

## Growth Hub Performance Update April 2024 – May 2024

### Growth Hub Board

18<sup>th</sup> September 2024

#### Item 8 – Growth Hub Performance Update and Priorities

Paper Title	Growth Hub Performance Update
Purpose of Paper	To inform the Board of activity and performance for the Growth Hub from 1st June 2024 - 23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2024
Equality and Diversity implications	None
Meeting Date	18 <sup>th</sup> September 2024
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### 1.0 Introduction

We are looking forward to the second half of the year and are now fully embedded within West Northants Council where the team is working well, feel settled and supported. We are now officially the South Midlands Growth hub and will work over the next 6 months to embed our new brand both internally and externally. We are continuing our joint team meetings across the local authorities and key partners across the region, which are valuable in ensuring we continue our joined up approach. The team continue to demonstrate their dedication, teamwork, and innovative ways of working to deliver successfully with reduced delivery team. Our Hour with an expert service offering is already successful and we continue to grow our partner offering. We are looking forward to our joint event with the Careers Hub at the end of the month, where we will launch our new joint website.

The following report provides a summary of the Growth Hub's activity and performance June 2024 - August 2024

We are working as a team to deliver against our plan, also working with our LA's to contribute to their ED strategies and are playing a key role in the development of the strategic plan for the South Midlands.

'As always we are continually making changes to our website and communication, so please do visit to see the brilliant work we are achieving across the South Midlands. [www.semlepgrowthhub.com](http://www.semlepgrowthhub.com)

### Core Delivery

The Growth Hub received 259 new enquiries during this period. The most common reason for making an enquiry was for advice and guidance on available grant programmes across the South Midlands patch, followed closely by support with marketing a business.

During this period 61 enquiries were received for the Resilience and Innovation Grant. The Business Adviser team continue to support clients with their grant applications, through 1:1 support and the delivery of monthly grant workshops. We have recorded an increase in the number of businesses attending our workshops resulting in a better quality applications being submitted.

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The Growth Hub team continues to deliver the Bedford Borough Step into Net Zero Programme and are looking forward to the upcoming Carbon Reduction Workshop in October, supported by our local sustainability expert from ActNow Consulting. We have also been supporting Bedford Borough businesses with grant applications to aid sustainability projects.

We are very focussed on educating our local businesses about the economic benefits of becoming more sustainable, ensuring that businesses are aware of the support available to them through the Growth Hub, and by making referrals to the Local Authority UKSPF funded programmes developed to assist businesses with their sustainability priorities.

## Summary of Growth Hub highlights June 2024 – August 2024

We continue to deliver Growth Hub activity in line with Growth Hub priority areas and in response to business intelligence and challenges faced.

These priority areas are summarised below including the key delivery / activity within each priority area. We also have a champion for each of these areas on our Growth Hub Board.

The team has been continuing to create and maintain relationships with our local businesses and wider business support community through our Growth Hub events and, and by attending partner networking events across the South Midland patch

## Businesses Supported by the Growth Hub April 2024 – August 2024



9482 unique  
visitors to the  
Growth Hub  
website



105 Forecasted  
jobs to be  
created



Over 500 businesses  
received support



£4,764,002.75  
private sector  
investment  
directly enabled



172  
attendees  
across 6  
events



over 600 hours of  
support  
provided

## Delivering events and working in partnership

From an events perspective, the Growth Hub has had another busy few months of our own events and supporting those of partners, thus strengthening our relationships across the region. We have run a further 2 'Network and Learn' Series in June & July partnering with all of the local authorities to deliver these two events. Our May event was focussed on AI and how using new technology can make a business more efficient. In partnership with a local

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Milton Keynes based AI business – Fliweel Tech and Milton Keynes City Council. July, we brought all six of the local authorities together for an online webinar to give updates on the business support landscape for the second half of the year. Our Network & Learn events continue to receive great feedback from businesses who are enjoying the value from our guest speakers but also to network with other like-minded businesses. We continue to host our virtual 'meet the neighbours' webinars which is a follow on from our support provider summit and will intersperse the face-to-face sessions bringing partners together to discuss the business support offerings available across the region from us all. We have our next in person session coming up in September with this group as part of our BusinessFest for Professional services conference. Following on from a successful network & Learn event with Fliweel Tech, they have now been onboarded as one of our delivery partners in our with an expert programme. Currently being promoted business will have the chance to spend an hour with an AI expert, discussing their challenges, further their understanding of AI and ways in which they can implement into their business. This is a great example of a developing partnership with one of our local businesses.

