

Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

Growth Hub Board

12th March 2025

Item 6 – 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 1 st January – 14 th February 2025
Equality and Diversity implications	None
Meeting Date	12 th March 2025
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1.0 Introduction

Looking Ahead: Our KPI and Delivery Plan for 2025/26

As we reflect on the challenges we have navigated over the past year—including the transition of functions to West Northants as the Host organisation, changes in government, and the evolving landscape of our geography—we remain focused on the future and our ambitious plans for the new financial year.

As we prepare for 2025/26, our commitment to delivering impactful business support remains stronger than ever. Our joint meetings with Local Authorities and key partners continue to expand our partnership network, strengthen collaboration, and extend the reach of our services.

Looking ahead, we are working closely with the **Careers Hub** and other stakeholders to develop a clear and effective delivery strategy for the year ahead. Our focus remains on driving economic growth, supporting businesses at every stage, and ensuring our services remain relevant and accessible across the South Midlands.

A heartfelt thank you to all our partners and stakeholders for their continued support as we work towards our shared goals.

As always, we are continuously updating our website and communications, so please visit us to see the fantastic work being achieved across the South Midlands:

www.semlepgrowthhub.com

Core Delivery

The Growth Hub team has had busy start to 2025 receiving 164 new enquiries during this reporting period, this is an improvement of 6% more enquiries received than the previous year. Business activity has been supported by the launch of our new Discover

Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

Northamptonshire Business Support Programme on behalf of West Northamptonshire and North Northamptonshire Council. Professional services made up 12% of these enquiries, followed by Cultural and Creative at 4%, Food and Drink, and Manufacturing and Advanced Technology made up 3.6% of enquiries received. The Growth Hub team has been busy attending local events actively engaging with our local authorities and business support organisations to support our collaboration and share information equating to 59 hours of stakeholder engagement.

The Growth Hub team has been working closely with local authorities and educational institutions, including Bedford Borough Council, Luton Borough Council, the University of Northampton, and Milton Keynes College, to explore new ways to collaborate and better support local businesses and communities.

In response to the Autumn Budget announcement, the Growth Hub has been helping businesses understand how the changes may affect their operations and future plans. We've been providing guidance to help them navigate these impacts and minimise any potential challenges.

Finally, we're excited to have launched the John Franklin Programme, designed to support pre-start and early-stage businesses in the West Northamptonshire area. The team is currently working with 21 businesses, providing tailored one-to-one support, workshops, and the chance to apply for £1,000 in grant funding.

Summary of Growth Hub highlights January – February

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 April 2024 – February 2025



1462 businesses supported



281 jobs committed through grants awarded



Over 3,400 hours of support provided



105 Grants Awarded



422 businesses referred to relevant specialist for support



417 businesses attending across 17 events



44 businesses attending Hour with an expert sessions

Delivering events and working in partnership

From a partnerships and 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. 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. Throughout January & February we hosted a further 2 Network & Learn events in Central Bedfordshire and Luton Borough. These were in partnership with Barclays Eagle Lab & Milton Keynes College demystifying the apprenticeship route for employers and then with Luton Borough Council, University Of Bedfordshire and Xtended revenue services on building a winning sales process within a business.

We have also supported the FSB, Pulse Group Media and University of Bedfordshire by attending and exhibiting at their business events

We have also had joint team meetings with North Northamptonshire Council and the BIPC to continue our ongoing partnerships, strengthening relationships and identifying joint opportunities.

Our next hour with an expert is now live covering HR and we have recruitment, rural and tax experts all prepared to deliver sessions over the coming months too.

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.

1.2 UKSPF

Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

The team are successfully delivering our BB Step into Net Zero programme and to date have already received 39 enquiries of which 23 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 February 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 Bletchley and Fenny Stratford Grant Scheme

On 1st October Milton Keynes City Council launched a new grant scheme for businesses in Bletchley and Fenny Stratford. The scheme is part funded by Milton Keynes City Council and the government's Towns Fund. The South Midlands Growth Hub is providing administrative support to help deliver this scheme.

Grants available include:

Start-up grants of up to £2,500

Existing business grants of up to £5,000

The grant panel met in December and agreed to approve 25 grant applications to support projects to aid business growth.

1.4 GPF Grants

Growing Innovation Fund

No more applications are being received for the Growing Innovation Fund. To date we have awarded 18 projects totalling £3,395,397.05. There is currently an underspend of £1,354,602.95.

