



# An Evaluation of the Local London E-business Programme



Funded by  
UK Government

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**Thanks to all those who have given up their time to contribute to this evaluation through the survey and one-to-one interviews.**

# Foreword

**There is no doubt we are living in a transformative era what with digital, data and new technology shaping our lives. London is well-placed to become a leader in tech and global innovation, supporting the Government's modern industrial strategy and the ambitions set out in the London Growth Plan.**

Yet, in this part of London, we have digital inequalities and discrepancies we need to address in order to fulfil London's ambitions. Access to world-class digital infrastructure is not ubiquitous across our sub-region; access and know-how prevents many residents and businesses from seizing digital opportunities to reach their potential.

The drive to succeed is evident here. Our sub-region is rich in small businesses and entrepreneurial spirit. There are around 100,000 micro, small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) at the heart of our communities.

However, without intervention, almost half will fail to make it past three years of trading. This clearly has a huge impact on the lives of the business owners, employees and their families, as well as the local economy. It goes without

saying, this affects our ability to contribute to the national economy to our fullest potential.

In 2019, when funding for the Local London E-business Programme was agreed, we already had a small business support model operating in one of our boroughs that was helping businesses leverage digital platforms and software to become more resilient.

Local London successfully bid for money, match-funded by our boroughs, to extend the model across our sub-region and managing the contract on behalf our member boroughs.

At that time, we had little idea of the seismic changes that would happen world-wide due to the COVID pandemic. While the impacts were felt by everyone, micro and SMEs were understandably hard hit, making the support of this programme even more necessary.

Through expertise of the three local providers Enterprise Enfield (working in Enfield, Redbridge and Waltham Forest), Newham College (covering Barking and Dagenham, Havering, and Newham), and South East Enterprise (Bexley and Greenwich), the



programme supported thousands of businesses to build up their digital skills, setting them on course to grow their businesses.

The achievements of the programme highlighted in this report speak to the future-changing difference this investment has made to people in our communities.

We are immensely proud that this model, grown in Local London, has been adopted across the capital to provide vital support to our most vulnerable businesses, and we believe that this will contribute to London and the UK achieving its growth and frontier-leading ambitions.

**Mayor Rokhsana Fiaz OBE,**  
Chair of Local London's Growth Board and  
Mayor of Newham

## Executive summary

- The Local London E-business programme provided free support to micro, small and medium-sized businesses to empower them to adopt digital technologies to grow and become more resilient.
- The programme, launched in 2021, was provided across eight boroughs (Barking and Dagenham, Bexley, Enfield, Greenwich, Havering, Newham, Redbridge and Waltham Forest) by digital and business experts from three delivery partners: Enterprise Enfield, Newham College, and South East Enterprise.
- The programme successfully supported over **3,000 local businesses** across the boroughs in the Local London sub-region. As a result, safeguarding over **4,000 jobs** and leading to over **£57m increase** in business revenue.
- This report pulls together interim evaluation and end of programme statistics, as well as interviews with borough business leads, the three programme providers and businesses themselves to provide a holistic overview of the programme's achievements.
- The feedback detailed in this report has highlighted learning and successes, which we are sharing for future iterations of similar programmes. Overall, the Local London E-business programme was well received and appreciated by SMEs. In fact, 9 out of 10 businesses who responded to our survey considered the programme effective or very effective.
- Testament to the successful Local E-business programme, the model has been adopted and modified, taking onboard our feedback and learning, to help SMEs across the whole of London benefit from developing their own digital knowledge.

Safeguarding over  
**4,000 jobs**

**"Since joining the programme I have managed to increase our company's website visitors by 6,566% - our email marketing engagement by 450% and our social media presence has increased by 1,566% - yes unbelievable! AND its all still increasing!"**

Mike Cooper, **Inspiring Salons Ltd** supported by the Local London E-business programme with Enterprise Enfield.



# Introduction

**In 2019, the Mayor of London, London boroughs and the City of London Corporation, with the agreement of the government, launched the London Strategic Investment Pot out of retained business rates.**

Under the agreed terms of the pool the Strategic Investment Pot was to be spent on projects that:

- Contributed to the sustainable growth of London's economy and an increase in business rates income either directly or as a result of the wider economic benefits anticipated;
- Leveraged additional investment funding from other private or public sources; and
- Had broad support across London government in accordance with the agreed governance process.

**£57m increase**  
in business revenue.

Local London's E-business programme was based upon a pilot which had been successfully delivered in Greenwich over a three-year period to address the skills needs of local small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs.)

The programme launched in 2021 and has, from that time, supported over **3,000 local businesses** across the nine boroughs in the Local London partnership, safeguarding over **4,000 jobs** and leading to over **£57m increase** in business revenue.

The Local London E-business programme was delivered by three partners across our boroughs:

- **Enterprise Enfield:** Delivered the programme to SMEs in Enfield, Redbridge and Waltham Forest.
- **Newham College of Further Education:** Delivered the programme to SMEs in Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Newham.
- **South East Enterprise:** Delivered the programme to SMEs in Bexley and Greenwich.

## Approach to evaluation

As part of the funding agreement with London's Strategic Investment Pot (SIP), we are required to provide a final report at the end of the programme.

As well as the end of programme report, we undertook ongoing evaluation, which was provided to both funders and boroughs on a monthly and quarterly basis.

In addition to using the ongoing evaluation which has taken place throughout the life of the project, this evaluation has also included an online survey sent out to businesses who used the project, as well as interviews with both boroughs' business leads and the three programme providers.

The programme year ran from October to September.



## E-business Programme successes in numbers



Staff digitally  
upskilled

**6,686**



Number of jobs  
safeguarded

**4,118**



Number of new  
jobs created

**826**



Staff trained

**10,569**



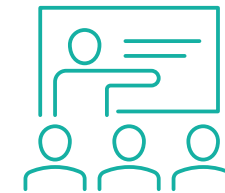
Number of  
businesses supported

**3,029**



Increased  
business turnover

**£57,438,104**



Number of individual activities  
in support of businesses

**29,942**

# The challenges

**Economic conditions for small businesses have rarely been tougher. Inflation, soaring energy prices, high rents, increases in business rates, not to mention the residual hangover from COVID and Brexit, have left many businesses in a precarious position.**

The impact of COVID on our business community cannot be overestimated; workplaces were closed and business practices significantly restricted, supply chains were disrupted and customers were unable to shop as they were accustomed. Unsurprisingly, this had a huge impact upon small and medium-sized businesses (SMEs).

**99% of all businesses** within the Local London sub-region are SMEs, this includes around **100,000 businesses** with fewer than **50 employees**; only **around 55%** of these would be expected to make it **past 3 years of trading**. For those businesses in particular, the pandemic represented an existential crisis, with many seeing their income stop entirely.

It is estimated that 78% of sole traders do not invest in digital training and 66% of small businesses do not have a budget for digital skills training.

The E-business programme provided businesses with access to expert advice, enabled them to build resilience and to thrive in an increasingly online age. It helped business owners:

- Build a strong online presence.
- Strengthen their business's cyber-security and data storage capabilities.
- Streamline processes.
- Enhance their online marketing and social media.
- Harness ecommerce and online payment systems.



# CASE STUDY

Alan Stewart founded **Faxlink Communications** in Bexley in 1985 as a one stop business equipment company offering high quality copiers, fax and printers, computer systems and networking installation, as well as office furniture supply.

The business suffered from downturn in demand and Alan approached South East Enterprise for support to help update his website and build a strategy to market services more effectively using digital marketing tools. Alan attended 'How to Build Your own Website' and 'Digital Marketing Content Plan' workshops, supported by an E-business Advisor, who helped him shape a plan.



I was introduced to Suzy Rai and South East Enterprise at a Business networking meeting, where I found they have a load of free training and support for businesses in Bexley. I had been meaning to update our website for some time so took advantage of their 'Build your own website' course, which was brilliant. I found the course instructor Lorraine, to be extremely knowledgeable and very helpful, and I came away with a basic website that was already better than my current one."



After a one-to-one meeting with Suzy, I attended the 'Creating your 3-month content plan' course, also with Lorraine, and with a further one-to-one meeting with Suzy imparting her extensive knowledge of marketing and helping with copy writing, my website has come on leaps and bounds."





## Responding to the challenges

**The E-business programme was already being successfully delivered in Greenwich before the launch of the Local London programme. It had been commissioned by the Royal Borough of Greenwich in 2014 to address the needs of local SMEs in a rapidly evolving market. The programme aimed to close the digital skills gap, to build up their resilience and make them more sustainable.**

Local London successfully bid for funding from London's Strategic Investment Pot (SIP) to scale up the Greenwich programme so that it could be delivered to SME businesses located in Local London's member boroughs over a 3 year period. This provided half the funding for the programme with the 8-member boroughs collectively match funding over £1.6 million.

Recognising the high volume of SMEs and micro-businesses within the sub-region, Local London sought to extend a programme that was already delivering meaningful results for those who needed support the most.

There was a recognition that SMEs and micro-businesses lacked the capacity or willingness to invest in skills training and were therefore not making the most of the opportunities that digital commerce and social media provide. Many businesses were unsure how and where to start, how to access support or could not afford to pay for it.

The E-business programme in Greenwich demonstrated that small businesses had the agility and eagerness to adopt new practices where support was made accessible and tailored to their specific needs.

The success of the programme has been built upon its non-prescriptive nature, where support can be tailored to meet the needs of individual businesses. By working with businesses on a one-to-one basis using experienced business advisers and identify the changes which will have the most impact upon their business, the programme has been able to optimise the time and effort businesses are able to put into it.

## Impact of the Greenwich E-business Programme

➤ **1000**  
jobs safeguarded

➤ **110**  
new jobs created

➤ **£17m**  
new revenue generated

# CASE STUDY

Angela Webster set up **Joint Works** in Greenwich to provide physiotherapy to businesses for their employees. Joint Works offers physio for stress and musculoskeletal issues, helping staff to feel physically better and ultimately reducing company sick days.

She found it difficult to promote her business and to find new clients.

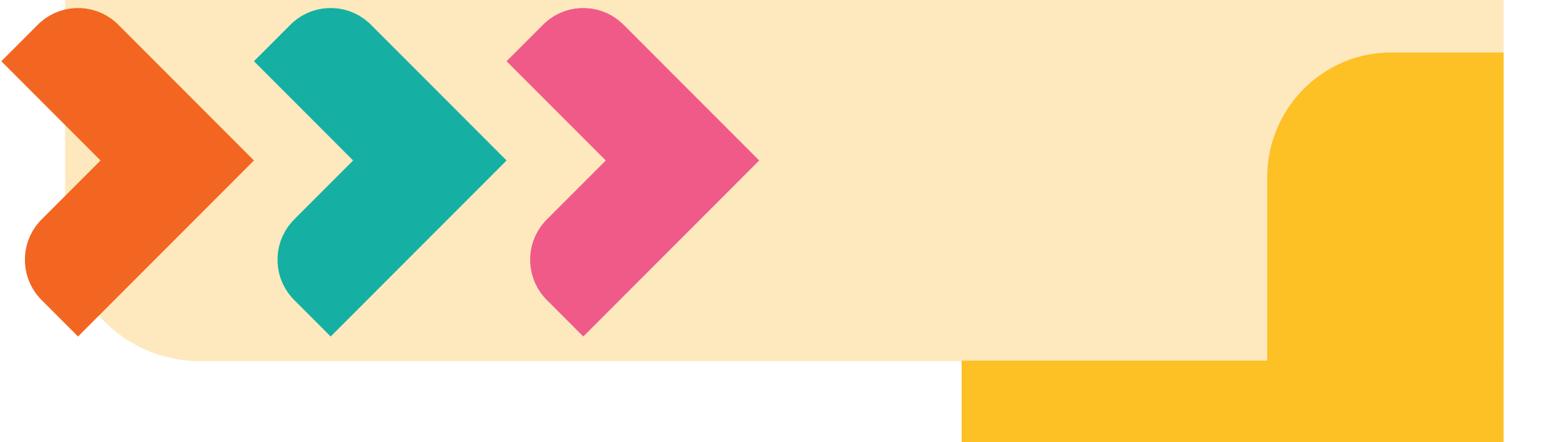
The E-business team carried out an initial audit to understand her digital presence and to see how Angela was promoting the business. Joint Works did not have a website and minimal social media presence, instead relying upon traditional tools, such as networking and word of mouth, to win new business.