### **1.2 UKSPF**

The team are successfully delivering our BB Step into Net Zero programme and to date have already received 30 enquiries of which 20 have attended a 30-minute business clinic. All of the businesses who have attended a clinic have also received a bespoke toolkit to assist with taking the next steps on their carbon reduction journey including:

- How to measure a carbon footprint
- How to create a carbon reduction plan
- Free training and development opportunities
- Funding to support carbon reduction initiatives.
- Wider carbon reduction support programmes

Newly registered clients will be invited to attend our upcoming Carbon Reduction workshop in October which will be delivered by our sustainability expert from ActNow Consulting. The workshop will be an interactive session, to support businesses with understanding more about their carbon footprint and provide advice and guidance on how to develop a carbon reduction strategy. Individuals will learn about the wider support available including funding opportunities to support sustainable projects.

### **1.3 GPF Grants**

#### **Growing Innovation Fund**

The second round of funding launched on 18<sup>th</sup> March 2024 . The remaining allocation was £3,914,500.84. The deadline for EOI submission was 1<sup>st</sup> June 2024. The deadline for applications to be received was 17<sup>th</sup> June 2024. 17 applications were received and appraised by our external assessors Edale. The results were presented to the Grant Panel on 10<sup>th</sup> July 2024. 15 applications were approved for funding totalling £2,898,033.13. Out of these 15, 11 businesses have received their Grant Offer Letter. The remaining 4 will receive their letter once information has been provided.

The total amount of funding awarded from Rounds 1 and 2 is £3,733,532.29 which leaves £1,016,467.71 uncommitted. We are currently looking at what options are available for this remaining underspend and will present a paper to the Board at a later date.

### **1.4 Resilience and Innovation Grant**

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The first deadline to receive applications was 15<sup>th</sup> September 2023. We have held 6 grant panels since the first deadline, the last one being held on 2 August 2024. 80 applications have been received in total.

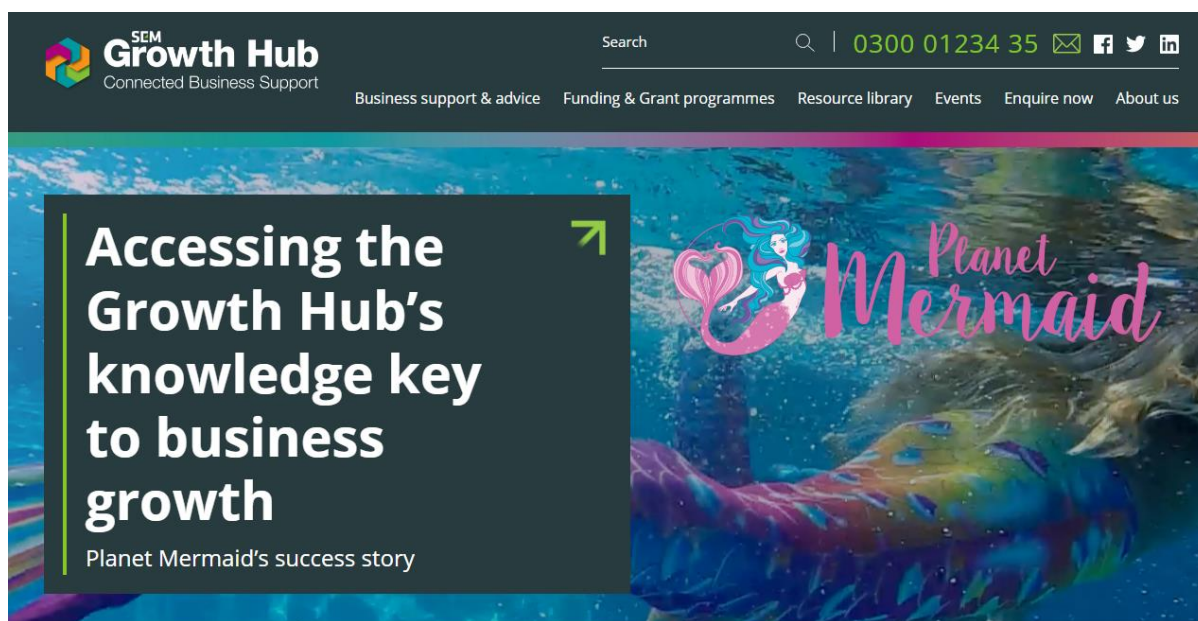
These 80 applications have been to the independent grant panel. 51 grants have been awarded totalling £1,622,706.99. The next deadline for applications to be received is 15<sup>th</sup> September 2024 with the Grant Panel meeting being held 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2024.