1.5 Resilience and Innovation Grant

The first deadline to receive applications was 15th September 2023. We have held 7 grant panels since the first deadline, the last one being held on 10 October 2024. 91 applications have been received in total.

These 91 applications have been to the independent grant panel. 62 grants have been awarded totalling £1,881,998.28. The Resilience and Innovation Grant Programme is now closed for further applications.

1.6 Case Studies

Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

To showcase and celebrate our work with business across the South Midlands we've created a number of case studies demonstrating the impact the Resilience and Innovation Grant programme has had on businesses.

We've created the following case studies:

- **Northampton County Lawn Tennis Club**
- **Eco Flexibles**
- **The Cube Disability**
- **Pinnell & Bax**

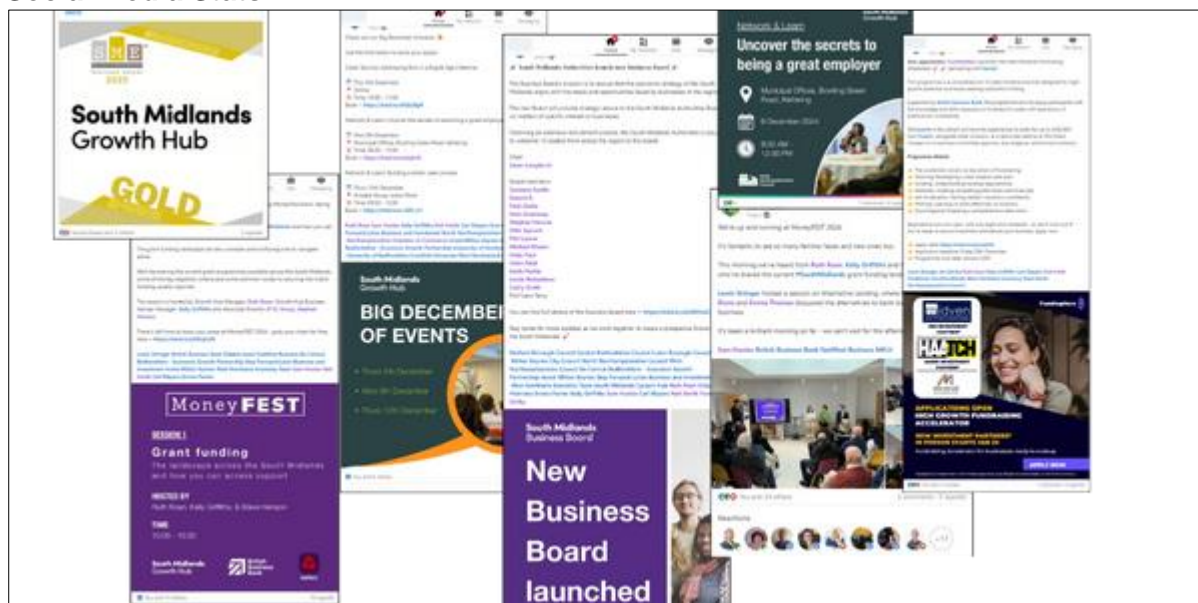
Email Stats

Email has been a key pillar of our marketing and communications outreach. It's formed the backbone of the promotion of Network & Learn, partner events and the Growth Hub monthly newsletter. We've also used the Growth Hub's platform to launch the InspireHER Growth Accelerator programme and the Discover Northamptonshire Business Support programme

Over the period, email contributed in generating 45 enquiries.

	Email
Subscribers	4,287
Unique opens	9,370
Open rate (avg)	37%
Unique clicks	563
Click through rate (avg)	3%
Total emails sent	25,273

Social Media Stats



Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

Throughout January 1st to February 14th, the Growth Hub has utilised LinkedIn to share our programmes and support offerings, as well as the support available from our network of partners. The platform has played a key role in launching, and recruiting for, both the InspireHER Growth Accelerator programme and the Discover Northamptonshire Business Support Programme.

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

In total 23 posts have been published on LinkedIn.

