ENTERPRISE OXFORDSHIRE Business

Growth Hub Newsletter

September 2026

Support for your business

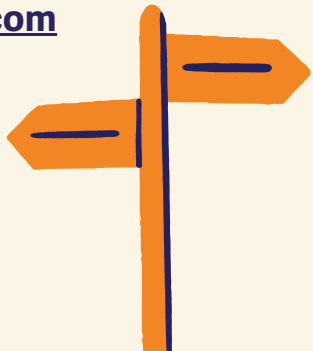
We provide fully funded support for every stage of business, from start-up to growth. This includes one to one support with one of our expert advisors, facilitated workshops and webinars, peer groups and much more.

Get started...

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:

Business Support Tool

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



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Help shape the future of business support in Oxfordshire.



We're reviewing activity delivered by the Oxfordshire Growth Hub and would like your input.

The following short survey takes around 10 minutes to complete and will help ensure future business support is shaped by what Oxfordshire businesses and entrepreneurs actually need.

From April 2027, Enterprise Oxfordshire and its partners will introduce a new approach to business support. Your feedback will help us create services that complement national provision, deliver real value and support local businesses to thrive.

All responses will be treated confidentially and will only be seen by Enterprise Oxfordshire and our independent reviewers, EPM Consultancy.

Your business will not be identified in any published findings without your permission.

Thank you for helping shape the future of business support in Oxfordshire.

Take Part in the Survey

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Unlock Your Leadership Potential at an Exclusive Oxfordshire Retreat

Leaders must think differently and focus on the leadership issues that shape growth. We've launched '**Personal Leadership: Expanding Possibilities**' – a two day, one night residential retreat for Oxfordshire SME owners and senior leaders with three or more staff – for this exact reason.

With a strong human leadership focus, it is built around real challenges, honest conversations and creating traction, not just another set of leadership tips.



Taking place at the **Sudbury House Hotel** in Faringdon on **29-30 September 2026**, the retreat is designed for a small cohort of 12-15 leaders looking for renewed energy, grounded confidence and an expanded sense of what's possible.

Why attend?

- Gain fresh perspectives on leadership and growth
- Tackle real-world challenges with expert guidance
- Connect with like-minded SME leaders
- Leave with practical actions, renewed confidence and a stronger network

The difference with this business retreat? Our business support is fully-funded - delegates only pay a fee of £268 for this support package to cover accommodation and catering.

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The Personal Leadership: Expanding Possibilities experience will be delivered by **Duncan Skelton, an award winning leadership coach who works with senior leaders and founders** committed to stretching what's possible in their organisations.

Take two days to transform how you lead. Join a unique residential retreat designed to help Oxfordshire business leaders step back, think differently and return with renewed focus, confidence and practical next steps. Secure your place today.

Find out more about the Retreat

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Turn Ambition into Action with New Growth Support

Enterprise Oxfordshire is launching four exciting support packages this September and October for **established Oxfordshire businesses ready to strengthen leadership, sharpen strategy and pursue sustainable growth.**

Whether your next opportunity is closer to home or overseas, these practical, expert-led offers will help you turn ambition into action. **Explore international growth through tailored support focused on export readiness, target-market selection, routes to market and generating overseas sales. Or develop the commercial leadership needed to scale with confidence, covering strategic choices, pricing and sales, finance, operational resilience, team capability and accountability.**

Designed for **founders, managing directors and senior leaders**, the packages combine focused workshops, specialist advice, peer learning and real-world tools. Participants will work on live business priorities, test ideas with experienced peers and build clear, achievable plans for the months ahead.

If you are leading an established business and asking what should come next, how to grow without becoming the bottleneck, build a stronger pipeline, enter new markets or lead your team more effectively, this is your opportunity to invest dedicated time in the decisions that matter.

Places are limited. Register your interest now and make this autumn the starting point for more focused, confident growth.

Find out more here

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The nominations are in and the winner is.... you'll find out on the night!

Book Your Place at Oxfordshire's Biggest Business Celebration

Marketplace and Celebration 2026 (MAC26) is Oxfordshire's flagship business event, bringing together SMEs, innovators and leaders from across the county for an afternoon of connection and celebration.

Over 150 businesses have already booked their place - here's why you should join them.