The team guided Angela in obtaining a domain, creating a professional website and content, setting up a professional email account and using LinkedIn more effectively.

In just a few short months Angela managed to obtain new businesses.

“ I am fully booked and inundated with work!”

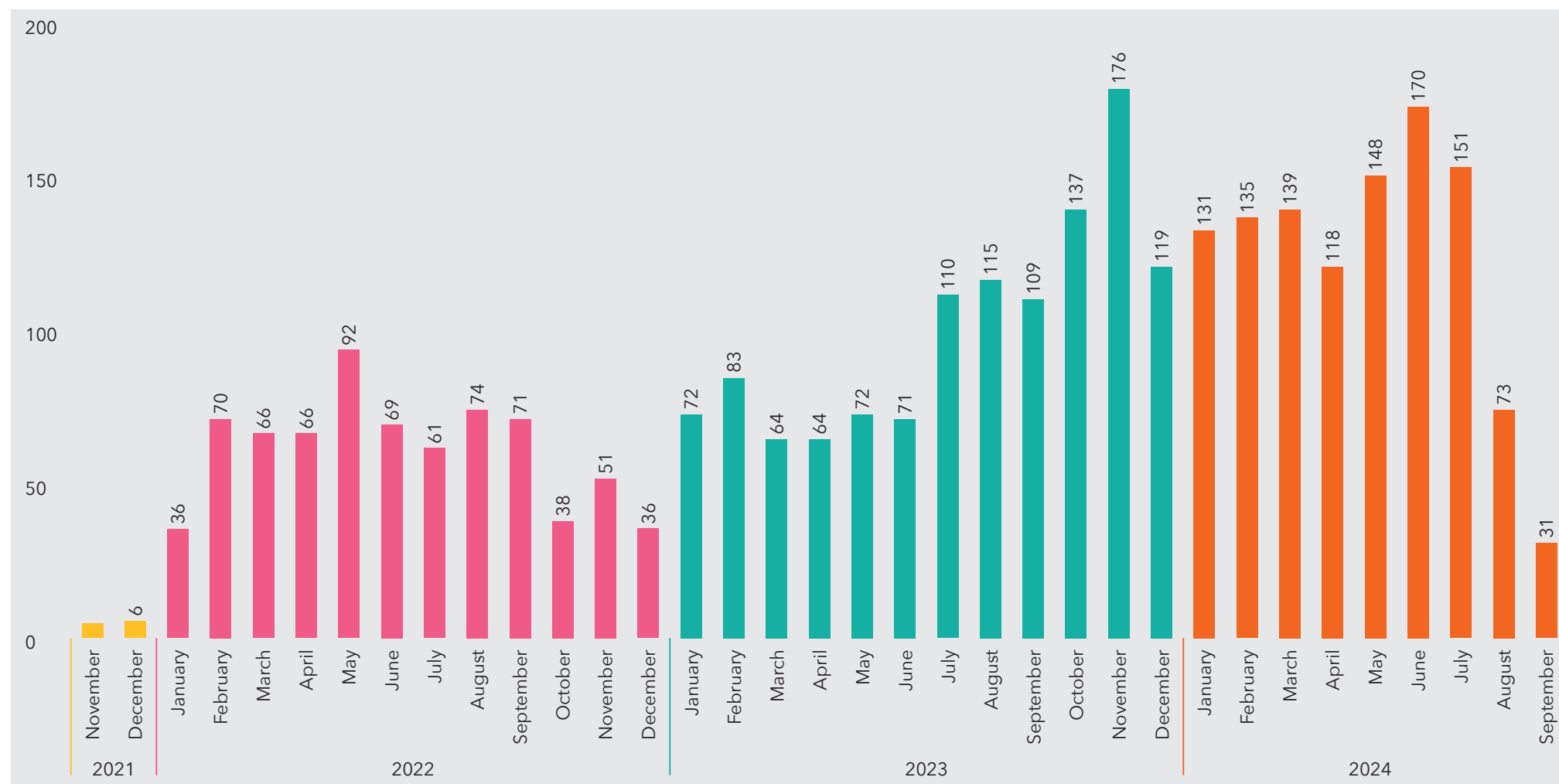
Angela Webster, **Joint Works**



## Engagement

In total, 3,029 businesses signed up for the business support programme.

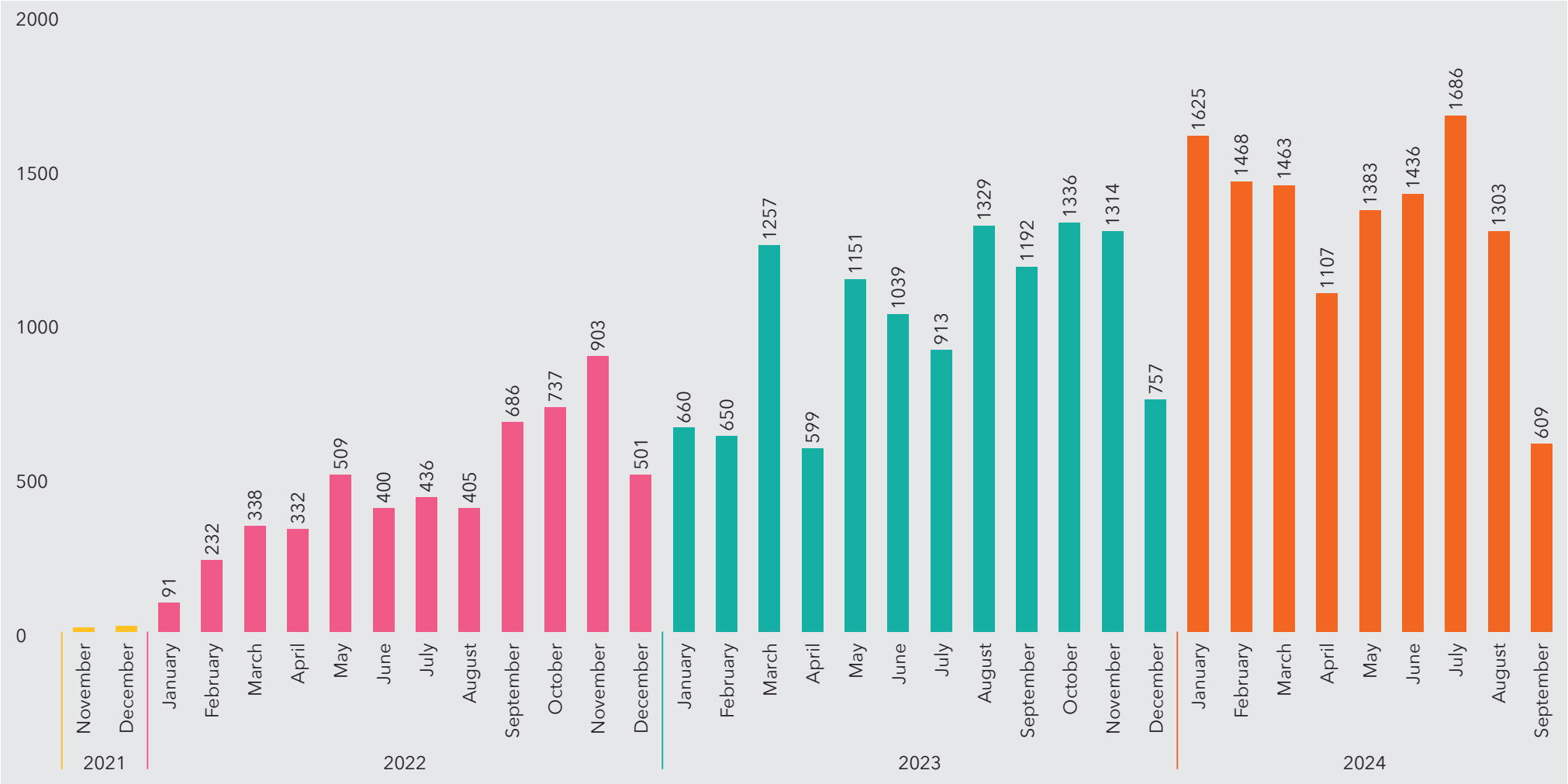
### Business support programme starts



However, many businesses found signing up to the full programme too large a commitment. In response to this, the E-business delivery partners

began offering customised one-to-one support with experienced business advisers and recording activity rather than full sign ups.

**Business support programme activity**

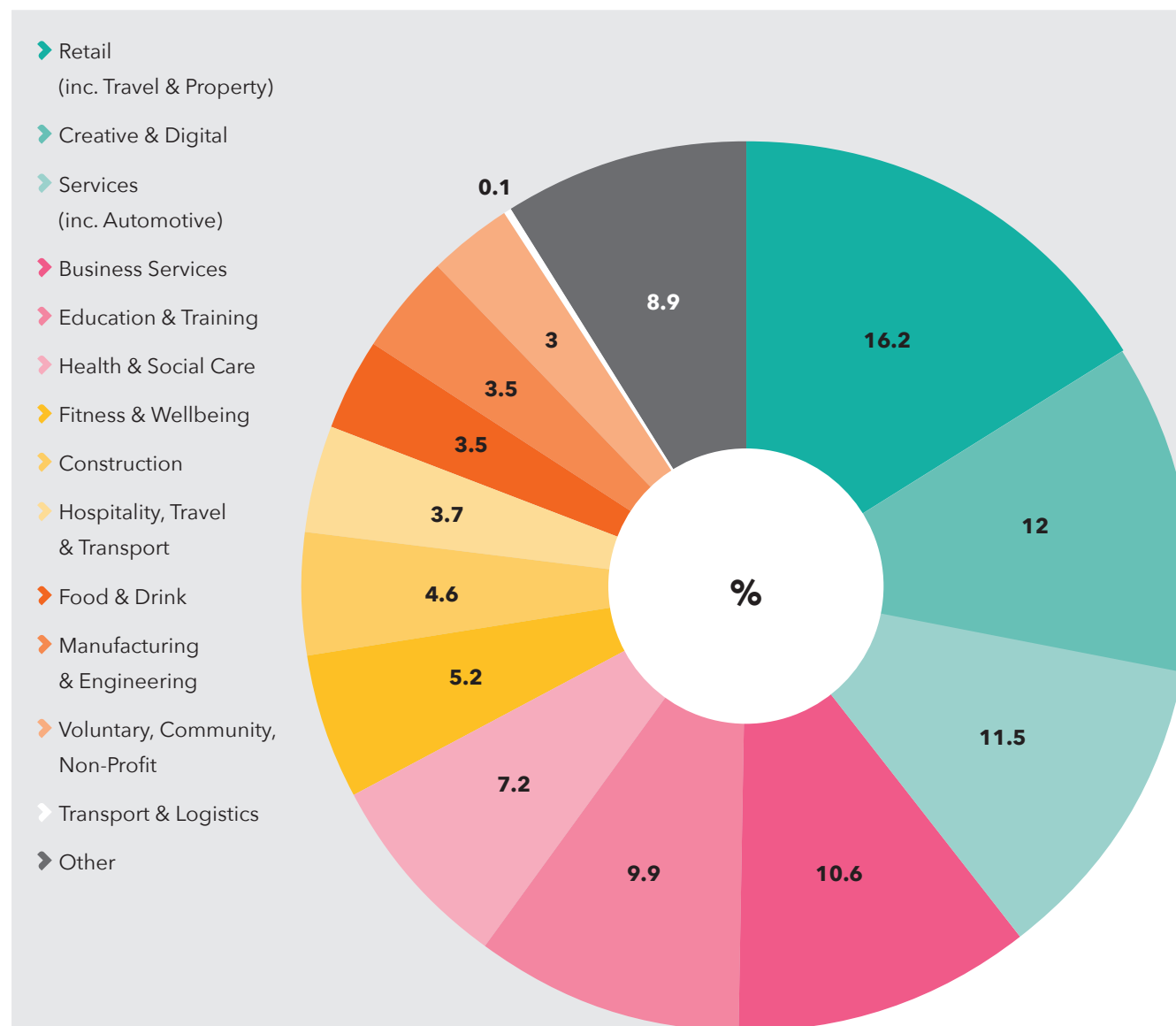




A high level analysis of participants shows that they come from a range of sectors, with large numbers coming from business and professional services, education and training, and retail, as well as the priority sectors identified in the Local London LSIP: construction, creative and digital, manufacturing, and health and care.

