

think  
**Luton**  
think business

Starting • Running •  
Growing your business •

Information on services  
offering support and advice

[www.thinkluton.co.uk](http://www.thinkluton.co.uk)

**LUTON**  
BOROUGH COUNCIL

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## About this guide

Welcome to **Starting • Running • Growing your business** • designed to introduce businesses to the range of support services available in Luton.

Statistics show businesses that access business support at an early stage grow better in the long term in comparison with businesses which don't.

Businesses often ask us about issues which are important to them like business rates, business planning and access to finance. This guide aims to provide businesses with information on services which can offer help, support and advice on various issues including the support available from Luton Borough Council for businesses new to Luton.

The areas covered within the guide are:

- Red Carpet Service – Luton's offer to businesses
- support services available locally and nationally
- access to finance for businesses
- links to further support.

The Council's Economic Development Service is here to provide you with support to grow your business and to ensure your journey is as smooth as possible. Call us on **01582 547970** or email: [economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk)

This guide forms part of a pack with ***A Guide to business regulations*** – a single source to make it easier for businesses to access current regulatory information.

Copies of this pack can be downloaded from the ThinkLuton website at [www.thinkluton.co.uk](http://www.thinkluton.co.uk) or the business pages of the Council's website at [www.luton.gov.uk](http://www.luton.gov.uk).

## Red carpet service

Whether you are looking to start a business, expand in Luton or relocating to this vibrant and dynamic town – we are your first point of contact.

The Council's Economic Development team offers all the help and support you need so you can take advantage of the town's growth and ongoing success.

Our bespoke package of support is completely confidential, free of charge and tailored to suit your business needs. The service includes:

- **property solutions:** to help you identify potential premises and property for your business in Luton
- **business growth incentive:** business rate relief up to a maximum of £55,000 (occupation of empty premises) in the first year available to businesses who can demonstrate they will bring in new investment or jobs to Luton and its residents
- **planning:** we can connect you with our planning team to ensure any building development enquiry is speedily actioned
- **working on your behalf:** connecting you with the right people involving a diverse range of services including transport, infrastructure issues and signage
- **market and business intelligence:** providing you with access to research and local economic data
- **recruitment:** connecting you with those that can help attract the right skills to your businesses, help with training and development of staff and with apprenticeships opportunities
- **familiarisation tours:** Luton has a lot to offer and we can help your staff with relocation advice, information on schools, housing, healthcare, leisure and other facilities
- **establishing your business in Luton:** connecting you with supply chain and local business networks
- **regulatory advice:** we can connect you with local regulators like Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service, Environmental Health and Trading Standards
- **aftercare:** our team will stay in touch with you, establishing strong relationships, proactively resolving any issues and helping you grow your business in Luton
- **funding and finance:** information and advice on funding and finance incentives to grow your business
- **marketing:** help with raising the profile of your business in Luton through our networks to the local business community
- **Business TimeBank Service:** access to up to one hour of free professional advice from accountants, solicitors and other professional business service providers.

Our red carpet service has been specially created to enable new and incoming businesses to hit the ground running by providing a range of support services and facilities in one single package. We provide you with a single point of contact and can help and support you to grow your business in Luton. The number to call is **01582 547970**, email [economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk).

**Welcome to Luton. The right location to do business in the UK.**

## Support services

The government is working with businesses and organisations to enable people to access help and advice to start and grow their business. A number of specialist organisations are also available to help develop business plans, raise finance and offer training. Listed here are some business support agencies based in Luton and nationally who can help and advise new and existing businesses in Luton.

## Economic Development Team

The Council's Economic Development Team should be your first point of contact, whether you are looking to start a business, expand in Luton or relocate to this vibrant town. We can provide you with the support to grow, connect you with other support providers externally and within the Council to ensure your business is best placed to take advantage of the all the support available locally and nationally to grow and thrive. Please give us a call on **01582 547970**, email [economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk)

## Business rates

Business rates are usually paid by the occupier of business premises to the Council. They are taxes to help pay for local services.