What's on at MAC26

- The Marketplace: browse stands from over 40 local businesses, a chance to see what's happening across Oxfordshire's business community and make connections face to face
- The Awards Ceremony: be in the room as this year's winners and runners-up are revealed live on the night, across six award categories covering everything from start-ups to sustainability
- The Guest Speaker: a keynote from one of the UK's leading transformational mindset coaches

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Meet guest speaker Mark Franklin

Mark Franklin is an **award-winning mindset coach, speaker and author with over 20 years' experience helping business owners overcome the mindset barriers holding them back**. His session will explore what he calls "The Four Fears" - the most common internal blocks that stop business owners building the business, and life, they actually want. Expect a keynote that challenges how you think about your own capability, with practical takeaways you can apply straight away.

Winners and runners-up are announced on the night, so come along to celebrate Oxfordshire business success as it happens.

Whether you're looking to grow your network, learn from other business leaders, or simply enjoy an evening celebrating Oxfordshire's business community, MAC26 has something for you. It's a chance to get a room full of the county's most engaged business owners together in one place.

Book Tickets

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Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Directory

Our fast-growing Business Directory is the perfect place for you to showcase your business, connect with other local enterprises, and take advantage of the numerous opportunities that our network offers. Whether you're a small startup or an established company, listing your business in our directory can significantly enhance your visibility and reach.

The process is simple and straightforward, and our team is here to assist you every step of the way.

List your business

Oxfordshire Network Groups

Are you looking to make valuable connections and boost your business success? We have some exciting news for you! There are numerous networking groups and events happening right here in Oxfordshire that can help you expand your professional network and open new doors for your business.

The Oxfordshire Network Groups directory is a great resource for discovering the best ways to find networking groups and events near you. Whether you're looking to connect with like-minded professionals, share ideas, or simply grow your business, this is the perfect place to start.

Find out more

Other Resources Available to Businesses

As part of Enterprise Oxfordshire's unwavering commitment to deliver the best possible service to Oxfordshire's SMEs, we continuously strive to ensure that other services and grant opportunities available to businesses within Oxfordshire are highlighted and signposted on our 'External Resources' website page.

Check out our 'External Resources' page and keep updated with any new opportunities that could benefit your business.

View resources

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Enterprise Oxfordshire Business Events

Find out more about upcoming Enterprise Oxfordshire Business events, workshops and webinars designed to help your business.



OxBOoSt September

Register Here

Tuesday 1st September• 4.00pm - 5.00pm • Online

The Number 1 regular meet-up for Oxfordshire businesses who want to connect, collaborate and exchange ideas.



Post Summer Pivot: Setting Your Goals for Q4

Register Here

Thursday 3rd September • 12.30pm - 1.30pm • Online

A 30-min reset, refocus & rally for ambitious SME leaders ready to turn post-summer ideas into Q4 success.



Using AI to Grow from Local to National

Register Here

Tuesday 8th September • 9.30am - 11.30am • Online

Using AI to Grow from Local to National is an interactive workshop for ambitious Oxfordshire entrepreneurs and SME leaders who are serious about growth – and want to use AI intentionally to support that, not chase every shiny tool.

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Procurement Made Simple: What SMEs Need to Know

Register Here

Tuesday 15th September • 9.30am - 11.30am • Online

A practical 2-hour workshop helping SMEs understand public sector procurement, Procurement Act 2023 changes, and bid readiness.



Enterprise Oxfordshire Women in Business Gathering

Register Here

Wednesday 16th September • 9.30am - 12.00pm • The Spread Eagle Hotel, Thame

Enterprise Oxfordshire is pleased to be hosting another Women in Business Gathering - a high-impact networking event designed to connect, inspire, and empower women across Oxfordshire's business community.



Developing Purposeful Collaborations Between Business and Charity

Register Here

Thursday 17th September • 12.30pm - 1.30pm • Online

An online workshop for Oxfordshire small businesses, charities & impact organisations to collaborate better and create more value together.

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Identifying and Validating New Market Opportunities

Register Here

Wednesday 30th September • 9.30am - 10.45am • Online

Exploring new markets doesn't mean thinking big or going global. It often means finding fresh opportunities right in front of you, new customer groups, adjacent sectors, or untapped locations that can unlock sustainable growth.

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Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills

For more information on Enterprise Oxfordshire Skills please visit:
enterpriseoxfordshireskills.com

How the Growth and Skills Levy helps Oxfordshire employers open doors for young talent

With thousands of young people receiving exam results in August, now is a timely moment to look at how the Growth and Skills Levy could support your business to bring in new talent this year.