It should be noted that, while this data provides a good indication as to the types of businesses in our sub-region, it is not representational of the number of businesses in each sector. Some sectors may be underrepresented where digital capabilities are required less. As a sample, however, this could highlight potential areas of growth, where future support and funding may be targeted.

### Range of businesses supported by sector



# Impact

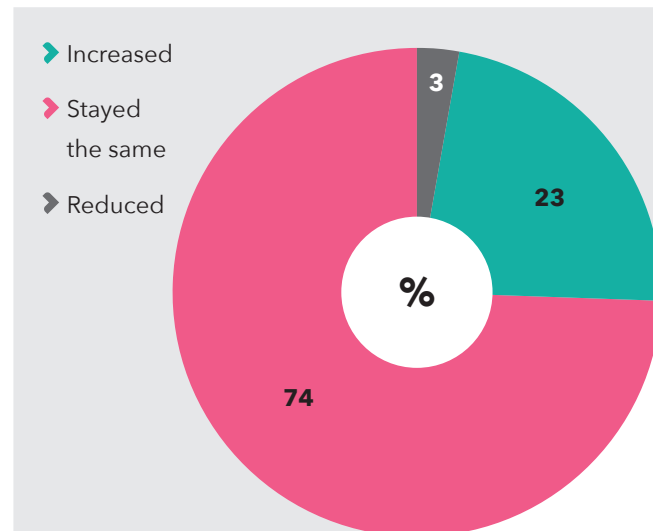
## Overall, the businesses who received support appreciated the programme.

Of those businesses who responded to our online survey, 23% reported an increase in the size of their workforce, while 74% reporting that they had stayed the same; only 3% reported a reduction in staff size.

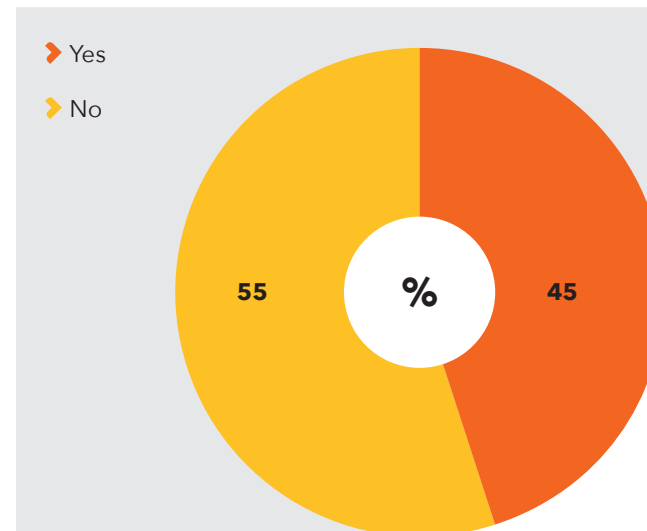
45% reported an increase in turnover since receiving E-business support.

Most importantly of all, however, 80% felt that their digital skills had improved, increasing their ability to promote their business online, their ability to trade products and services over the internet, and just as importantly, increasing their confidence to grow.

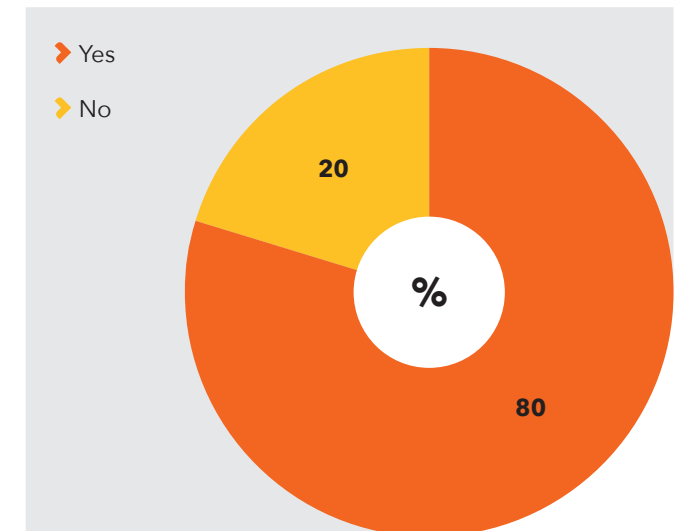
### Has the size of your workforce changed since you received E-business support?



### Have you seen an increase in turnover since receiving E-business support?



### Do you feel that your digital skills improved as a result of E-business support?



Businesses' appreciation of the E-business programme in boosting their digital skills and confidence to grow, was backed up by positive comments.

Many referenced marketing and advertising seeing the biggest change to their business, along with increased use of social media and websites to promote themselves.

**"Since joining the programme, I feel much more confident and secure in my business. My advisers were with me every step of the way and I've become a stronger person as a result."**

**Silvana Xhameta, Silvana**

**“**

**While I expected assistance and guidance with utilising digital tools to boost the business, I also received a comprehensive review of our business operations, which helped to provide confidence that we're moving in the right direction."**

Ola Soneye, **Work, Care and Thrive**



# CASE STUDY

**Tots and Tweenies** is a after School and Holiday Clubs based in Redbridge. It had only just got started when COVID struck in 2020. As well as support on financial forecasting, business owner Fareeha sought advice from the programme's Digital Adviser on her digital marketing strategy.

Since Fareeha started receiving support the business has seen a marked increase in turnover – she has introduced new services and is planning to expand her setup to other parts of London.



My adviser showed me how to make better use of social media and encourage more reviews on Google Business - this has proved much more effective than I could have imagined. We now have over 20 fabulous reviews from customers, which has prompted more enquires and some people have actually booked their children in with us directly, without even seeing the premises! They leave more positive feedback and say they will send their children again for any activities or sessions we plan in future."



The best thing about the support was it cleared my vision for my business, and I was able to implement it. I started it as an After School and Holiday Club and now I am offering tutoring and upcoming projects include sessions for SEN children and interactive sessions for toddlers (3 to 5 years old). The advice has really helped to make the business viable and grow.."





# Feedback



**As part of our evaluation the E-business Programme, we have been interviewing our boroughs' business leads on their experience of the programme, what went well and what lessons can be learned for future projects.**

## Overall management

Overall, the boroughs felt that they had built up good working relationships with the delivery partners. Business owners agreed with 91% of those who responded to our survey considering communication from delivery partners to be either good or very good.

At the beginning of the programme, there was some collaboration between boroughs and respective delivery partners to jointly market the offer. Overall numbers and reach was considered very positive, and where numbers were low, delivery partners responded, through door knocking, leaflet drops and hiring a telemarketer. Boroughs felt that the support on offer fitted in well with existing business support in boroughs, where it existed.

As well as the delivery partners' performance, boroughs were very complimentary about Local London's management of the programme, noting the team's responsiveness and the direction and organisation that they provided.

**91%** Business owners agreed

## Content

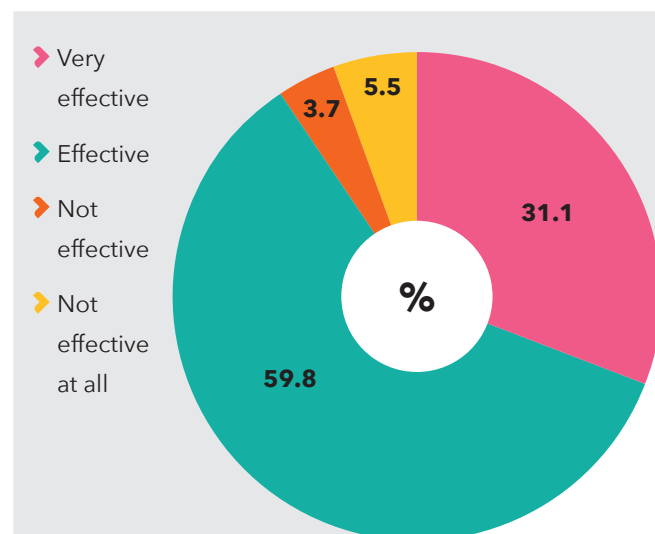
Overall, boroughs were very complimentary about the diversity of the topics on offer and the value for money it presented. The presentation of sessions was considered to be generally very good and overall professionally done.

Businesses agreed with 91% who responded to our survey considering the programme either effective or very effective.

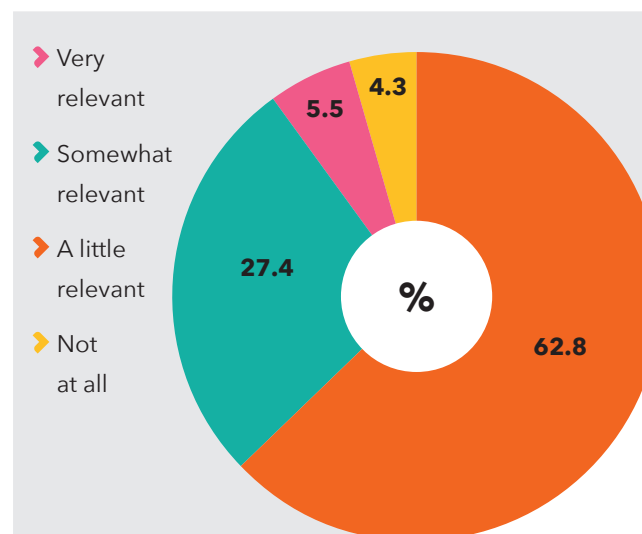
With 90% of employers considering it relevant to their needs.

This is also reflected in the support which was considered the most beneficial. The tailored one-to-one support offered by experienced business advisers proved the most popular business owners and the most effective at meeting their specific needs.

