

Introduction

The continuing cutbacks in publicly funded support for business have led to a reduction in the provision of free or subsidised business advice and support for small business in general. However, finance and support is still available, but is more typically targeted at those starting up or running a business in specific sectors or groups, such as the social and community enterprise sector.

This factsheet provides information about sources of finance and support for social enterprise, including details of specific funding schemes, and organisations that provide advice and support for the social enterprise sector.

Sources of finance

A number of national and regional organisations and agencies currently provide finance and support for the social enterprise sector. They include the following:

Big Issue Invest provides finance to social enterprises in the UK. Loans and investments are available from £20,000 to £3 million and can be used for working capital and to purchase property and equipment.

<https://bigissueinvest.com>

Bridges Fund Management manages Bridges Evergreen Holdings, which provides funding for the social enterprise sector. It provides equity investments to charities, social enterprises and 'mission-led enterprises' that are delivering programmes and services that tackle everyday social problems across the UK.

(020) 3780 8000

www.bridgesfundmanagement.com/long-term-capital

Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) Venturesome provides loans of up to £400,000 to UK-based social enterprises, charities and community groups.

0300 012 3000

www.cafonline.org/charities/borrowing/social-investment

Charity Bank only lends to charities, social enterprises and organisations with charitable goals. It has regional managers who work with organisations across the UK. Loans up to £4 million are available.

(01732) 441900

www.charitybank.org/charity-loans

Community Finance Ireland provides loans and business support to community organisations, charities, sports clubs and social enterprises in Northern Ireland.

(028) 9031 5003

<https://communityfinanceireland.com>

Community Shares Unit manages the Community Shares Booster Programme, which supports local groups in England to set up or grow a community business. The programme provides grants and equity finance to help community businesses to raise finance through community shares.
www.communitysharesbooster.org.uk

Co-operative & Community Finance provides loans of up to £150,000 to co-operatives, social enterprises and community firms. Applicants from new enterprises must already have a detailed business plan in place before applying for a loan.
(0117) 916 6750
<https://coopfinance.coop/borrow>

Firstport is aimed at helping prospective social enterprise start ups in Scotland. Awards of up to £5,000 are available for testing business ideas ('Start It'), and up to £25,000 is available to help the further development of social enterprises that have already tested an idea and proved it is sound ('Build It'). Repayable grants from £30,000 to £50,000 are also available for start ups and social enterprises trading for up to three years to strengthen their operations ('Boost It').
(0131) 564 0331
www.firstport.org.uk

Foundation Scotland provides administration support and grant-making services to make charitable giving easier and more efficient. It also manages a number of local and national programmes that provide funding to social enterprises in Scotland.
(0131) 524 0300
www.foundationscotland.org.uk

Good Finance supports charities and social enterprises to navigate the social investment landscape and understand their finance options. Support includes a directory of investors, as well as a diagnostic tool to help organisations identify the best type of funding.
www.goodfinance.org.uk

Key Fund provides blended loans and grants of up to £300,000 to social enterprises tackling social and environmental issues in the north of England and the Midlands.
0330 202 0559
<https://thekeyfund.co.uk>

Responsible finance providers are local, independent providers of loans to community and social enterprises in disadvantaged areas. Most responsible finance providers are members of Responsible Finance, which can provide further information and contact details of individual providers located around the UK.
<https://responsiblefinance.org.uk>

Social and Sustainable Capital (SASC) manages a number of funds that provide finance for the social enterprise sector and charities across the UK. Finance is available for a range of purposes, including to buy property and assets, funding regular operations and growth projects. To qualify, applicants must be registered as a charity or social enterprise.
(020) 3874 3330
www.socialandsustainable.com/what-we-offer

Social Investment Business manages a number of social enterprise funds that provide loans and grants to help social enterprises grow their services and become more sustainable.
(020) 3096 7900
www.sibgroup.org.uk/funds

Social Investment Scotland (SIS) provides investments to charities, social enterprises and community groups across Scotland. Investments from £10,000 to £1.6 million are available.
(0131) 558 7706

www.socialinvestmentscotland.com

Triodos Bank is a specialist bank that generally provides finance of between £100,000 and £20 million for firms and projects with social, cultural or environmental benefits.

www.triodos.co.uk/business

Unity Trust Bank is a specialist bank providing socially responsible banking services for organisations, including social enterprises. It manages a number of loan schemes, including property development funding to assist with refurbishing or building business premises.

0345 140 1000

www.unity.co.uk/small-business-loans

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) manages the Social Business Growth Fund, which provides grant and loan funding of up to £150,000 to support social enterprises in Wales to grow and create new jobs.

0300 111 0124

www.wcva.org.uk/funding/social-investment-cymru/social-business-growth-fund

Sources of advice and support

Advice and support are available from the following sources that cover the whole of the UK:

ClearlySo is a financial intermediary in the social investment sector, which provides advice to charities about raising finance.

(020) 3433 6521

www.clearlyso.com/raise-capital/businesses

EY Foundation runs the 12-month Accelerate programme which provides support for social entrepreneurs aged 18 to 30, as well as social enterprises that support young people. Support includes workshops and business coaching to help social enterprises scale and grow their impact.