If you are working from home, you may be liable for business rates for part of the property being used for business. This depends on the extent and frequency of the non-domestic use of the room or rooms used for business. You can find out your rates by contacting the Council. Small business relief may be available in some circumstances. Exemptions may be available in some cases, such as places of public religious worship.

If you are moving to new premises you can find out the rateable value by contacting the Council or using the [Valuation Office Agency www.voa.gov.uk](http://www.voa.gov.uk). If the building is new or unoccupied you can ask the Valuation Office to assess the property. Appeals or requests for revaluations can be made to the [Valuation Tribunal for England www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk](http://www.valuationtribunal.gov.uk).

Businesses that bring in new jobs and investment may qualify for the [Business Growth Incentive Scheme](#) which offers business rate relief in the first year of operation. This is a discretionary rate relief scheme operated by the Council. Other discretionary rate relief support available to business includes partly occupied and hardship relief.

For more information on business rates and on how you can pay, contact the team on **0300 7900340** or email: [revenues@luton.gov.uk](mailto:revenues@luton.gov.uk)

Web: [www.luton.gov.uk](http://www.luton.gov.uk) and search for **business rates**.

## Procurement services

If you are interested in doing business with the Council and would like to stay informed of the latest contracts and business opportunities advertised from time to time, register your interest with us at <https://procurement.luton.gov.uk>

The team also runs tender opportunities online - to take part in a tender you will need to register on the portal. There is also a link to Luton Borough Council and other Government departments and the Council's current contract opportunities on this page; you can also register to receive information on future tender opportunities.

Luton Borough Council is a member of buying groups together with other councils - details of these groups are on the Procurement webpage.

For more information please contact the team on **01582 546 867**, email: [purchasing@luton.gov.uk](mailto:purchasing@luton.gov.uk), web: [www.luton.gov.uk](http://www.luton.gov.uk) and search for **Purchasing**.

For companies new to the public sector, Gov.uk provides a wealth of information, including an overview of the public sector tendering process and a free online contracts finder. For more information visit the website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for '**tendering for public sector contracts**'.

CompeteFor is a free service that enables businesses to compete for contract opportunities linked to major public and private sector buying organisations. For access to supply chain contract opportunities see [www.competefor.com](http://www.competefor.com)

If you are interested in a free procurement course, Winning the Contract provides a good overview of the public sector tendering process and how to find opportunities. For more information visit the website [www.learndirect-business.com](http://www.learndirect-business.com) and search for '**winning the contract**'.

## Think Luton Think Business TimeBank Service

The Think Luton Think Business TimeBank Service can help develop and support your business by offering up to one hour of free 1:1 advice with a local business expert including marketing consultants, accountants and solicitors.

For more information please contact the Council's Economic Development team **01582 547970** or email [economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk).

## Apprenticeships

The Council actively encourages the employment of apprentices and runs its own in-house apprenticeship programme, graded as outstanding in a recent Ofsted inspection. It also offers an apprenticeship training service to local employers.

More and more employers of all sizes are seeing the benefit of recruiting apprentices to help grow their businesses. With the Government funding much of the training costs, plus offering an incentive payment of £1,500 per apprentice (up to a maximum of 10) to SMEs who take on their first young apprentice(s), it's a great time to consider what apprenticeships could do for your business.

There are a number of apprenticeship providers delivering in Luton as well as the Council. For more information on local providers contact the National Apprenticeship Service website [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk) and click on 'employers', where there is a tool to help you determine the most appropriate training provider for your business sector.

If you would like to contact Luton Bough Council directly, contact the 16-19 Business Support Officer on **01582 548257** or visit [www.youth.luton.gov.uk](http://www.youth.luton.gov.uk)

## Strategy and Sustainability Team

Travel Luton can provide your employees with everything they need to make an informed decision about how they get to work. The team of travel advisors can offer your employees personalised journey planning to make their journey to work easier, with incentives to take away such as pedometers and bike locks.