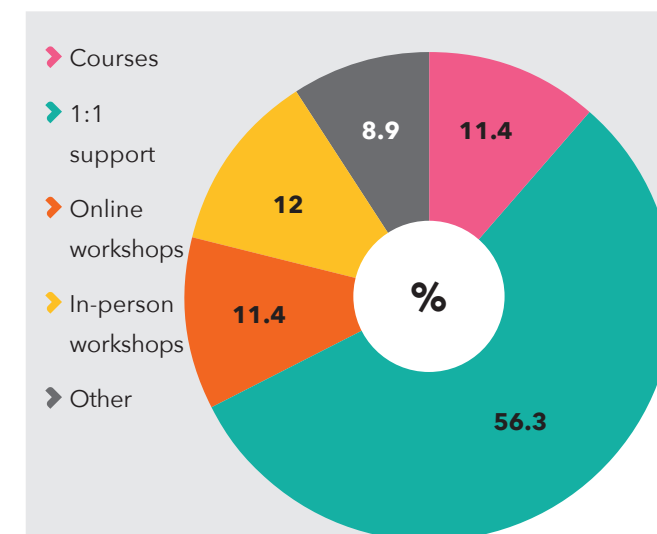
**How would you rate the overall effectiveness of the programme?**



**How relevant was the eBusiness programme content to your needs?**



**Which aspect of eBusiness support did you find most beneficial?**



# Lessons for the future

**Our conversations with boroughs naturally raised a number of challenges that the E-business programme faced, and lessons which could be learned for similar initiatives in future.**

## Setting up the programme

Boroughs spoke of there being a number of delays from the original bid to the start of the project. Commencing as it did during the height of the COVID pandemic, many of these could not be avoided. Boroughs felt that this delay left them in limbo, particularly in relation the businesses who they had already engaged and who had shown an interest in receiving support. A good deal of outreach had taken place earlier in the project and this momentum was lost.

The funding model gave priorities to bids with match funding, at a time when local authorities were experiencing significant financial pressures. Most boroughs did manage to match fund, although this also led to delays.

The financial pressures put on businesses by COVID also prevented private investment which had been an early target.

## Marketing

Over the course of the programme, our delivery partners also changed how they marketed. Any initial focus on digital marketing was soon replaced by a move to newspapers, leafleting and cold calling. Telemarketing became the main focus of marketing activity.

While some boroughs felt that independent marketing worked well, others were disappointed with the lack of join up with the councils' marketing teams.

Links to chambers of commerce and other business groups were also considered useful by delivery partners, and many worked alongside or within partner venues.

It was noted that businesses needed to be followed up as soon as possible following first contact in order to maintain momentum.

## Multi-provider model

The E-business programme was provided by three different organisations: **Enterprise Enfield** (in Enfield, Redbridge and Waltham Forest), **Newham College** (in Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Newham, and **South East Enterprise** (in Bexley and Greenwich).

Boroughs felt that the multi-provider model resulted in a lack of join up in the project, each provider, for example, had a different website, when a single portal, as discussed early on, would have been more convenient and less confusing for business.

The multi-provider model also resulted in differing levels of service in each borough, as well as different marketing and different content.



## Project delivery

A number of the boroughs felt that the eligibility criteria for businesses seeking support were too restrictive. The project excluded start-ups and required businesses to have been trading for over 6 months. This criteria has now been removed in the London-wide roll out of the programme, something welcomed by boroughs.

Geographical eligibility was also considered too restrictive, as registered office addresses may not reflect where businesses operate.

It was felt that the referral process was initially, at least, too complicated and often off-putting for businesses. This was simplified over time, with boroughs developing the sign up model to also encompass some diagnostics.

Similarly, there was an initial expectation that businesses would sign up for the full programme of courses and this was how programme activity was initially counted. Overtime, it was recognised that this was too big an expectation of business owners who preferred more modular tailored support to meet their specific need, and so support was provided more flexibly and activity recorded on this basis.

## Course Content

The content of courses evolved over time to meet business need.

Conflicting messaging on level of content with some saying too basic, and others thinking it too advanced, suggesting that SMEs had a range of expertise and would benefit from tailored courses. However, 1:1 support by experienced business advisers was universally popular and appreciated by the SMEs. Ecommerce was the most popular.

Over the life of the project, demand for AI, digital marketing and cyber security became more prominent.

## Other suggestions

Other issues raised by boroughs were the confusing offer being provided to employers through multiple funds and income streams from boroughs' own offers of support through the GLA-funded to Grow London Local.

Boroughs also suggested more accredited courses or links to accredited qualifications would have also have been useful for employers.





# Borough breakdown

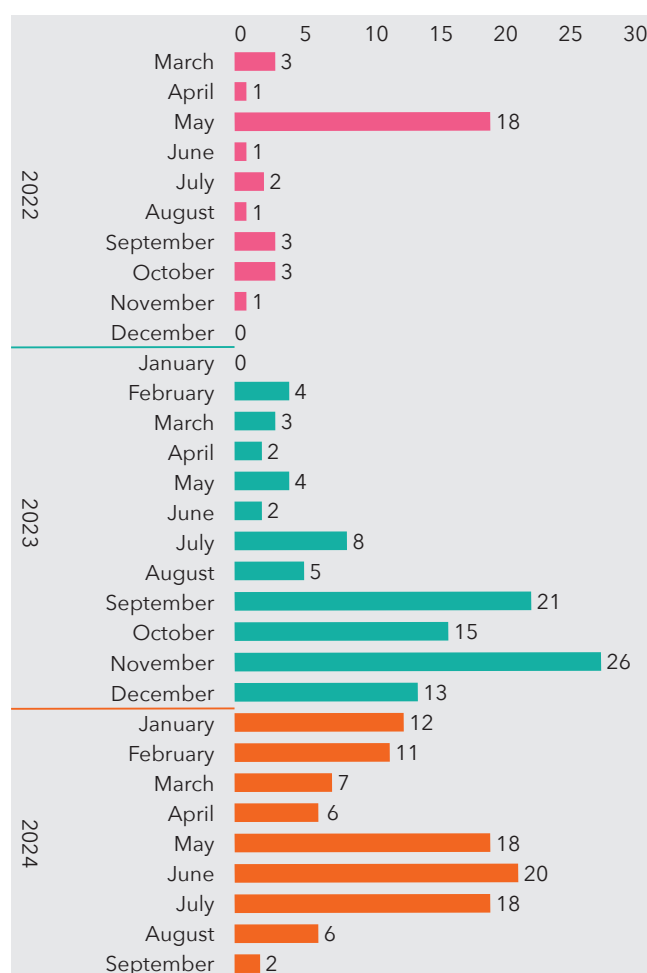
## Barking and Dagenham

Activity in **Barking and Dagenham** really picked up in the second half of the programme, performing strongly. Over the course of the programme, strong relationships were built between the our delivery partner, Newham College, and borough, as well as with the MAKE IT Enterprise Centre.

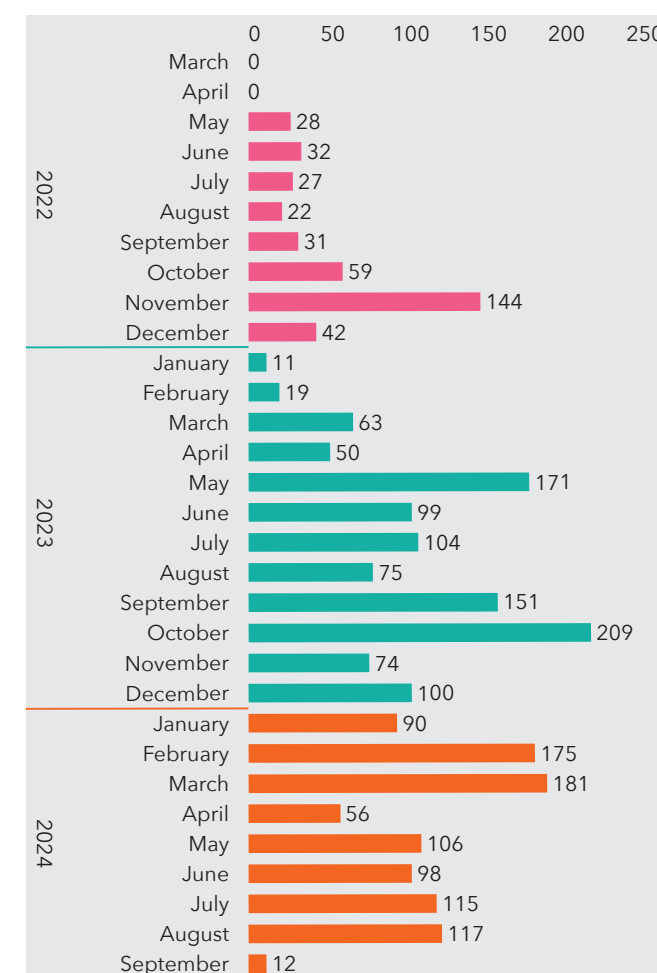
The lack of existing support within the borough, for example through an active chamber of commerce has been cited as a factor in the slow start, as was the relative inexperience of the provider. The support landscape in Barking and Dagenham was also complicated by the presence of the UKSPF-funded Barking Enterprise Centre and a duplication of offer.

The borough suggested that more could have been made of dynamic marketing and use of their contacts and referrals. They have also suggested that a simplified referral process could also have helped.

**Business Support Programme Starts**



**Business Support Programme Activities**



# CASE STUDY

**Brennan & Burch** are an interior design product company based in Barking. Their owners, Lisa Brennan and Majida Burch, contacted the E-business team to see how they could streamline their online e-commerce efforts. They wanted to understand how they could manage their website and merchant services better, and optimise their presence via search engines and social media-based promotion.

The E-business team provided them with training in:

- Social media management platforms.
- Merchant services for websites.
- Keyword analysis for highly effective copywriting.
- Improving website layout and navigation.



[the E-business Programme] helped us gain confidence in Shopify features and learn to navigate our way through the site. We now feels confident to write blogs and we're independently able to edit website pages."

Lisa and Majida, **Brennan & Burch**



## Bexley

In Bexley the programme was delivered by South East Enterprise.

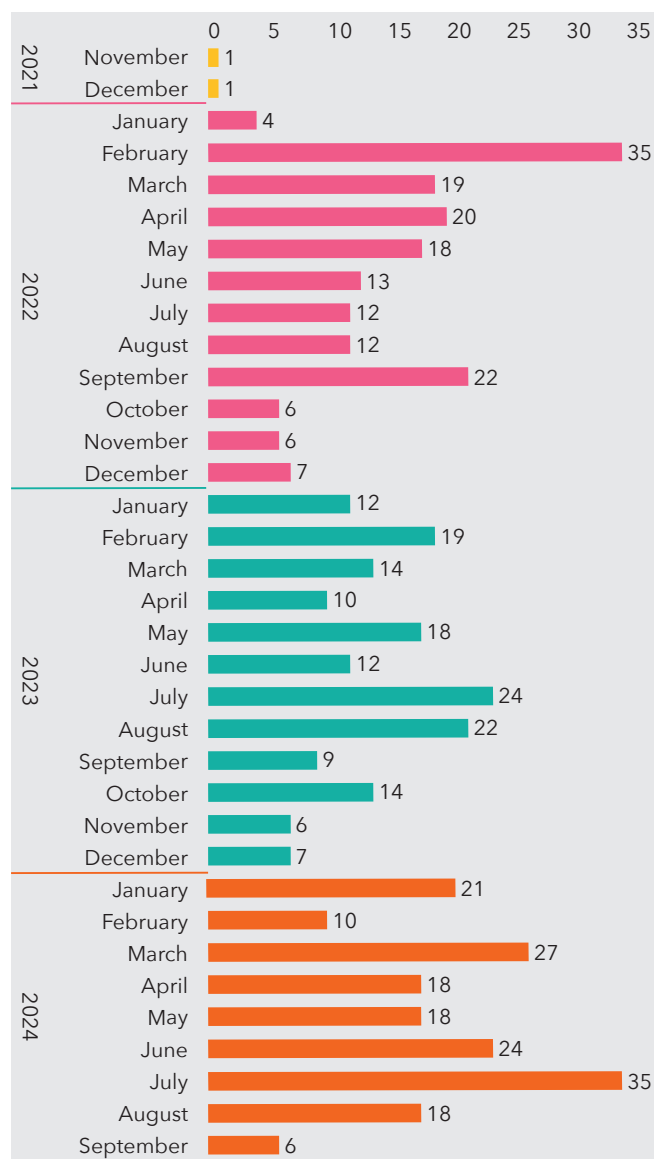
Performance activity within **Bexley** was consistently strong, helped by South East Enterprise's considerable experience in delivering the programme.