### 1.5 Hour with an Expert – Marketing

During the month of June, the Growth Hub launched Hour with an Expert – Marketing, delivered by our Marketing Lead. The programme was launched in response to demand from local businesses requesting advice and guidance on how to better promote their businesses and grow their customer base. The programme had a positive response receiving 32 registrations between June and August.

### 1.6 Case Studies

To showcase our work with business across the South Midlands we've created the following case study alongside Planet Mermaid. The case study focuses on how the Growth Hub supported Planet Mermaid in first relocating their business and leasing new property, to then taking part in Growth Curve and successfully accessing funding.



The image shows a screenshot of the SEM Growth Hub website. The header includes the SEM Growth Hub logo (Connected Business Support), a search bar, and contact information (0300 01234 35) along with social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. The navigation menu lists: Business support & advice, Funding & Grant programmes, Resource library, Events, Enquire now, and About us. The main content area features a large banner with an underwater theme. On the left, a dark box contains the text: "Accessing the Growth Hub's knowledge key to business growth" and "Planet Mermaid's success story" with a green arrow icon. On the right, there is a colorful illustration of a mermaid and the text "Planet Mermaid".

*Finding the perfect premises can be a daunting task for any business. For [Planet Mermaid](#), a rising star in the world of aquatic fashion, this was no exception. Hoping to match their rapid growth with a suitable location, they turned to the expertise of the Growth Hub. What ensued was not just assistance, but a transformative partnership that propelled Planet Mermaid to new heights.*

### Email Stats

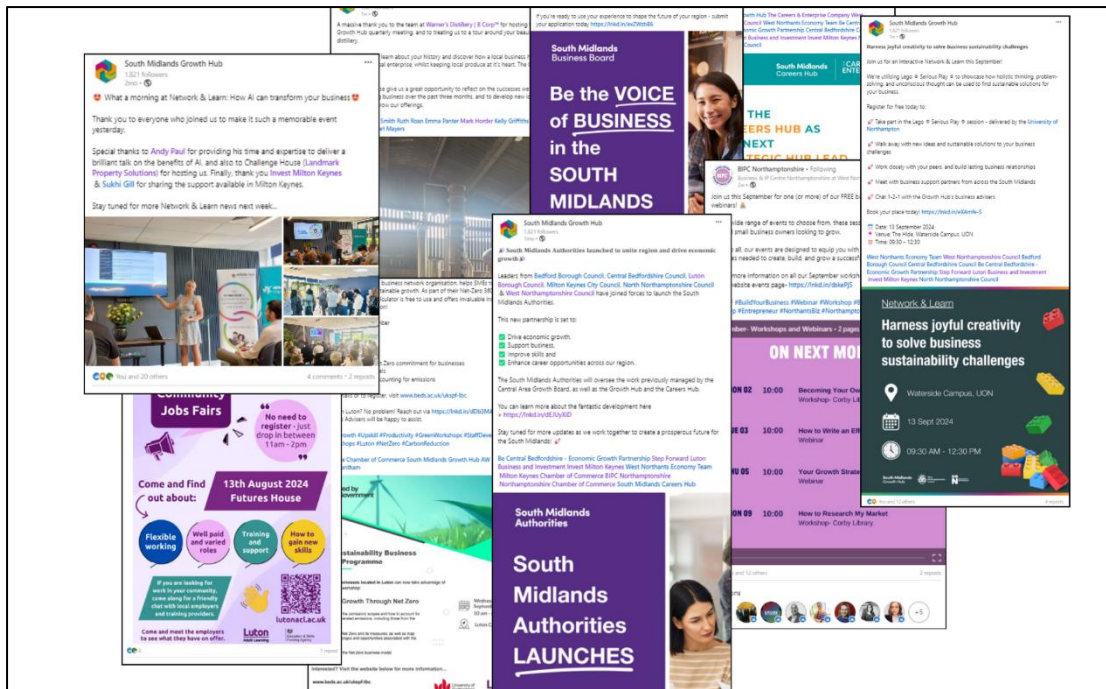
Email continues to prove effective in reaching our audience and generating interest in our programmes. Over 70% of sign ups to our events are generated through our email outreach, whilst our funding programmes receive boosts in EOIs when promoted through the channel.