For more information contact the team to find out how Travel Luton can help your business on tel: **0800 0281 755**, email: [info@travelluton.org.uk](mailto:info@travelluton.org.uk) or visit the website [www.travelluton.co.uk](http://www.travelluton.co.uk)

## Wenta

Wenta is an independently funded not-for-profit organisation founded to encourage business start-ups and support small businesses. Wenta offers a variety of services including business start-up advice and guidance such as business planning to new and existing small businesses, business training and development opportunities, business incubation centres (My Incubator), mentoring and education programmes.

For more information on Wenta see [www.wenta.co.uk](http://www.wenta.co.uk) or call **01582 433700**.

## Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus has a range of recruitment services that can help you as an employer including:

- advertise your vacancies using Universal Jobmatch (UJ) service - a free online service to advertise jobs and search for jobseekers whose CVs match your needs
- recruitment advice helping you to recruit a workforce to meet your business needs. The team can also help to address local skills shortages
- help to build your business by equipping people with the skills you need
- connect you with support from across Government and local partners
- support you and your employees if you need to make redundancies
- through the Youth Contract - a government scheme to help unemployed people aged 18 to 24 find work. As an employer, you can get involved in a number of ways, follow this link for further information [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for 'Jobcentre Plus help for recruiters'.

If you would like further information regarding any of the services offered through Jobcentre Plus, part of Department for Work and Pensions, please visit [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for 'Jobcentre Plus help for recruiters'. You can contact one of the Partnership Managers (see below) who will be happy to arrange a meeting.

For more information contact: Luton Jobcentre Plus, Cheviot House, Guildford Street, Luton LU1 2ER or get in touch with one of the Partnership Managers, **Angela Roberts: [angela.roberts@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:angela.roberts@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)** or **Rob Mayhew: [rob.mayhew@dwp.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:rob.mayhew@dwp.gsi.gov.uk)**

## Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce is a business support membership organisation working alongside businesses, partner organisations and other stakeholders across the county of Bedfordshire. The Chamber can:

- provide opportunities to meet, network and interact with business contacts
- help you access the support you need to achieve your business objectives
- help reduce your business risks and costs by offering a range of support services and benefits
- publicise and celebrate achievements of member companies and the economy of Bedfordshire
- support businesses to grow and develop in international markets.

For more information contact the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce on

Tel: **01582 522448**, email [info@chamber-business.com](mailto:info@chamber-business.com)

Website: [www.chamber-business.com](http://www.chamber-business.com)

## Bedfordshire Federation of Small Businesses

The Bedfordshire Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) is the UK's leading campaigning pressure group promoting and protecting the interests of the self-employed and owners of small businesses and has 200,000 members nationally. There are 2,000 members in Bedfordshire.

Joining the FSB could be one of the most important decisions you make for your business, as you can receive:

- FSB Legal Protection Scheme
- free banking for the life of your membership
- FSB care benefit
- free legal documents.

As right of membership, you can also take advantage of financial and business services provided by partnerships with market-leading corporate organisations.

The FSB also lobbies national and local government with direct access to MPs, councillors and officials locally and in the UK and European parliaments.

For more information about joining the FSB:

Tel: **01462 451124, 077364 71568** or email: [maree.atkinson@ntlworld.com](mailto:maree.atkinson@ntlworld.com)

Website : [www.fsb.org.uk/bedscambsherts](http://www.fsb.org.uk/bedscambsherts)

## University of Bedfordshire Knowledge Hub

The Knowledge Hub is the gateway for business support at the University, offering organisations of all sizes the chance to develop via access to a number of initiatives. They have a variety of tools available to businesses, a wealth of experience in delivering business support and are dedicated to helping companies become more innovative leading to sustainable growth. *They offer:*

- business growth support
- support start-up companies
- a network of leading experts and researchers
- access to the latest facilities for organisations
- training.

For more information contact Knowledge Hub, Putteridge Bury, Hitchin Road, Luton, Bedfordshire LU2 8LE. Tel: **0800 328 5334**, Email: [knowledge@beds.ac.uk](mailto:knowledge@beds.ac.uk), Website: [www.beds.ac.uk/knowledgehub](http://www.beds.ac.uk/knowledgehub)

## Business Link Helpline

The Business Link helpline is for business support and advice over the phone. It provides a quick response service if you have simple questions about starting or running a business. It also provides a more in-depth service if you have more complex enquiries.