The programme faced challenges at the start. Businesses in the borough could access similar support from multiple avenues, making the new offer and who the provider was unclear. This was exacerbated by an element of competition on the high street with Retail Revival.

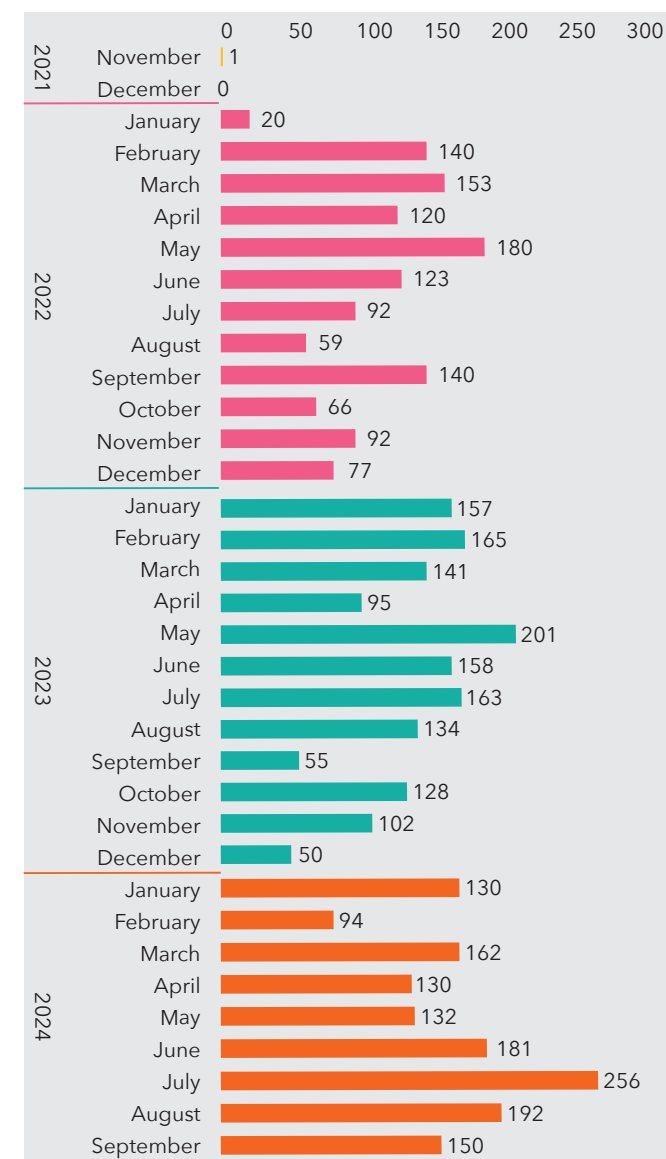
However, South East Enterprise was very responsive to working with Retail Revival, temporarily halting marketing whilst programmes could be aligned and made complementary.

The South East Enterprise made a concerted effort to recruit locally, supporting the local business awards and basing themselves locally. They built up a good relationship with the council and worked well with town centre managers.

### Business Support Programme Starts



### Business Support Programme Activities



# CASE STUDY

**Perfect Facilities Services** is a specialised cleaning, property maintenance and janitorial service in the borough of Bexley. Its owner, Gabriel Ogunbiyi, looked for support from South East Enterprise to identify the best way to increase his turnover.

His E-business Adviser conducted an initial audit and identified commercial clients presenting the most significant opportunity to grow. Together they created a targeted content-driven marketing plan to build brand awareness and generate more business from this sector. Key to this was attending South East Enterprise workshops on Strategic Marketing, LinkedIn, Instagram and Google My Business.



I enjoy the one-to-one business sessions and workshops, as it teaches me about using tools in business I wouldn't be aware of. I have gained more confidence in achieving some of my original goals and new ones."

Gabriel, **Perfect Facilities Services**

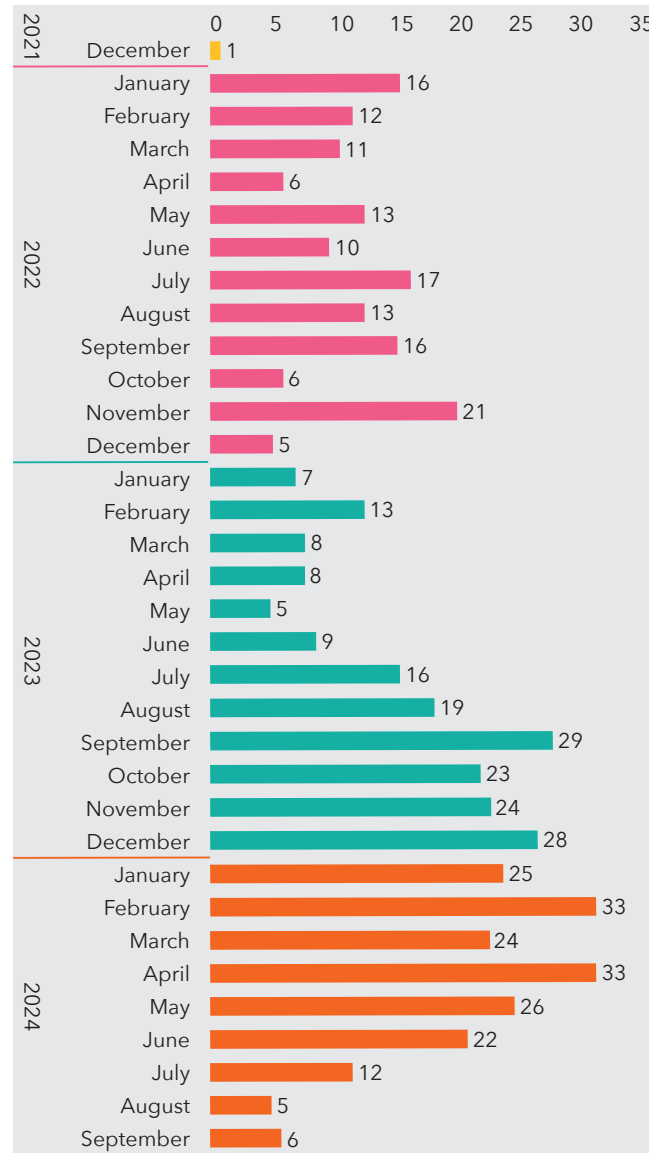


## Enfield

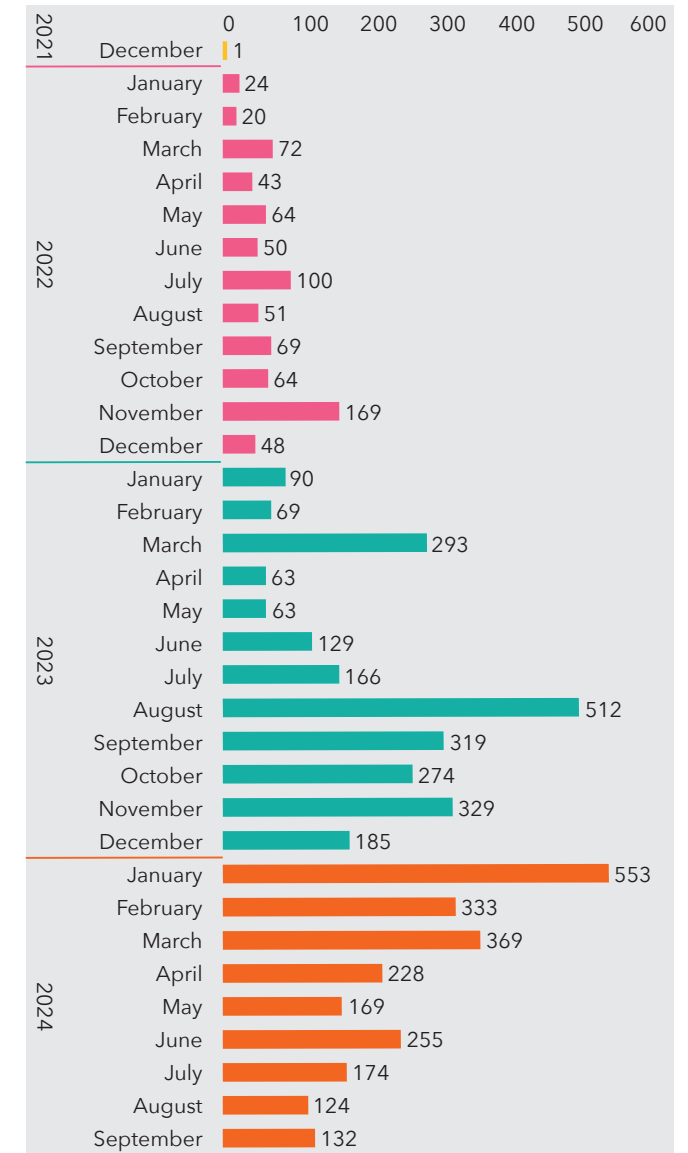
Performance in **Enfield** was strong, really picking up in the second half of the programme. Enterprise Enfield, who delivered the programme in Enfield, had already developed close working relationship with Enfield council and boasted good connections to businesses within the borough, not least through their relationship with the local chambers of commerce.

The council were extremely happy with the programme within their borough.

### Business Support Programme Starts



### Business Support Programme Activities



# CASE STUDY

**Optimum Group Partnerships Ltd** is an Enfield based company, which has been trading for over 15 years as the parent company to a group of companies that provides security, safety and logistical solutions, systems and services to protect people, secure premises and safeguard property.

The company's CEO, Tim Chegel, wanted to improve marketing and increase revenue.



The business adviser I was assigned to, was exceptional and provided fantastic advice and support on the financial and human resources aspects of the business. This enabled me to introduce a new plan of action, create a budget and make better decisions regarding the business. I now have an innovation day every month to help generate new ideas and I have a clearer idea of how to plan ahead.



I received excellent digital advice and support from the programme's Digital Expert, Vernetta John-Jollies, who was extremely impactful. Vernetta was able to tell me where the gaps were in my digital marketing. This allowed us to create an effective plan to fill these gaps and innovate other digital aspects of my marketing.

The investment and time they put in to help and support businesses is invaluable. We have now launched a new website with a much better structure which is attracting more prospects and visitors."