On 1st April, the government replaced the Apprenticeship Levy with the new Growth and Skills Levy, giving employers more flexibility over how levy funds are used to develop relevant, high-quality skills and support business.

Enterprise Oxfordshire connects levy-paying employers with businesses who could use the support:

Paying the levy? Large employers can pledge up to 50% of unused levy funds to another local business, fully covering the cost of apprenticeship training and end-point assessment.

Not paying the levy, or already used your own funds? Smaller employers, and even levy-payers who've exhausted their own funds, can receive a transfer and take on an apprentice or upskill existing staff at no cost.

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Transferred funds can support a brand new apprentice start, an existing employee moving into a new apprenticeship, or an apprentice changing employer partway through their training.

Enterprise Oxfordshire has helped secure and redistribute levy funding right across the county, with £7m in levy funds secured and 529 apprenticeship starts fully funded.

Our team supports both donor and receiving employers at every step, from matching suitable partners to setting up the transfer on the Apprenticeship Service.

Whether you're ready to take on your first apprentice or you have unused levy funds sitting idle, results day is a great time to start the conversation.

FIND OUT MORE

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Opportunities to support students with SEND

If you would like to support young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) i.e. learning difficulties, disabilities, or additional needs that may require extra support in education, training or work and help them find out about the world of work and the opportunities available to them in Oxfordshire, here are two events coming up in the autumn for you to get involved with.

Aspirations Day

Come along to our Aspirations Day on 12 October at Leonardo Royal Hotel and host an interactive stand so that young people can find out more about what you do. Please complete this form to express an interest in attending, exhibiting at, or supporting the event.

After attending the event in 2025, one exhibitor said: "This is my third consecutive year attending the Aspirations Day and the enthusiasm and engagement of the young people in attendance was brilliant. It was once again a very rewarding experience, as the young people seemed extremely engaged and were very happy approaching the stand to ask questions." Read more about the 2025 Aspirations Fair in this article.

Reverse Recruitment Fair

Alongside Oxfordshire County Council, we are also hosting a 'Reverse Recruitment Fair' at the Kassam Stadium on 29 November. This is another opportunity to engage with young people with SEND and showcase the opportunities you can offer when they leave education. Download information about the event.

A Reverse Recruitment Fair turns the usual recruitment model around. Instead of employers promoting vacancies, young people lead the conversation by sharing their skills, interests and ambitions. Employers are invited to listen, ask questions, and explore opportunities such as work experience, supported internships, apprenticeships or future employment. Taking part helps your organisation connect with local talent, strengthen inclusive recruitment practice and gain confidence in recognising and supporting the talents of young people with SEND.

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We need you! Help us inform and inspire the next generation



As the new academic year starts, we are looking for volunteer professionals to support the work of Oxfordshire Careers Hub by informing and inspiring local young people to help them decide on their best next step. This could be by attending a careers event, giving a talk or offering a workplace visit, for example. To find out more, please get in touch at skills@enterpriseoxfordshire.com.

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Connect to Work: Supporting inclusive recruitment



Connect to Work is a voluntary employment support programme funded by the Department for Work and Pensions and delivered locally by Oxfordshire County Council in partnership with Enterprise Oxfordshire and Oxfordshire Employment. The programme helps people who face barriers to employment – including those with disabilities, long-term health conditions, caring responsibilities, experience of homelessness, care leavers, veterans, refugees and other disadvantaged groups – to find, secure and sustain meaningful work.

For employers, Connect to Work offers an opportunity to access a wider and more diverse talent pool while helping to create a more inclusive local labour market. Participants receive tailored support before and after entering employment, including help with confidence building, workplace adjustments and ongoing in-work support, helping employers recruit and retain talent successfully. It can also support existing staff.

How employers can support the programme:

- Offer employment opportunities to programme participants
- Promote Connect to Work through your business networks
- Share information with colleagues, customers and community contacts who may know eligible individuals
- Invite the Connect to Work team to employer events, careers fairs or networking activities, or contact them to find out more (CtWPartners@oxfordshire.gov.uk)

By getting involved, employers can help local people overcome barriers to work while strengthening Oxfordshire's workforce and supporting inclusive economic growth.

FIND OUT MORE

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Oxfordshire Net Zero Business Support

SMEs across Oxfordshire play a vital role in helping the county reach net zero emissions by 2050. To make this journey easier, Enterprise Oxfordshire have created a one stop resource hub offering guidance, tools and funding opportunities – no matter your sector or where you are on your sustainability journey.