Business Link Helpline is available Monday to Friday from 9am to 6pm on **08456009006**.

## GrowthAccelerator

GrowthAccelerator is a new partnership between Government and private enterprise. The initiative is designed to support your business through one-to-one personalised service, working with you to grow your business year-on-year in a sustainable way. *The programme aims to help businesses with:*

- business development
- access to finance
- leadership and management
- growth through innovation

Through GrowthAccelerator the Government is investing with you in the growth of your business, therefore significantly reducing the cost of the service to your business.

For more information on the GrowthAccelerator and how it can help your business to maximise opportunities for growth, see [www.growthaccelerator.com](http://www.growthaccelerator.com)

## Intellectual property (IP)

Intellectual Property (IP) is the result of expression of an idea; it can be a trade mark, copyright, design or patent. If it is your own intellectual property, it is advisable to take measures to protect it.

The Intellectual Property Office (IPO) has a range of resources you can use for guidance. Find out about registering patents, trade marks and designs and look up existing trade marks on the register online. The office can also advise on how to protect your copyright works and how to apply to register a design.

The Council's Trading Standards Service enforces trade marks and copyright so if you feel your Intellectual Property has been used without your permission, it will be able to provide advice and where necessary, take enforcement action.

For more information visit the Intellectual Property Office [www.ipo.gov.uk](http://www.ipo.gov.uk)

## UK Trade and Investment

UK Trade and Investment (UKTI) is the national Government agency offering free support and independent advice to foreign companies looking to invest or locate in the UK. Its extensive network of experienced sector and location consultants provides market information, location guidance and practical help getting your UK operation up and running.

UKTI will help you grow and access export markets from your UK base. The investment location services are independent, highly professional and free.

For specific help in setting up in the UK or for help with exporting, please contact the UKTI Investment Services Team on **0845 5390419**.

General enquiries: **020 7215 5000** or [www.ukti.gov.uk](http://www.ukti.gov.uk)

## GOV.UK

GOV.UK is the best place to find information about Government services. Comprehensive information is available for businesses about starting up and running a business in the UK, including help with writing a business plan if you are self-employed or a sole trader. For more information visit the website [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk)

## Technology Strategy Board

The Technology Strategy Board (TSB) works with SMEs, large businesses, the Government, universities, colleges and other partners to develop new products and services and to access technology. Since May 2010 the TSB, both directly and through Knowledge Transfer Networks, has helped thousands of businesses through various funding schemes and other forms of support. For more information visit the website [www.innovateuk.org](http://www.innovateuk.org).

## Manufacturing Advisory Service

Manufacturing Advisory Service (MAS) provides manufacturing business support for companies based in England, helping them to improve and grow.

MAS is designed to help the manufacturer, streamline processes, reduce waste, become more energy efficient and generally improve and grow your business.

Regardless of the size of your business, experienced and highly skilled advisors with hands-on experience of both shop floor working and management skills will work with you and your workforce to ensure that your business is run in the best way possible. And if you're a small or medium sized manufacturer in England, many of the services are **free** and **supplemented by appropriate grant funding**. For more information visit the website [www.mymas.org](http://www.mymas.org)

**mas**  
manufacturing advisory service





## Access to finance

Access to finance is one of the main areas where businesses often require assistance. Agencies offering help include:

- **LLAL Enterprise Grant** is delivered by Wenta, funded by London Luton Airport Limited. A business start-up grant of up to £1,000 is available to start-up businesses based in the Luton Airport and surrounding area. Existing businesses in the Luton Airport area may also be able to apply for grants of up to £2,000 to grow and develop their business. To find out if you're eligible for the LLAL Enterprise Grant, please contact Dawn Bell on **01582 433 700** or email [dawnbell@wenta.co.uk](mailto:dawnbell@wenta.co.uk). For further information on Wenta see [www.wenta.co.uk](http://www.wenta.co.uk)
- **Low Carbon Innovation Fund (LCIF)** is a venture capital fund supported by the European Regional Fund. The fund will make early-stage equity investments into small and medium sized enterprises within the East of England that are developing new and innovative products or processes in a low carbon, environmentally sensitive manner. The fund runs until December 2015. For more information see [www.lowcarbonfund.co.uk](http://www.lowcarbonfund.co.uk)
- **GrowthAccelerator** is a partnership between Government and private enterprise to support and grow businesses through a one-to-one, personalised service. Through Growth Accelerator the Government is investing with you in the growth of your business, therefore significantly reducing the cost of the service to your business. For more information see [www.growthaccelerator.com](http://www.growthaccelerator.com)

- **Energy-Efficiency Financing** is being offered to public and private-sector organisations to invest in low-carbon equipment. To qualify businesses must have been trading for at least 36 months. For more information visit the website [www.carbontrust.co.uk](http://www.carbontrust.co.uk)
- **East of England Business Angel Co-investment Loan** is available for high growth SMEs in the East of England. The Co-investment facility is designed to offer a flexible loan to unlock Business Angel investment. Debt facility of between £50k and £125k is provided to match Business Angel Investment. For more information tel: **08451800580**; email: [enquiries@financeeast.com](mailto:enquiries@financeeast.com); website [www.financeeast.com](http://www.financeeast.com)
- **Regional Growth Loan** is available to established incorporated businesses that have a minimum annual turnover of £500k, show strong growth potential and have a medium to long-term funding requirements to deliver that growth. The loan term is usually between 2-5 years with loan of £50,000-£200,000 available. For more information: tel: **0845 180 0580**; email: [enquiries@financeeast.com](mailto:enquiries@financeeast.com); web: [www.financeeast.com](http://www.financeeast.com)
- **Small Loans for Business** by Foundation East to new and existing businesses, self employed people and social enterprises that can't get a loan from mainstream lenders or need to match lending from banks. Loans range from £3k to £50k and poor credit rating does not necessarily prohibit you receiving a loan. Contact: **01284 757777** or [www.foundationeast.org](http://www.foundationeast.org)
- **Grants for Research and Development** from the Technology Strategy Board scheme offering funding to SMEs to engage in projects in the strategically important areas of science, engineering and technology from which successful new products, processes and services could emerge. The scheme supports R&D projects which offer potentially significant rewards and could stimulate UK economic growth. For information on grants see [www.innovateuk.org](http://www.innovateuk.org)

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- **Start up Loans** provides advice and start-up finance (around £2,500) for 18-30 year olds looking to start and grow their own businesses - [www.startuploans.co.uk](http://www.startuploans.co.uk)
- **Business Finance Finder:** Gov.uk has a Business finance and support finder search for publicly-backed and private sources of finance to help you start and grow your business - [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) and search for '**business finance support finder**'
- **Better Business Finance** provides impartial information and support to businesses and entrepreneurs looking to develop and grow; whether the business is seeking finance, mentoring support, starting out or exporting abroad. It has a free and easy to use search engine which brings together a wide range of finance providers to enable businesses to easily seek the finance required - [www.betterbusinessfinance.co.uk](http://www.betterbusinessfinance.co.uk)

- **Funding Circle** is an online marketplace to help businesses find low cost loans quickly. The Government has started lending to all businesses which meet its criteria through the Funding Circle as part of the Government's Business Finance Partnership scheme (BFP) - [www.fundingcircle.com](http://www.fundingcircle.com)
- **Community Development Finance Institutions** can help if you are looking for small amounts of credit. CDFIs offer loans from a few hundred pounds up to £25,000 to people who find it difficult to borrow money from banks - [www.findingfinance.org.uk](http://www.findingfinance.org.uk)
- **MarketInvoice** allows companies to flexibly and quickly access the cash tied up in their invoices, enables businesses to take control of their finances and grow their top-line revenues – [www.marketinvoice.com](http://www.marketinvoice.com)
- **Crowdcube** is a way to fund start-ups and business expansion by crowdfunding for equity, giving entrepreneurs a platform to connect with ordinary people and raise venture capital - [www.crowdcube.com](http://www.crowdcube.com)
- **Crowdfunder** – is a crowdfunding website which is an alternative means of funding that allows individuals to take their ideas forward and make them a reality with the power of the crowd and change the world around them [www.crowdfunder.co.uk](http://www.crowdfunder.co.uk)