Tim Chegel, **Optimum Group Partnerships Ltd**



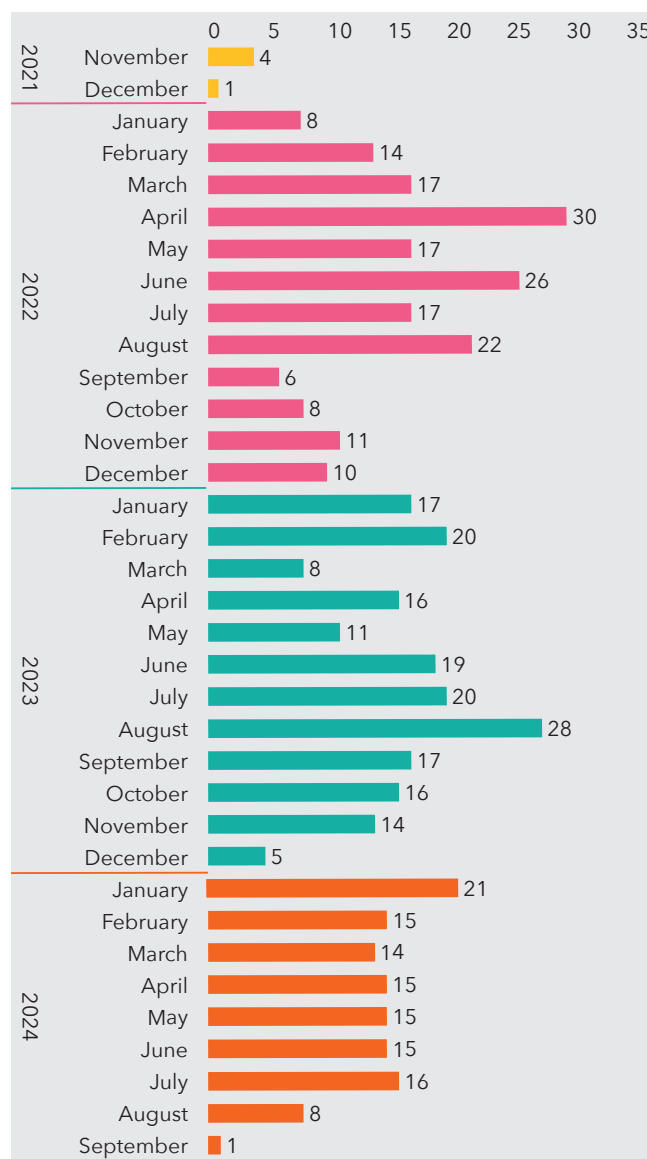
## Greenwich

The programme's performance in **Greenwich** was consistently strong.

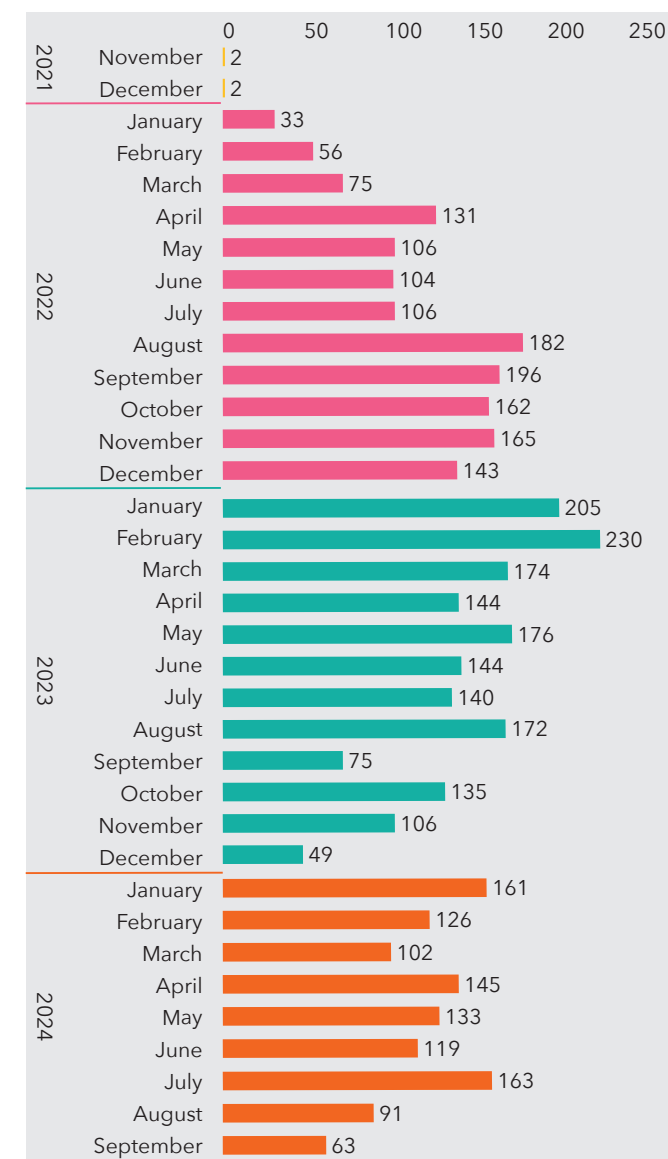
South East Enterprise, who delivered the programme in Greenwich, were already well established within the borough (see page 9), having originally been set up as Greenwich's Enterprise Board and remaining, to this day, an associate company.

As a borough, Greenwich has a strong offer to business, and their long-standing relationship with South East Enterprise enabled the E-business programme to fit comfortably within their existing services.

### Business Support Programme Starts



### Business Support Programme Activities



# CASE STUDY

**The London Leather Workshop**, based in Woolwich and founded by Melissa and Sara, offers design consultancy, sampling and manufacturing of handbags and accessories, as well as leatherworking courses. To take their business to the next level, they needed to strengthen their online presence.



South East Enterprise has been there for us since the beginning of our journey."



By participating in the **E-business** programme, a combination of workshops and targeted one-to-one sessions, we gained the confidence and knowledge necessary to grow our business effectively and in line with the times.

It also gave us the opportunity to network with other local small businesses, which is extremely important, especially in the early stages of our own growth."

**The London Leather Workshop**



## Havering

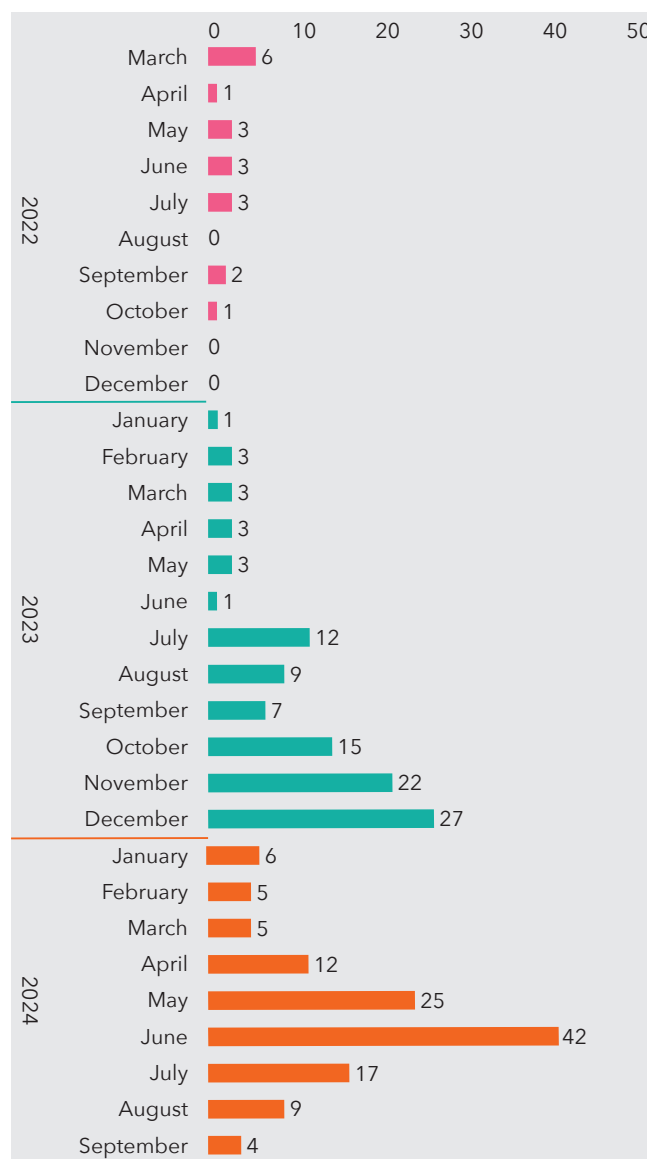
After a slow start, activity in the borough of **Havering** picked up during the final months of the programme.

The lack of existing business support within the borough and the relative inexperience of the provider (Newham College) were cited as contributing factors, with limited opportunity to collaborate.

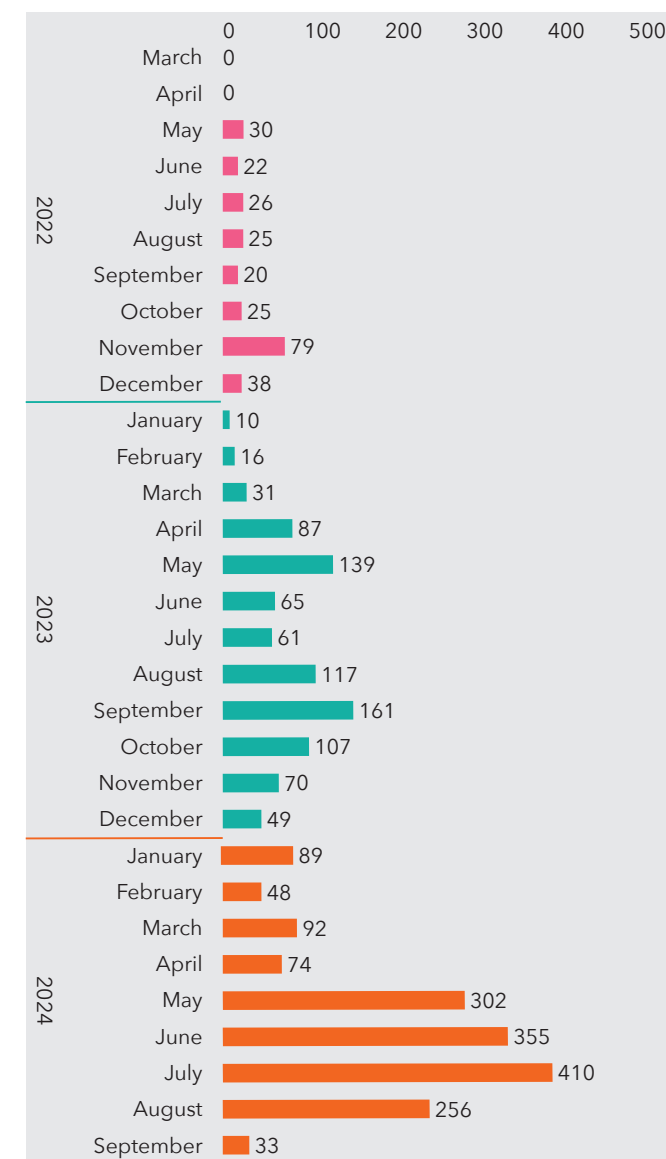
Despite the lack of capacity, the borough was able to promote the programme to 10-20,000 businesses across the borough, resulting in a significant pick up in performance in the second half of the programme.

Through working in partnership with local partners such as Centre for Engineering and Manufacturing Excellence (CEME) the Newham College was able to reach a much larger number of employers.

### Business Support Programme Starts



### Business Support Programme Activities



# CASE STUDY

**Andrews Catering** is a catering and events company in Havering. Its owner, Elisabetta Andrews, was keen to embrace the digital marketplace's power to grow her business further but felt overwhelmed by options available.

Elisabetta was encouraged to join the E-business Microsoft Fundamental training course and successfully passed the Microsoft Fundamentals Course.