<https://eyfoundation.ey.com/uk/en/apply/accelerate.html>

Inspire2Enterprise provides a social enterprise support, information and advice service, which is free to access by phone, email or online.

0844 980 0760

www.inspire2enterprise.org

School for Social Entrepreneurs (SSE) provides social enterprise training courses at various locations across the UK, as well as resources and support.

(020) 7089 9120

www.the-sse.org

Social Enterprise Mark CIC is the certification authority for the social enterprise sector. Social firms can apply for accreditation and, if successful, will be awarded the Social Enterprise Mark, benefits of which include business advice and marketing support.

0345 504 6536

www.socialenterprisemark.org.uk

TrustLaw from the Thomas Reuters Foundation connects social enterprises that require pro bono legal advice with a network of lawyers. It also runs training and events for social enterprises, as well as providing online resources and tools to help organisations address their legal needs.

www.trust.org/trustlaw

UnLtd provides support for social enterprises across the UK. It runs a number of award schemes that offer practical support and funding.

(020) 7566 1100

www.unltd.org.uk

Advice and support in England

Firms England is an organisation that promotes and supports the creation of social enterprises in England. It has benefits for members, including advice and discounts.

(01737) 231360

www.socialfirmsengland.co.uk

Advice and support in Wales

Development Trusts Association Wales (DTA Wales) is an independent membership organisation set up to represent development trusts in Wales. It has benefits for members, including support, training and discounts.

(029) 2019 0260

<https://dtawales.org.uk>

Social Business Wales is provided by Business Wales to support the creation and growth of social enterprises in Wales. It provides support, funding advice and online resources.

0300 060 3000

<https://businesswales.gov.wales/socialbusinesswales>

Social Firms Wales is an organisation that promotes and supports the creation of social enterprises in Wales. It has benefits for members, including advice and discounts.

07799 345940

www.socialfirmswales.co.uk

Wales Co-operative Centre is a source of training and business support for co-operatives and social enterprises.

0300 111 5050

<https://wales.coop>

Wales Council for Voluntary Action (WCVA) is a source of support, funding advice and training for social enterprises and voluntary and community groups across Wales.

0300 111 5050

www.wcva.org.uk

Advice and support in Scotland

Highlands and Islands Social Enterprise Zone (HISEZ CIC) is the development agency for social enterprises in the Highlands and Islands. It provides advice, support and events to new and established social enterprises.

(01463) 715533

www.hisez.co.uk

Just Enterprise is a consortium that provides targeted support for those wishing to start or grow a social enterprise in Scotland. It provides a range of business support services, including workshops training, resources and one-to-one-support.

0300 302 3333

<https://justenterprise.org>

Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations (SCVO) is a membership organisation representing charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises in Scotland. Membership benefits include advice, access to online resources and discounts.

0800 169 0022

<https://scvo.org.uk>

Social Enterprise Academy is based in Scotland and runs programmes that support the running and development of social enterprises.

(0131) 243 2670

www.socialenterprise.academy

Social Enterprise Scotland is an organisation set up to represent social enterprises in Scotland, and to manage communication with the media, government bodies and the public. Its membership comprises both social enterprises and business support organisations. A number of useful publications are available to download from the website.

(0131) 243 2650

<https://socialenterprise.scot>

Advice and support in Northern Ireland

Building Change Trust provides a range of advice and award programmes to support the development of the community and voluntary sector in Northern Ireland. The website includes useful resources and publications for social enterprises.

(028) 9040 8725

www.buildingchangetrust.org

Northern Ireland Council for Voluntary Action (NICVA) is a membership organisation representing social enterprises in Northern Ireland. It provides practical advice, support and training to new and established social enterprises, as well as a collection of online resources.

(028) 9087 7777

www.nicva.org

Social Enterprise NI is an organisation that promotes and supports the creation of social enterprises in Northern Ireland. It has benefits for members, including advice and discounts.

(028) 9046 1810

www.socialenterpriseni.org

Further information

BIF032 Choosing the Right Business Legal Structure

BIF066 Setting up in Business as a Co-operative

BIF349 Legal Structures for Not-for-Profit Organisations

BIF445 Setting up a Community Interest Company (CIC)

Useful contacts

Social Enterprise UK is the national body for social enterprise, influencing national policy and promoting best practice in the sector.

(020) 3589 4950

www.socialenterprise.org.uk

The National Council for Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) is a membership association for the voluntary sector. Membership benefits include discounted conferences and training, networking opportunities, and advice and support.

(020) 7520 2414 (membership enquiries)

www.ncvo.org.uk

The Directory of Social Change (DSC) is an independent source of information, support and training for the UK's voluntary and community sectors.

(020) 4526 5995

www.dsc.org.uk

DISCLAIMER While all reasonable efforts have been made, the publisher makes no warranties that this information is accurate and up-to-date and will not be responsible for any errors or omissions in the information nor any consequences of any errors or omissions. Professional advice should be sought where appropriate.

Cobweb Information Ltd, YBN, 7 & 8 Delta Bank Road, Metro Riverside Park, Gateshead, NE11 9DJ.

Tel: 0191 461 8000 Website: www.cobwebinfo.com