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We've also utilised our extensive reach amongst the South Midlands to share the messaging on behalf of the South Midlands Authorities, creating the press release, email and all communications materials.

	Email
Subscribers	4,212
Unique opens	17,575
Open rate (avg)	38%
Unique clicks	1,721
Click through rate (avg)	746
Total emails sent	4%

## Social Media Stats



Throughout June to August, the Growth Hub has utilised LinkedIn to share our programmes and support offerings, as well as the support available from our network of partners. Particular areas of focus throughout the period was our ongoing Network & Learn series – with LinkedIn driving sign ups for our first ever virtual session.

LinkedIn has also played an important role in promoting our announcement of the launch of the South Midlands Authorities, the South Midlands Business Board, and also two new jobs roles. Collectively, these posts generated 2,122 impressions, 79 clicks and 75 likes and reposts.

LinkedIn continues to play a vital role in raising awareness of the Growth Hub and the support available to business across the region.

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In total 84 posts have been published on LinkedIn.

	<b>LinkedIn</b>
Followers	1,820 (66 increase)
Page views	167
Unique visitors	71
Impressions	11,521
Clicks	746
Reactions/Likes	447
Comments	18
Reposts/Retweets	19
Engagement rate	8.18%

### 1.6 Summary of KPI performance and types of businesses supported

The following table provides an overview of performance against the KPIs we set out for the Growth Hub at the beginning of the financial year.