**With their help I managed to overcome my grey areas and improve my confidence.**

**Our next step is to rejuvenate our website and the E-business support is on course to get us there."**



**Steve and the rest of the team are always there when I needed them."**

Elisabetta, **Andrews Catering**



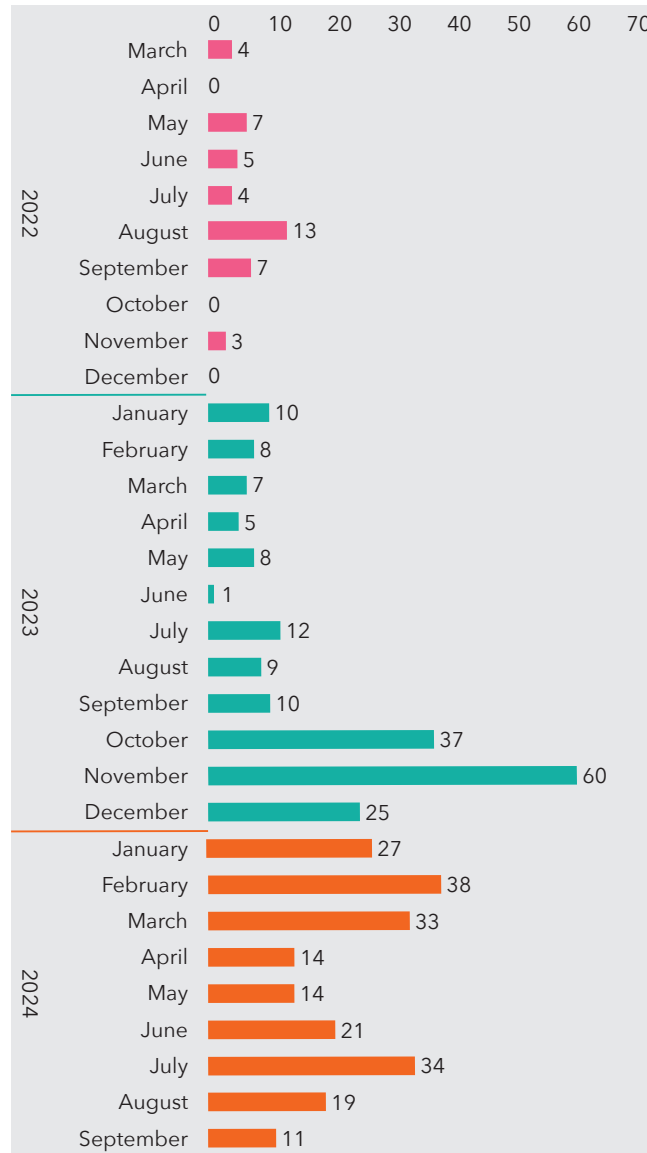


## Newham

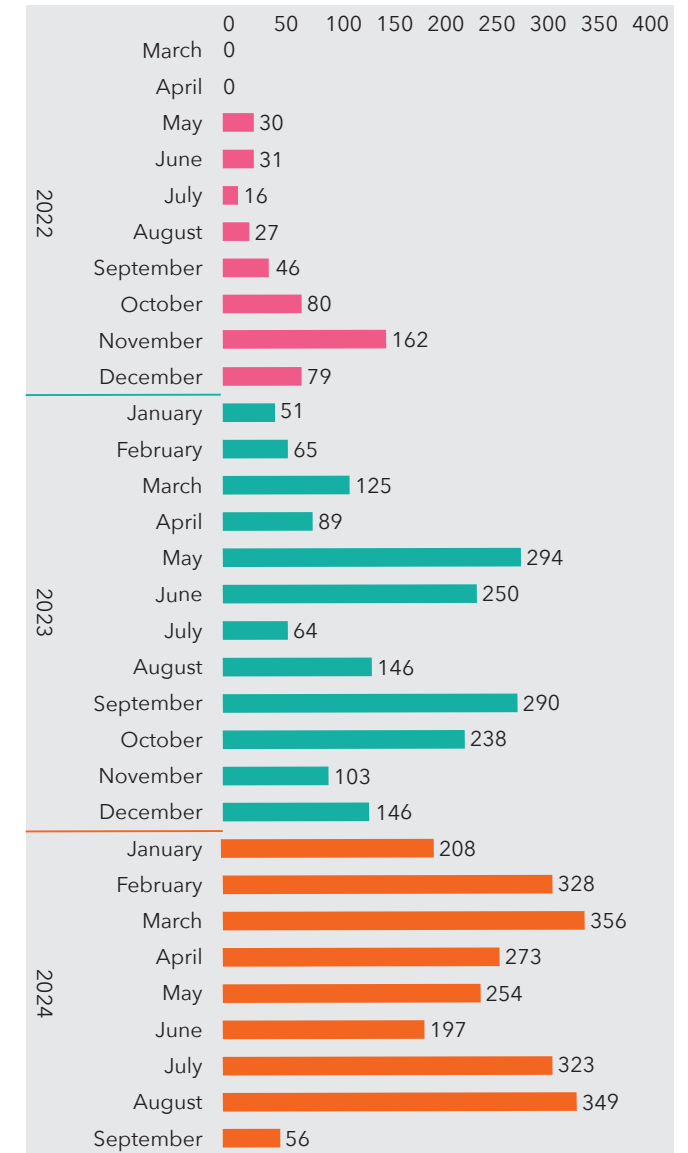
Performance within **Newham** was strong throughout. The borough already had a strong offer to business and built up a good relationship with Newham College which meant the e-business programme fitted seamlessly in with existing provision.

Support within the borough was provided by Newham College who were able to utilise their existing services, knowledge and venues within the borough to provide a strong offer to business.

### Business Support Programme Starts



### Business Support Programme Activities



# CASE STUDY

**Fitcredibles** was set up in 2015 in the borough of Newham to offer their clients fitness and nutritional coaching face-to-face and online.

The digital tools that Fitcredibles already had in place were excellent, but they wanted to explore how the e-business team could help them to improve their social media presence and further exploit the functionality of their website to enable stronger client reach/relationships.

The e-business advisor team set out a plan that focussed on how they could assist Fitcredibles to develop and implement a new marketing drive and rebrand of their website, including:

- Social media management platforms.
- SEO-based marketing strategies.
- Website enhancements to enable growth.



The guys at Newham College have been amazing. I love the attention to detail and hands-on support I get for my business. The team is attentive and takes your business as their own - I highly recommend it to anyone who needs the support and wants to grow."

**Fitcredibles**



## Redbridge

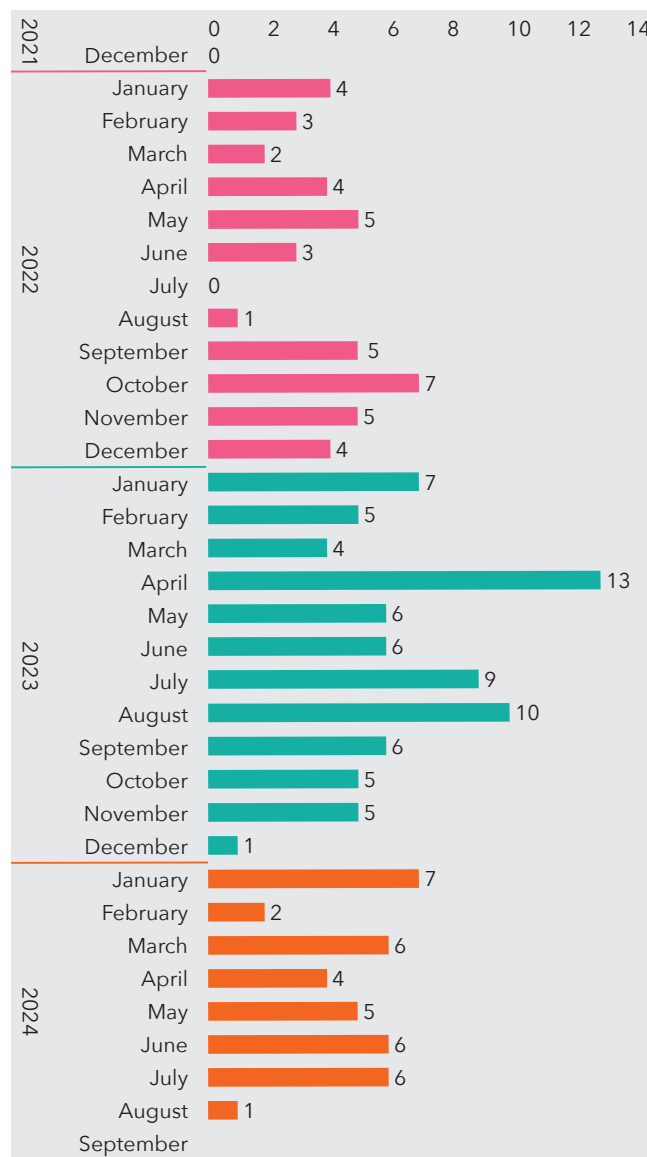
Enterprise Enfield delivered the programme within **Redbridge** with strong performance throughout. Both Enterprise Enfield and Redbridge Council commented upon the positive relationship they built during the programme.

The council was frustrated by the delays caused by COVID, having carried out a lot of outreach when the programme was first suggested, only for that momentum to be lost due to unavoidable delays.

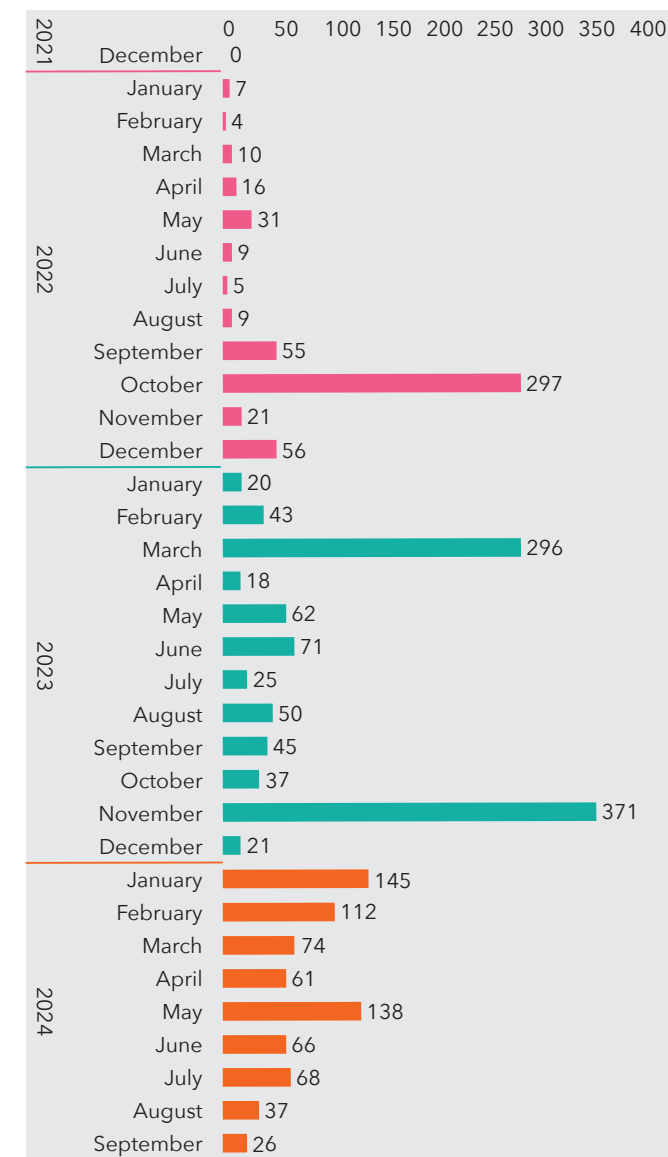
As a borough, Redbridge has a large number of SMEs, however, sign ups to the programme began slowly, possibly due to a 'too good to be true' perception. Borough officers worked hard to sign up businesses.

