

There's a wide range of Government help for new and developing businesses — ranging from professional advice and training to grants and other forms of financial help. The precise type of assistance can depend on where you're based

Government advice and support for your business

Make Business Link your first port of call

The best way of finding out about the support and advice available to you in your local area in England is to contact Business Link. It gives access to impartial, expert and practical business advice for people planning to set up in business or who want to improve their business's performance and direction

Business Link provides you with a range of information and support services to suit your individual needs. It connects businesses with the right people, skills and knowledge to help them succeed — and has strong links with other business-support organisations and networks if it can't provide the service directly.

Business Link is partly funded by the Government to provide you with the help and advice you need, as your business needs it — both when you are starting out and later when you want to develop your business. Initial advice is provided free of charge, with other services charged at affordable rates.

You should contact Business Link at an early stage in the development of your business idea: it will know about the support available and the experts who can help you get your business started.

Next steps

- *If you're planning to set up in business, contact Business Link in England by calling the helpline on 0845 600 9 006 or visit the website at www.businesslink.gov.uk*

If your business is in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland

To find out about the support and advice available if your business is in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, you should contact these organisations providing services equivalent to those of Business Link

- **Lowland Scotland**
Business Gateway:
0845 609 6611;
www.bgateway.com
- **Highlands and Islands**
Highlands & Islands Enterprise:
01463 234171; www.hie.co.uk
- **Wales**
Business Eye:
08457 969798;
www.busesseye.org.uk
- **Northern Ireland**
Invest Northern Ireland:
028 9023 9090;
www.investni.com

Grants and other types of Government support

A number of Government departments, including the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), provide support schemes for businesses — the highlights are featured on these pages

New schemes and improvements are continually being introduced to give a better service to people setting up and developing a business. It's always worth checking with Business Link to ensure you're making the most of what's on offer and whether any schemes you've used in the past have been changed.

To save you time, the DTI brings together — in a one-stop shop on the Internet — information on all the support available from Government departments. You can find more information about support available from the DTI and other Government departments by using the business-support directory at www.businesslink.gov.uk/support

Next steps

- *Check Government support at www.businesslink.gov.uk or call the Business Link helpline on 0845 600 9 006*

Check for changes in the law

Regulations, figures and sums of money may have changed since publication. Update check: 0845 600 9 006
www.businesslink.gov.uk/figures

A Government grant could help you start

You may be able to get a Government grant to help start your business

Success in gaining a grant depends on a combination of factors, including:

- Location: your business may have to be located in a specified part of your district or region.
- Size: almost all grants have a limit on the number of people employed in a business that might qualify for assistance.
- Industry or business sector: many grants target specific sectors that need special assistance. Not every type of business will be eligible for every grant available in your business sector.

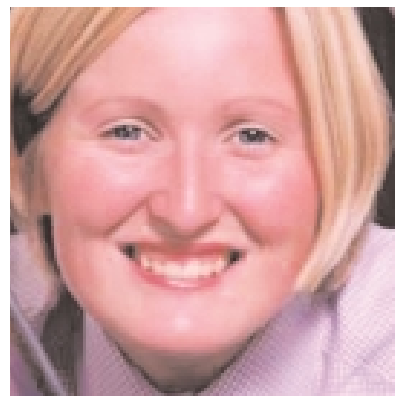
Your Business Link is best placed to advise you on the options available for your business.

Next steps

- Check with Business Link to see if you qualify for a grant. Contact 0845 600 9 006; www.businesslink.gov.uk



I used to pass Business Link on my way to work and one day I popped in to discuss a business idea. We had no idea how to get off the ground but they helped at every step



Hilary Kinnair
i2B
IT specialist
Sunderland

How the Government can help you get a loan

Have you tried and failed to get a conventional loan because of a lack of security? If so, you might be able to get help from the Government

In certain circumstances the Government will act as a guarantor of loans to small businesses with viable business proposals. A Small Firms Loan Guarantee (SFLG) allows a business to get a loan from an ordinary bank or other financial institution which would otherwise turn down the proposal because the business can't offer sufficient security against the money lent.

Loans are available for periods between two and ten years and for sums ranging from £5,000 to £100,000 (or up to £250,000 if a business has been trading for more than two years).

The Government guarantees 75 per cent of the loan. In return for the guarantee the borrower pays the Government a premium of 2 per cent a year on the outstanding amount of the loan.

The commercial aspects of the loan are matters between borrower and lender.

You have to apply directly to one of the participating lenders. Your local Business Link can advise you where to go to access the SFLG.