Table below showing key performance indicators of the Growth Hub



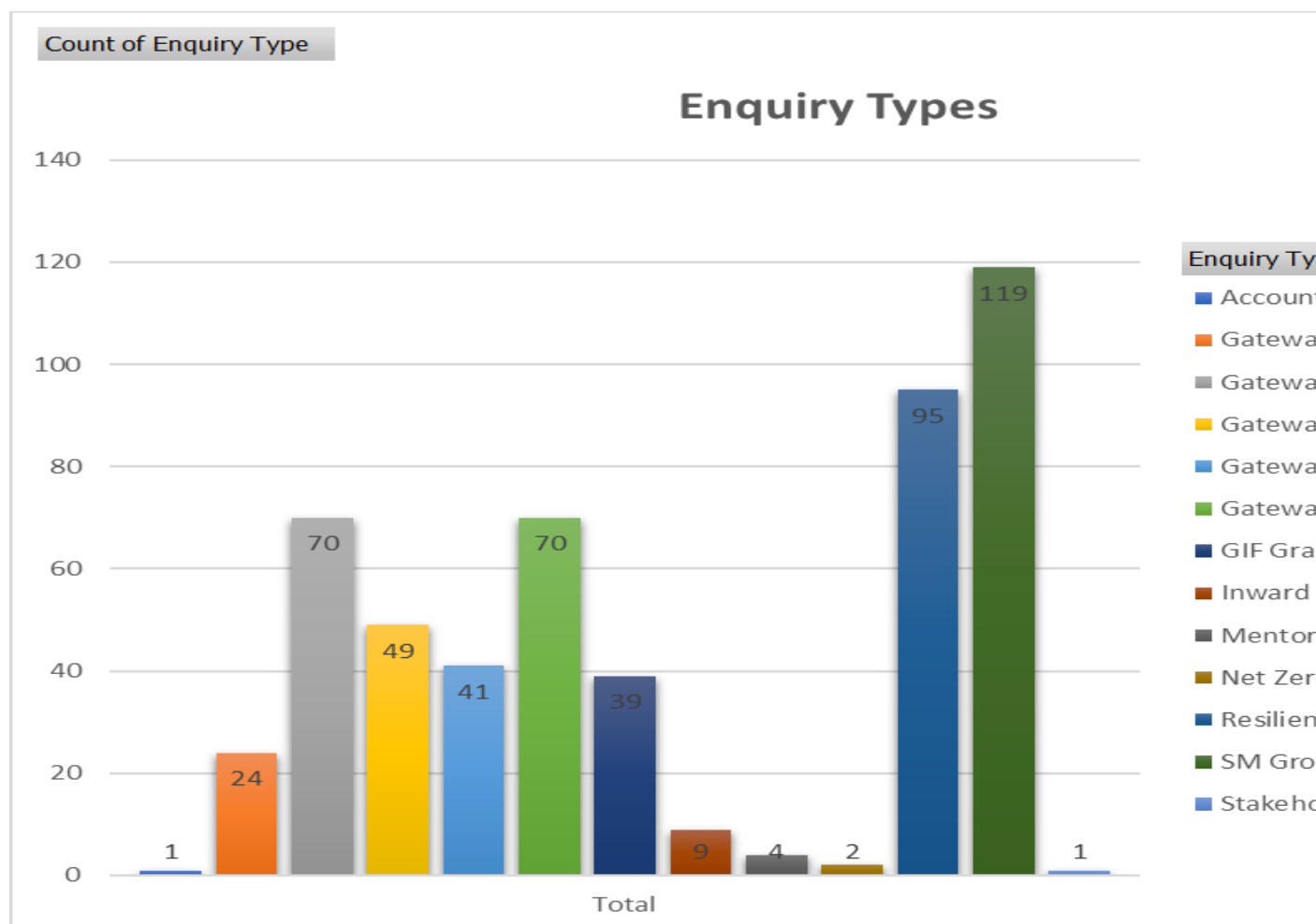
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KPI measured April 2024 to March 2025	Target – Annual 24/25	Achieved as 23 <sup>rd</sup> August 2024	Variance
Total number of enquiries received	1,500	524	<b>35%</b>
Light intensity support (0-1 hours)	800	405	<b>51%</b>
Medium intensity support (1-12 hours)	550	120	<b>22%</b>
High intensity support (12+ hours)	50	2	4%
Workshop / Event attendees	300	172	<b>57%</b>
Workshops/ Events	25	6	<b>24%</b>
Referrals to external support	600	105	<b>17.5%</b>
Total number of unique visitors to the Growth Hub Website	To maintain 2023/2024 levels of visitors to the Growth Hub websites	9482	-
Private Sector Match Secured	£1,500,000	£4,764,002.75	<b>317%</b>
Grants awarded	50	65	<b>130%</b>
Jobs Created	35	105 Forecasted	-

