the purchase and installation (inclusive of VAT), up to a maximum of £350 per socket, and up to 40 sockets per applicant.

Oxfordshire Net Zero Business Support

Made Smarter - Funding and support for SME manufacturers and makers

Did you know Made Smarter can help you access funding, support and training to help your manufacturing business adopt new technologies and boost competitiveness?

If you're ready to take your business forward by adopting digital technologies, but are looking for the support, advice and grants to help you do it, the gov-funded Made Smarter programme could be the solution you've been looking for.

Made Smarter South East's team of experts will provide advice and support to manufacturing businesses and makers to help you switch to advanced and automated technologies to improve productivity, reduce downtime, and boost competitiveness. And match-funding up to £20k is available to help you purchase the technology you need.

Come along to a 45-minute webinar on 25 September to find out more:

[Webinar Tickets](#)

Or, if you're ready to start your technology adoption right away, sign up here:

[Sign Up](#)



**Made Smarter South East
Business Briefing webinar.**

**Funding & support for
manufacturers and makers
across all sectors in the
South East**

WHEN: 25 September, 12.30-1.15pm

**MADE
SMARTER**
South East

Oxfordshire Business Support

As part of our ongoing commitment to provide the best possible service to Oxfordshire's SMEs, we always ensure that other services and opportunities which may be available to business within the county are highlighted and signposted.

Business & IP Centre Oxfordshire

At the Oxford Westgate Library

Supporting Oxfordshire residents to start, protect and grow their own business.



[Learn More](#)

OSEP

OSEP provides support, empowerment, and advocacy for local social enterprises, enterprising charities, and purposeful businesses in Oxfordshire. Email: hello@osep.org.uk



[Learn More](#)

District Council Support for Businesses

[Cherwell District Council](#)

[Oxford City Council](#)

[South Oxfordshire District Council](#)

[Vale of White Horse District Council](#)

[West Oxfordshire District Council](#)

The Oxford Magazine: What's on in Oxfordshire

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email: business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com**