We believe that with the right support and resources, every business can make a meaningful contribution to a greener future. Let's work together to achieve net zero and make Oxfordshire a leader in sustainability.

Find Out More

Climate Action Oxfordshire

Find out what sustainability support for Oxfordshire SMEs is available, including free energy assessments, match funding for upgrades, practical checklists, local and national resources, and grant schemes to cut costs and emissions.

Find Out More

Low Carbon Hub

Low Carbon Hub work with businesses and organisations across Oxfordshire on their energy efficiency, helping them to save money on their energy bills as well as generate clean energy.

Find Out More

Cherwell District Council – Sustainable Practices

The latest greenhouse gas reports show that almost 25% of the Cherwell District's $CO2^{e}$ emissions come from commerce and industry. To address this, CDC are considering conducting short knowledge-gathering workshops with local business owners. By understanding what prevents individuals or organisations from becoming greener, CDC can address challenges such as financial constraints, lack of information, or practical difficulties. This knowledge will enable the council to provide more tailored support through grants, educational resources, or policy changes.

Find Out More

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Other Net Zero Support

Business Climate Hub

The UK Business Climate Hub provides sustainability advice for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The Hub is a shared endeavour, developed with the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ), the SME Climate Hub and business organisations, energy networks, high street banks and professional bodies. Alongside a range of free tools and resources, the SME Climate Hub hosts the SME Climate Commitment.

The SME Climate Hub has developed a guide to assist businesses with their procurement: Engaging Suppliers to Reduce Emissions - SME Climate Hub.
The guide encourages suppliers to take action on climate change and includes actions relating to securing management commitment, setting targets for supplier commitments, public commitment to supplier engagement and estimating emissions in supply chain.

Find Out More

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Oxfordshire Business Support

Thrive at Work Oxfordshire

A free support programme developed to assist Oxfordshire-based workplaces passionate about creating happy, healthy, and inclusive environments where organisations and employees can thrive. Any Oxfordshire-based workplace with three or more employees is eligible to access the programme. Participating organisations will gain access to a range of free support, including a structured wellbeing framework leading to certification, training webinars, staff wellbeing surveys, policy templates, practical resources, and tailored advice from workplace wellbeing specialists.

Find Out More

Carterton Business Breakfast

Local Businesses to Carterton are invited to attend the next Carterton Business Breakfast taking place on Thursday 24 September 8am – 9am at Carterton Town Hall. The breakfast provides an opportunity for businesses to come together, share ideas, build connections and hear the latest developments affecting the Carterton area.

Find Out More

Match My Project Oxford

Match My Project Oxford City Council invites you to a special networking morning on Tuesday 6 October 2026 to explore how local businesses and community organisations can collaborate to promote social value. Discover the **Match My Project platform**, hear real success stories, and meet potential partners. Whether you're looking to offer support or need support for your projects, this event is for you.

Find Out More

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Business Growth Service

The Business Growth Service is accessible via a new digital platform which acts as a single-entry point for tailored support.

Whether you're looking for funding, mentoring, or export advice, the platform helps you find what you need quickly and easily.

Enterprise Oxfordshire Business is integrating the Business Growth Service into our communications and promotional activities, making it easier for local businesses to discover and access support. This builds on our existing offer, which has already delivered significant impact.

Learn More

Defence Office for Small Business Growth (DOSBG)

The Defence Office for Small Business Growth is the Ministry of Defence's focal point for improving how small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) access, compete for, and grow within the UK defence supply chain.

Learn More

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MADE SMARTER

Nearly 300 South East manufacturers have already benefited from the Made Smarter South East programme last year. Manufacturers and makers - don't miss out!

Made Smarter is a government-funded push to drive growth in South East manufacturing SMEs, helping boost productivity and increase their competitive edge through the adoption of new industrial technologies. After last year's successes, the programme has been extended for a further year to March 31st 2027.

Once you've registered for the Made Smarter programme, you will be assigned a Technical Expert who will provide personalised advice and support to your manufacturing business. They will help you adopt advanced and automated technologies. Made Smarter also provides up to £20k in grant funding, covering up to 50%, along with specialist advice, leadership and workforce champion training, and paid internships.

Whatever you make, make it smarter.

To understand how joining the Made Smarter programme could help your business, read about how South East manufacturers are accelerating the adoption of artificial intelligence (AI), automation and digital tools through Made Smarter South East's Digital Internship programme.