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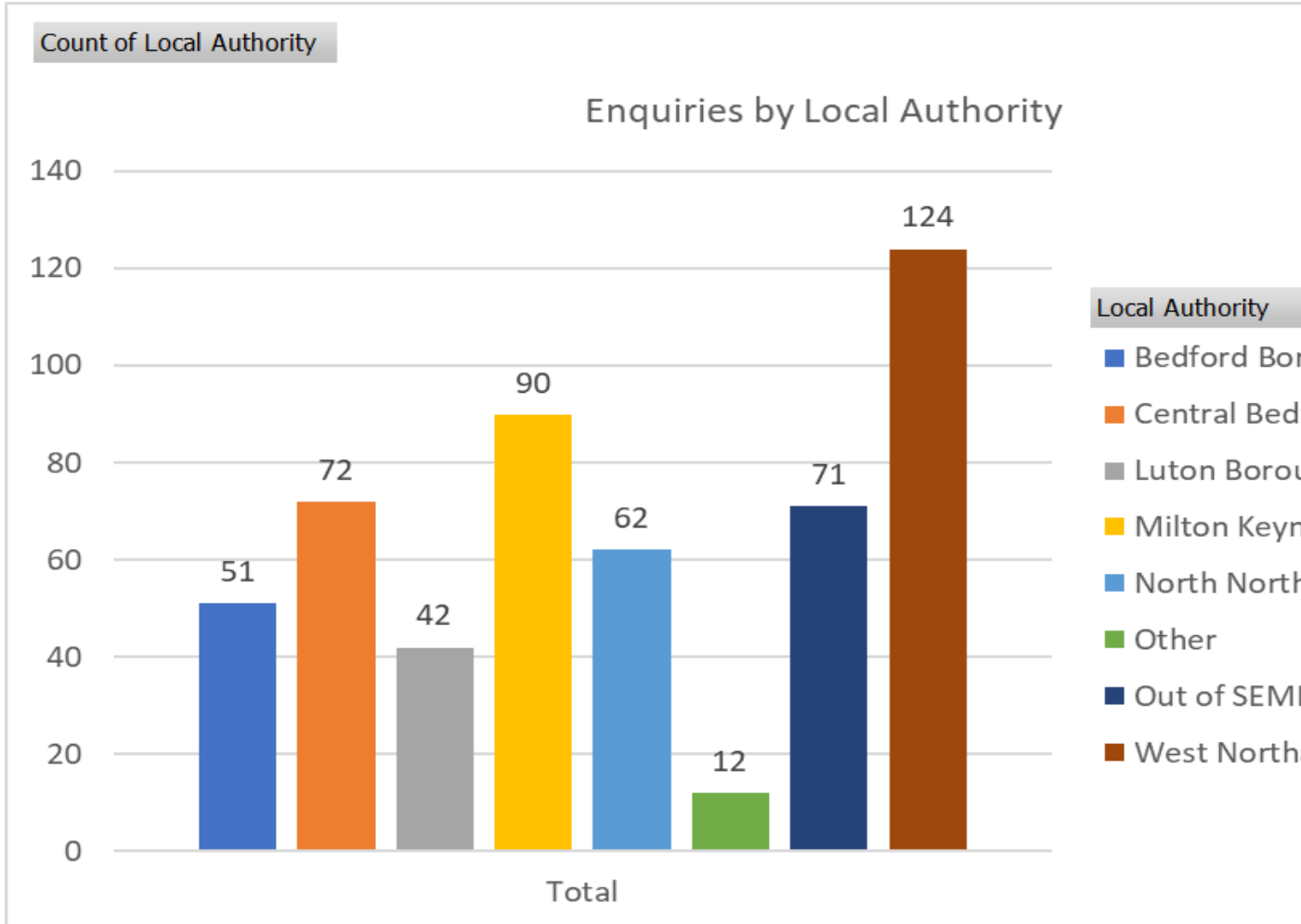
\*The number of businesses in each of these categories changes each quarter as some businesses move to higher categories of support. This accounts for sometimes seeing a reduction on previous quarter, as some businesses have moved upwards

Graph below showing businesses supported by enquiry type



Breakdown of businesses supported within the South Midlands





### 1.7 Growth Hub post August 2024 - Ruth

Our focus is to continue our work to strengthen our partnerships across the region. Working with the 6 local authorities, universities and other partners to ensure we continue to support and enhance businesses across the region with their business growth opportunities. Whilst we focus on business as usual delivering our DBT targets. We have 6 key priority areas: Business as usual, Inward Investment, GIF/RIG Grant Schemes, Current Contracts, Future contract opportunities and Careers Hub collaboration.

We value the input of the Growth Hub board and look forward to continuing to work with you all to ensure we are accountable to our delivery objectives.