Next steps

- For more information on the Small Firms Loan Guarantee contact 0845 001 0032/33; www.businesslink.gov.uk

Government tax relief and credits to help research and development

The Government offers research-and-development tax relief and credits to small and medium-sized companies to encourage investment in research and development

When you're working out your company's profits for tax purposes you can increase the amount you deduct for appropriate research and development spending — from the normal 100 per cent allowance to 150 per cent. This is called R&D (research and development) tax relief.

If your company is not in profit it can exchange its qualifying research and development losses (including the R&D tax relief) for a cash payment from the Government. This can be worth up to 24 per cent of your company's spending on research and development. It's called the payable R&D tax credit and the payment is made to you by the Inland Revenue.



Business Link has helped us right from the start — from guidance on our initial business plan through to help with training and applying for a Grant for Research and Development



Tony Douglas
Contained Solutions Ltd
plastic containers
Brighouse, W. Yorkshire

You also need business advice

This guide covers regulations. You should also read a guide to general business advice — from market research to writing a business plan

A company can claim R&D tax relief and the payable R&D tax credit even though it has not started to trade for tax purposes. Check with your accountant if you think you might benefit from this option.

Next steps

- Find out more about R&D tax relief and credits from your Inland Revenue office or at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/randd

Equity finance from venture capital funds and business angels

Although the Government doesn't make equity investments directly in individual businesses — putting in money in return for a stakeholding — it does support a range of methods that help new and growing businesses to get easier access to finance

Venture Capital Funds allow you to raise finance in return for a share in your business. The Government has launched a series of Regional Venture Capital Funds in England to provide risk-capital finance — for amounts up to £500,000 — to small and medium-sized business which show growth potential. There are also Government-supported Early Growth Funds which provide risk-capital finance up to £100,000.

Both the regional and early-

growth funds are managed by venture-capital professionals and are commercially focused, making commercial returns.

The Government also supports the National Business Angels Network, which matches businesses seeking finance with suitable networks of business angels.

These are usually wealthy individuals who invest in new and growing businesses in return for a share of the equity.

The **Bridges Community Development Venture Fund** provides venture-capital funding to firms which are in the 25 per cent most disadvantaged areas of England and which can show meaningful interaction with their local economy. This could be through employing local people, providing services to local communities or by stimulating other local businesses through their purchasing decisions.

The fund is operated by the private-sector fund-management team Bridges Community Ventures (see **Next steps** below).

Next steps

- *Contact Business Link to find out about Venture Capital Funds: 0845 600 9 006; www.businesslink.gov.uk*
- *Contact Bridges Community Ventures: 020 7262 5566; www.bridgesventures.com*
- *For venture-capital opportunities in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland contact business support services listed*

under If Your Business Is In Scotland, Wales Or Northern Ireland, page 90

- *For more information on the National Business Angels Network contact 020 7329 2929; www.nationalbusangels.com*

Training for you and your workforce

You should check the range of Government training help for people setting up and running businesses or moving into self-employment. Contact details are in Next steps at the end of this section

Business Link can open the door to a variety of training events and skill-development packages for both you and your workforce.

You can get help with training designed to give you the skills and knowledge to set up and run your own business — from business planning and sales to marketing and business finance.

In addition to training events, Business Link provides networking opportunities so you can meet like-minded individuals to build and develop business relationships and share knowledge.

The **Learning and Skills Council (LSC)** is the Government body responsible for all post-16 education and training in England. The LSC may be able to subsidise the cost of training for

you or your employees (for example through the recruitment and training of a Modern Apprentice) and help with basic skills training or in identifying skills issues in your business.

Career Development Loans help people from a wide range of backgrounds pay for vocational learning or education courses. You can get a loan of between £300 and £8,000 to cover up to 80 per cent of course fees. The Government pays the interest on your loan during the course. You then repay the loan to the lender — Barclays, The Co-Operative Bank and Royal Bank of Scotland — over an agreed period at a fixed rate of interest.

New Deal gives jobseekers aged 18-24, 25+ and 50+ and jobseekers with disabilities a chance to develop their potential, gain skills and experience and find work.

New Deal is part of the Government's Welfare to Work strategy — it offers businesses the chance to make use of the untapped energies and talents of a new labour force. Participating businesses benefit from wage subsidies and subsidised training for employees.

If you're thinking of setting up in business and are on New Deal as an individual, you may also be able to benefit directly through the **New Deal Self-Employment Option**.