	LinkedIn
Followers	2,040 (33 increase)
Page views	182
Unique visitors	103
Impressions	4,896
Clicks	207
Reactions/Likes	150
Comments	10
Reposts/Retweets	9
Engagement rate	9%

1.7 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

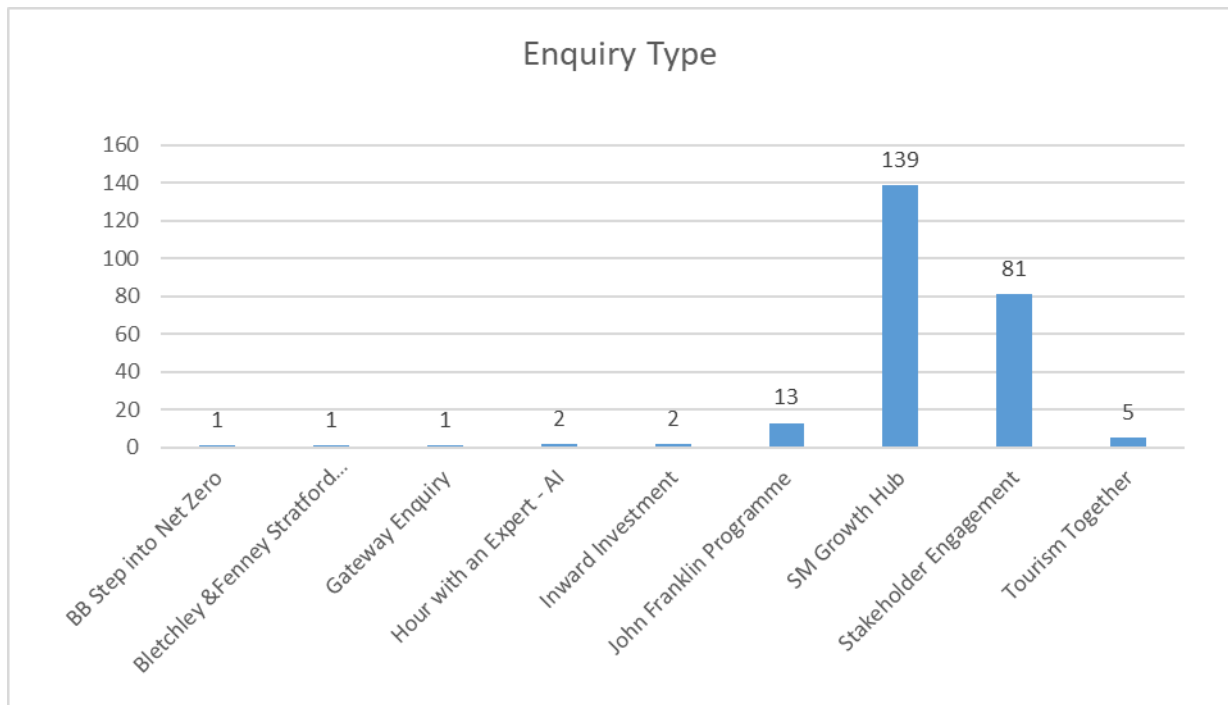
Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

KPI measured April 2024 to March 2025	Target – Annual 24/25	Achieved 1st January– 14 th February	Total Achieved	Variance
Total number of enquiries received	1,500	245	1,462	97%
Light intensity support (0-1 hours)	800	168	755	94%
Medium intensity support (1-12 hours)	550	202	622	113%
High intensity support (12+ hours)	50	-	85	170%
Workshop / Event attendees	300	21	417	139%
Workshops/ Events	25	2	17	68%
Referrals to external support	600	184	422	70%
Total number of unique visitors to the Growth Hub Website	To maintain 2023/2024 levels of visitors to the Growth Hub websites	2748	16,851	-
Private Sector Match Secured	£1,500,000	£501,212.85	6,081,682.26	405%
Grants awarded	50	25	105	210%
Jobs Created	35	147 Forecasted	281	-

Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

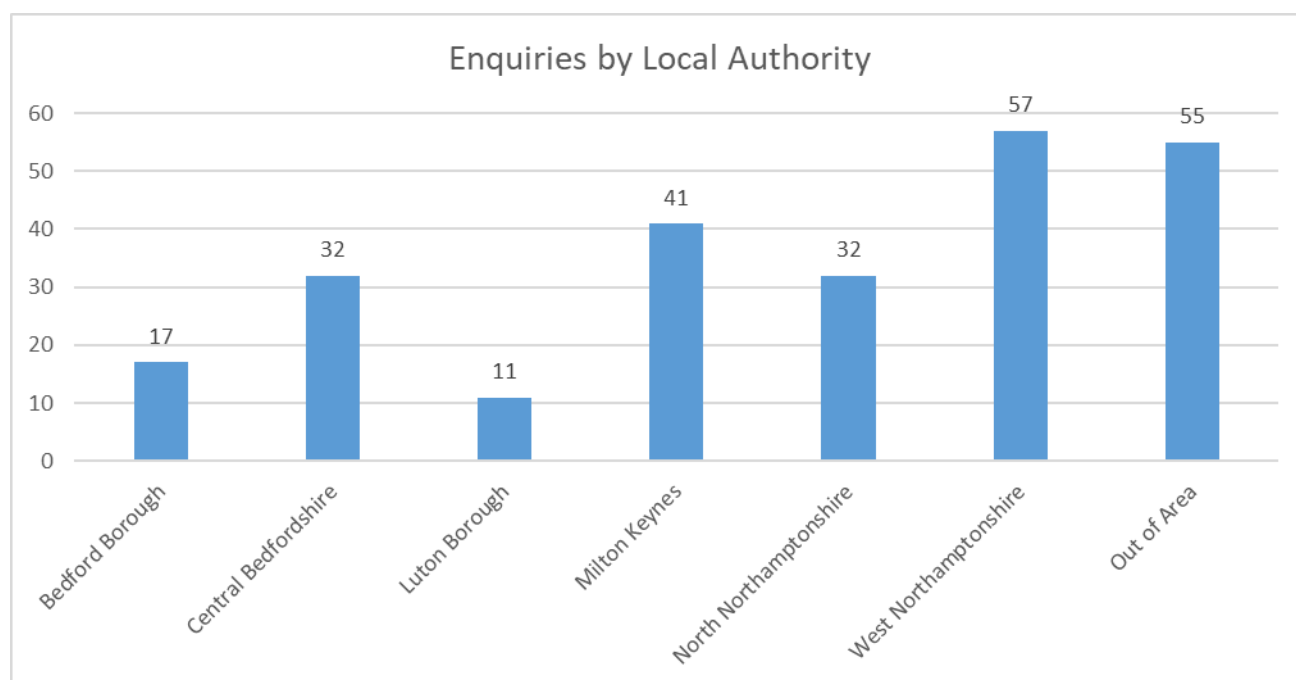
*The number of businesses in each of these categories changes each quarter as some businesses move to higher categories of support. This accounts for sometimes seeing a reduction on previous quarter, as some businesses have moved upwards

Graph below showing businesses supported by enquiry type



Breakdown of businesses supported within the South Midlands

Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025



1.8 Growth Hub Priorities

We look forward to another impactful quarter as we deliver on our commitments and plan for the **Looking Ahead: Priorities for the New Financial Year**

As we enter the 2025/26 financial year, our focus remains on delivering our **Department for Business and Trade (DBT)** outputs while identifying and fostering new opportunities for growth. Strengthening partnerships across the region continues to be central to our approach. By working closely with **local authorities, universities, and key partners**, we are ensuring that businesses across the South Midlands have access to the support and resources needed for long-term success.

Our priorities for the year ahead are structured around six key areas:

- ✓ **Supporting National SME Strategy & Business Growth Service:** Contributing to the development of national government initiatives that drive business growth and resilience.
- ✓ **DBT Core Delivery:** Ensuring the seamless execution of our DBT targets while maintaining high-quality business support services.
- ✓ **Completion of UKSPF Programmes & Future Opportunities:** Successfully delivering existing UKSPF-funded initiatives while identifying new funding and collaboration opportunities.
- ✓ **Careers Hub Collaboration:** Strengthening our work with the Careers Hub to align business support with future skills development and employment growth.
- ✓ **Business as Usual:** Maintaining our core services and continuing to provide high-impact support for businesses.

Growth Hub Performance Update January- February 2025

✅ **Strengthening Regional Relationships Amid Geographical Changes:** Ensuring collaboration and alignment across the region in response to ongoing structural and geographical shifts.

We greatly value the continued input of the **Growth Hub Board**, whose guidance is instrumental in ensuring accountability and strategic alignment. Together, we remain committed to driving business growth, fostering innovation, and building a strong and resilient economy across the South Midlands.

As we embark on this new financial year, we look forward to working with all our partners to deliver meaningful impact and lasting success.