Find Out More

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Business & IP Centre Oxfordshire

At the Oxford Westgate Library
Supporting Oxfordshire residents to start, protect and grow their own business.

Learn More

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC)

The Office of the Small Business Commissioner (OSBC) is an independent public body established by Government under the Enterprise Act 2016 to tackle overdue payments and unfavourable payment practices in the private sector.

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

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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

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Non Business News/Events:

Pathways to Work Innovation Fund

DWP has launched a UK wide Pathways to Work Innovation Fund of up to £60m over 2 years to support new approaches that help disabled people and people with long-term health conditions move towards, enter, and stay in or progress in work. The fund is open to public, private and voluntary sector organisations, and is intended to support ambitious, creative and innovative ideas, not simply more of the same employment support. The first bidding window is expected to open in September and close in October, with decisions early in 2027 and projects starting early 2027. The second bidding round is expected in early 2027.

Learn More

Grassroots Music Fund

Oxford City Council has £20,000 available as part of the Grassroots Music Fund. There are two strands divided into Venues and Musicians & Promoters. The goal is for venues to be able to connect with and support musicians & promoters by providing space and reducing costs in Oxford. To find out more and see if you are eligible, click here: Grassroots Music Fund | Oxford City Council

Learn More

Music Growth Fund

Grants of between £1,000 and £100,000 are available through Arts Council England's Music Growth Fund to support sustainable and inclusive growth across the UK music sector. Arts Council England is the national development agency for creativity and culture, investing public money to support arts, museums, libraries and cultural activity.

Learn More

South Oxfordshire District Council Community Grants

The council provide grants to voluntary and community organisations to help build thriving communities and improve the quality of life for the residents of South Oxfordshire, through projects that; create thriving, healthy and inclusive communities, provides infrastructure that meets local need, and that take action on climate change and nature recovery. Grants currently open include Performing Arts Grant Fund and Fund for nature recovery projects.

Learn More

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New Employers:
What you need to know about the National Minimum Wage

Taking on your first workers is a milestone moment for any new business. It's important to pay your workers correctly from day one, as this helps build trust, demonstrates your commitment to treating workers fairly, and lays the foundations for a positive and productive working relationship.

The good news is there's plenty of guidance and support available to help you get things right. Like HMRC's free webinar for new employers on GoTo Stage – just search 'National Minimum Wage new employers' on the home page. This will tell you all you need to know, including information about; Payments & Deductions, Apprentices, what is classed as working time, salary sacrifice and Record Keeping.

National Minimum Wage (NMW) is more than just a rate, it's a calculation

A worker's hourly rate may be above the National Minimum Wage, but deductions, unpaid working time or other factors can still mean they are underpaid.

Here are some of the things to remember to make sure you get the calculation right.

NMW rates

These are the minimum hourly rates all businesses must pay workers in the UK.

New Rates *The rates are updated every April, and it's your responsibility to keep up with these changes to ensure your workers receive the correct pay.*

	21 and over	18 to 20	Under 18	Apprentice*
April 2026	£12.71	£10.85	£8.00	£8.00

**Apprentices are entitled to the apprentice rate if they're in the first year of their apprenticeship or under 19 during their apprenticeship. Otherwise, they get the same rate for their age as other workers.*

Not everything you pay counts towards the NMW

If a worker gets tips or shift premiums, or you refund their expenses, this is on top of their NMW pay. If you make deductions from pay for things like uniforms or training – or workers pay for these themselves – their hourly rate may fall below the NMW.

Look at the employer checklist on GOV.UK here to make sure you don't get caught out, or search 'a checklist for employers' on GOV.uk

Getting the NMW wrong isn't just an admin issue

HMRC can carry out checks at any time. If you underpay your workers, you will have to repay arrears straight away, and you may;

- have to pay a penalty
- be publicly named by the government.

It's important to keep records to show you're paying the NMW correctly

Good record keeping helps demonstrate that you're paying the National Minimum Wage correctly. It safeguards both you and your workers and can make any HMRC review much simpler. You must keep your records for 6 years.

More information

For general advice about NMW, you can call Acas who offer this free and confidentially. You can call the helpline on 0300 123 1100 or visit acas.org.uk – translation services are available.

Understanding National Minimum Wage - a guide for new employers | GoToStage.com

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The Oxford Magazine: What's on in Oxfordshire

Learn More

Oxfordshire County Council News

Learn More

Experience Oxfordshire: What's on

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If you have anything you would like sharing in future editions, please email: business@enterpriseoxfordshire.com