Learndirect for Business can help you gain skills to deal with the day-to-day issues that confront your business.

A boost for business in Enterprise Areas

To help remove barriers to enterprise in disadvantaged communities, the Government has designated 2,000 Enterprise Areas covering the most deprived areas of the United Kingdom. New measures have been introduced to boost business and investment in these areas

To check whether your intended or existing business is in an Enterprise Area, visit www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/so/pcode_search.htm and use the postcode search tool. If you have any problems with the search, call the Stamp Taxes Enquiry Line on 0845 6030135.

Your local Business Link is the best place for more information about whether your business is eligible for one of the schemes outlined below, especially as

some help is not exclusive to businesses in Enterprise Areas.

If you are in an Enterprise Area, you may benefit from one of several new or existing forms of Government assistance:

- Stamp duty exemptions for all residential-property transactions up to £150,000 and for all non-residential property transactions. Further information from the Inland Revenue Stamp Taxes Enquiry Line 0845 6030135; www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/so or any Inland Revenue Stamp Office.
- In England, Enterprise Grants are available to small and medium-sized businesses. The grant is for up to 15 per cent of a capital investment of up to £500,000. These grants complement commercial funds in helping firms to finance

When you run your own business you can't always take time out for training, so flexible learning packages have been designed which you can use as and when you want them.

Because each course organised by Learndirect for Business looks at a specific business issue, you can tailor your learning to your immediate needs. And because the courses are online, you and your employees can get the skills to succeed at a time and a place to suit the daily demands of your business.

Next steps

- For more information on training and skills development, contact Business Link: 0845 600 9 006; www.businesslink.gov.uk
- Contact the Learning and Skills Council: 0870 900 6800; www.lsc.gov.uk
- For more information on Career Development Loans contact 0800 585 505; www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl
- For more information on employing someone through the New Deal Programme, contact Employer Direct:

0845 601 2001;

www.newdeal.gov.uk

- For information about the New Deal Self-Employment Option contact Jobseeker Direct: 0845 606 0234; www.newdeal.gov.uk
- For more information on Learndirect for Business, contact 08000 150 750; www.learndirect-business.co.uk

Advice in Scotland

Business Gateway in Lowlands
(0845 609 6611;
www.bgateway.com);
Highlands & Islands Enterprise
(01463 234171; www.hie.co.uk)

their growth. Eligible projects can involve the expansion, modernisation or restructuring of an existing business, or setting up a new business.

- Help from a Community Development Finance Institution (CDFI). CDFIs provide mainly loan finance to small and medium-sized enterprises in disadvantaged communities where such enterprises cannot access mainstream finance to meet their needs. The Government is encouraging private investors to invest in CDFIs through the Community Investment Tax Relief. To find out whether there's a CDFI in your area, contact the Community Development Finance Association at 020 7430 0222; www.cdfa.org.uk
- Business support from an

organisation backed by the Phoenix Development Fund. This fund promotes innovative ways of supporting enterprise in disadvantaged areas and among under-represented groups such as women and ethnic minorities. Further information:

- www.sbs.gov.uk/phoenix
- A targeted package of support for employers from the Inland Revenue, including assistance on tax and National Insurance provided by Inland Revenue business-support teams. Contact 0845 60 70 143; www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/bst
- Neighbourhood Renewal Projects: these may include business advice, training help, accessing finance and premises and help with tackling crime. Further details from Business Link

(0845 600 9 006; www.businesslink.gov.uk), your local authority or Government Office or by visiting the website at www.neighbourhood.gov.uk

Next steps

- *Before seeking Enterprise Area help and contacting the organisations above, check whether your new or existing business is in an Enterprise Area. Use the postcode search tool on the Inland Revenue's stamp taxes website at www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/so/pcode_search.htm or phone 0845 6030135*
- *Also check your eligibility with Business Link. Contact 0845 600 9 006; www.businesslink.gov.uk*

Help with exporting

There's a range of help if you intend to export products or services

The Government's export agency, UK Trade & Investment, offers training, information and advisory services to help you get the best possible start to exporting.

Next steps

- *More information at www.uktradeinvest.gov.uk*

- *Contact UK Trade & Investment through Business Link: 0845 600 9 006; www.businesslink.gov.uk*

Help from your council

Local authorities also provide support for people setting up in business

Help from your local council includes grants, assistance with premises and advice on local

planning and environmental health regulations.

Next steps

- *To find out your local authority's contact details, go to www.ukonline.gov.uk and use the A-Z search of local government*