- **British Private Equity and Venture Capital Association (BVCA)** is the industry body and public policy advocate for the private equity and venture capital industry in the UK. For details of members see [www.bvca.co.uk](http://www.bvca.co.uk)

## Links to further support

### Start-up advice, inspiration and support

Great Businesses [www.greatbusiness.gov.uk](http://www.greatbusiness.gov.uk)

StartUp Britain [www.startupbritain.co](http://www.startupbritain.co)

Inspiring the Future [www.inspiringthefuture.org](http://www.inspiringthefuture.org)

Small Business [www.smallbusiness.co.uk](http://www.smallbusiness.co.uk)

Business Support Resource Centre [www.lutonboroughcouncil.startupdonut.co.uk](http://www.lutonboroughcouncil.startupdonut.co.uk)

### Support organisations

Prime, supporting mature entrepreneurs [www.prime.org.uk](http://www.prime.org.uk)

The Prince's Trust [www.princes-trust.org.uk](http://www.princes-trust.org.uk)

everywoman [www.everywoman.com](http://www.everywoman.com)

Enterprising Women [www.enterprising-women.org](http://www.enterprising-women.org)

Mumpreneur UK [www.mumpreneuruk.com](http://www.mumpreneuruk.com)

### Tools and guidance

Business Support Finder [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk) click on 'Businesses and self-employed'

Companies House [www.companieshouse.gov.uk](http://www.companieshouse.gov.uk)

### Finance advice

Intuit Financial Fitness [www.intuit.co.uk](http://www.intuit.co.uk)

ICAEW business advice service [www.businessadvice.service.com](http://www.businessadvice.service.com)

The Next Generation Finance Consortium [www.ngfc.org.uk](http://www.ngfc.org.uk)

## Business Angel Finance

UK Business Angels Association

[www.ukbusinessangelsassociation.org.uk](http://www.ukbusinessangelsassociation.org.uk)

Angels Den [www.angelsden.co.uk](http://www.angelsden.co.uk)

Beer and Partners [www.beerandpartners.com](http://www.beerandpartners.com)

C2Ventures [www.c2ventures.com](http://www.c2ventures.com)

E-Synergy [www.e-synergy.com](http://www.e-synergy.com)

Exemplas [www.exemplas.com](http://www.exemplas.com)

## Mentoring

Mentorsme [www.mentorsme.co.uk](http://www.mentorsme.co.uk)

Being a Mentor [www.getmentoring.org](http://www.getmentoring.org)

## Growth

Growing Business [www.growingbusiness.co.uk](http://www.growingbusiness.co.uk)

Growth Business [www.growthbusiness.co.uk](http://www.growthbusiness.co.uk)

Growth Accelerator [www.growthaccelerator.com](http://www.growthaccelerator.com)



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### **Disclaimer**

This Publication aims to provide a single source of information on support service options for businesses in Luton. The support services and other sources mentioned here are based on information available to Luton Borough Council at the date of publication. All efforts have been made to include as many relevant support services and other sources as possible. Any support services or other sources excluded from the list are not intentional on the part of Luton Borough Council or the author.

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## Starting • Running • Growing your business •

This Publication aims to provide businesses in Luton with a single source of information on support service options. For more information or with help with your businesses contact:

Economic Development Service

**Luton Borough Council**

Town Hall

Luton LU1 2BQ

Tel: **01582 547970**

**Email:** [economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk](mailto:economicdevelopment@luton.gov.uk)

**Website:** [www.thinkluton.co.uk](http://www.thinkluton.co.uk); [www.luton.gov.uk](http://www.luton.gov.uk)

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