Increased use of council communication channels could have increased sign up, as could a stronger pipeline, such as start-up and pre-start up courses.

### Business Support Programme Starts



### Business Support Programme Activities



# CASE STUDY

**The Music Place**, in Wanstead, is a space for people to learn instruments and engage with music through a variety of workshops and events.


In April 2022, co-director Liliana Dimovska approached Enterprise Enfield, looking to expand the reach of the business and to develop a marketing plan. Liliana had ambitions of connecting to the “grassroots” of the local community, to upgrade the business website and branding, with a vision to develop an online portal for teachers and students to facilitate enrolment.



Our organisation was very fortunate to have been a part of the E-business Programme. The one-on-one sessions and live webinars with my mentors were invaluable. Their support and guidance helped us launch a brand-new digital marketing campaign, develop an online music lesson portal, and improve our bottom line.

The expertise in digital tools yielded more efficient business operations and opened our minds to many more new possibilities and options for running the business. We highly recommend this programme to anyone looking to enhance their digital presence and improve their business operations.”

Liliana, **The Music Place**



The Music Place has already reaped the benefits and seen a significant impact with an **18% increase** in turnover since embarking on the E-business programme.

## Waltham Forest

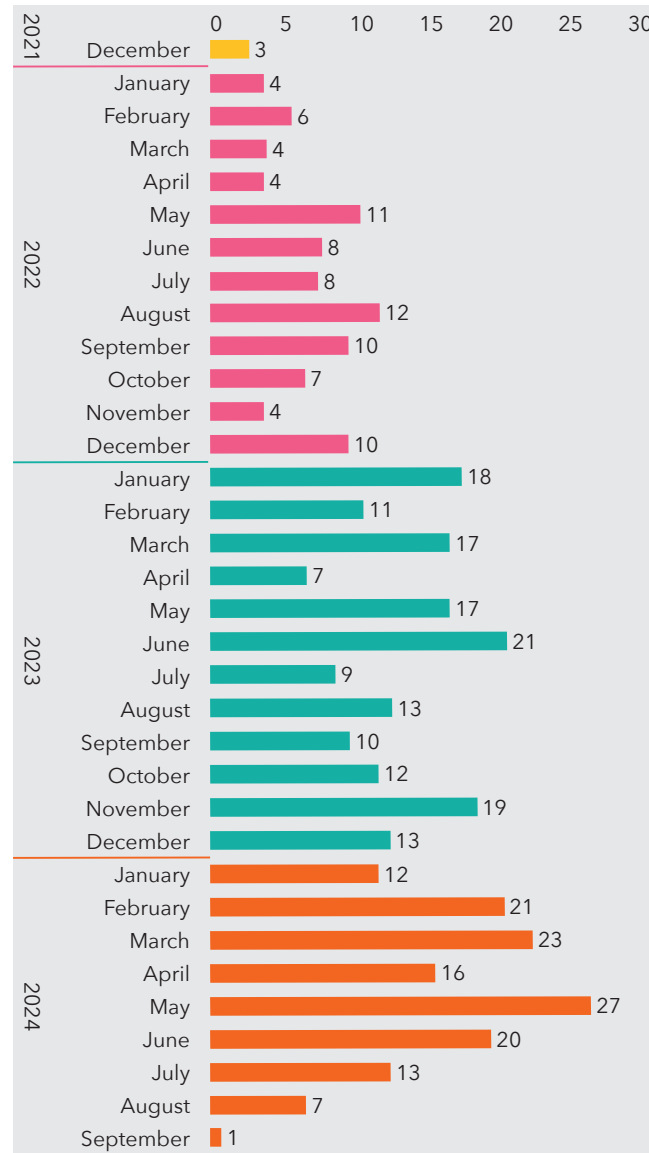
The programme, delivered by Enterprise Enfield, performed well throughout. Both Enterprise Enfield and the council commented upon the positive relationship they created through the programme.

Many of the businesses within **Waltham Forest** were transgenerational and lacked digital skills, this proved particularly problematic during COVID.

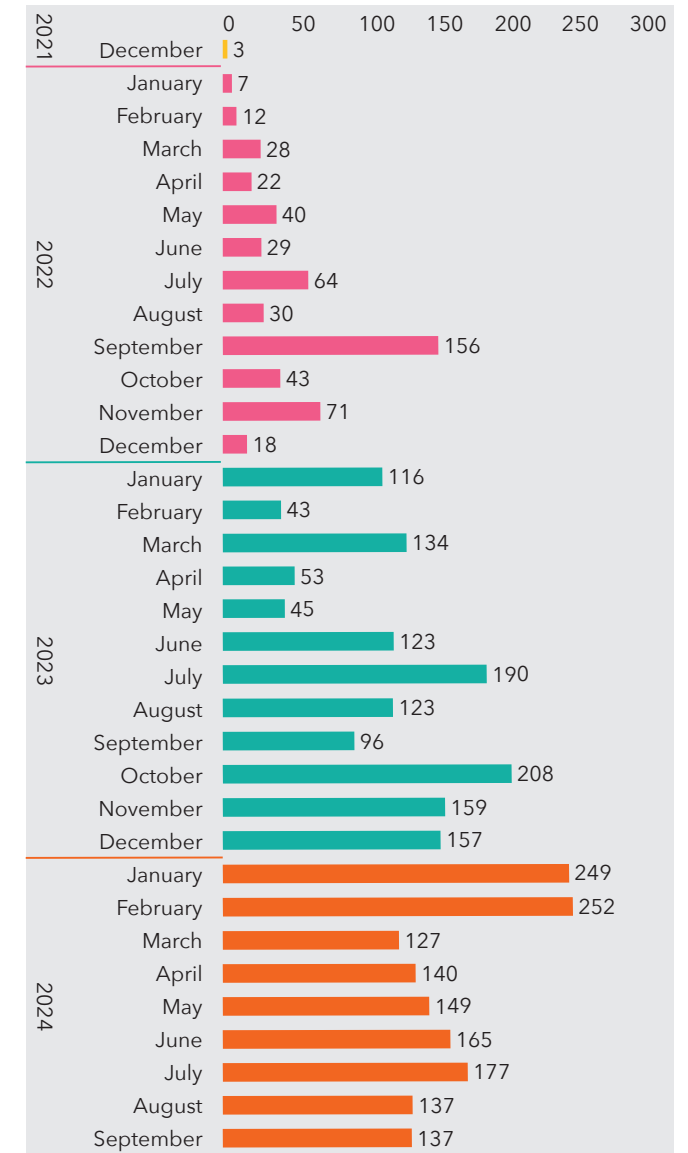
The borough and Enterprise Enfield worked closely together to market support and were able to ensure that the E-business programme complemented the borough's already mature offer of support to SMEs.

Enterprise Enfield's close links to the local chambers also helped with their employer engagement.

**Business Support Programme Starts**



**Business Support Programme Activities**



# CASE STUDY

**Shot By Martyna**, is owned by professional personal branding photographer, Martyna Przybysz.

Martyna approached Enterprise Enfield for advice and help with attracting more clients and improving her marketing skills. Her goal was to **“put herself on the map”** in Waltham Forest.

On registering, Martyna was assigned the help of a Business Adviser and Digital Expert. Regular zoom meetings with both experts meant that Martyna was able to better focus on marketing and build her client base steadily.

“ I have been meeting with them every 2-3 months to discuss marketing and my challenges, such as consistency, and the overwhelm I experienced with all the different media putting my messages across. We narrowed it down to building a stronger mailing list, showing up on social media in a way that feels doable, and networking locally as much as possible.”

“ The programme has helped me immensely in strategising how to attract new clients and get more hands-on support in my business, as well as putting a financial plan together that feels feasible and realistic. It has helped me see myself more as a business owner than I did before, which has been extremely empowering.”

Martyna, **Shot By Martyna**

The E-business programme also supported Martyna to explore potential avenues for attracting funding for The Kind Space project – and she successfully secured **£620** from William Morris Big Local fund.





# Conclusion

**The E-business programme has been viewed as extremely successful by councils, delivery providers and, most importantly, local businesses.**

The support being provided was welcomed, in particular, the tailored one-to-one support that providers were able to offer through experienced business advisers.

The programme highlighted a number of systemic issues which were overcome by the delivery partners but which should be considered by funders of similar schemes.

## The Landscape

Whilst the E-business programme provided welcome and much needed support to SMEs in the area of digital skills, this was within the context of other support for SMEs and other businesses being provided by councils or other funding streams, such as Grow London Local.

**Recommendation.** Funders should seek to align future offers to existing avenues of support to help businesses to navigate the system better and choose the support that's right for them and to help boroughs in signposting.



## Join Up

Across the Local London sub-region, the E-business programme was provided by three different delivery partners: Enterprise Enfield (in Enfield, Redbridge and Waltham Forest), Newham College (in Barking and Dagenham, Havering and Newham, and South East Enterprise (in Bexley and Greenwich).

Whilst two of the partners had relationships in some of their boroughs, all three partners needed to foster new relationships and navigate the landscapes in some of their areas. In addition, whilst two of the partners were enterprise agencies, the third was a college without specific experience in this area. These factors naturally resulted in differing outcomes across the Local London sub-region.

Differing outcomes were exacerbated by the three delivery partners working to different SLAs – a result of the application process.

Whilst there was some effort to create uniformity across the three partners, confusion around terminology, different working practices and offers and differing levels of experience magnified the extent of those differing outcomes.

**Recommendation.** At the commencement of similar multi-partner initiatives, consideration should be given to agreeing shared terminology, aligning working practices, and joining up the delivery through single branding and online portal.

## Programme Launch

The E-business programme was set up in 2019 and its launch experienced unavoidable delays due to COVID and lockdown. Boroughs felt that the delay to support being provided to SMEs who had already been engaged resulted in many of them being left in limbo.

**Recommendation.** Any similar future programmes should seek greater coordination with borough and alignment with borough offers to business, particularly when seeking to use borough marketing and employer contacts.

## Eligibility

Eligibility criteria for accessing E-business support required businesses to be operating for at least 6 months. Whilst this was generally sensible with very young businesses focused on more fundamental aspects of setting up, this did also leave some SMEs without support. Boroughs felt this eligibility requirement too restrictive and at least one delivery partner provided advice to ineligible businesses outside their contract, whilst systems had to be put in place to ensure that those businesses weren't lost.

**Recommendation.** This requirement has now been removed from the legacy programme, which has been welcomed. However, future programmes should consider ways to signpost ineligible businesses elsewhere.

Other improvements and modifications to the original offer naturally evolved over the course of the programme, such as to course content, sign up processes and recruitment issues, these have been noted in the report but have not been included as recommendations.



## Next Steps/Legacy

Whilst the E-business programme, as managed by Local London, ended in September 2024, the model's success helped attract additional funding to see it continue under a different structure and rolled out across the whole London, until March 2025. Two of our delivery partners (Enterprise Enfield and South East Enterprise) are sharing their expertise as part of a consortium to help even more businesses in the new scheme. Although Local London is no longer the managing authority we continued to support the programme being integrated into our member boroughs.

The new pan-London scheme has built upon the success of the initial Local London E-business programme and incorporated learning and recommendations from our scheme. The new London-wide programme has also seen other changes, including the reduction of the eligibility criteria to just one month's trading.

In summary, despite launching against a backdrop of world-wide pandemic, the Local London E-business programme successfully helped thousands of local SMEs become more robust, as evidenced by the jobs created, safeguarded and the significant increase in business turnover, and feedback from businesses who were supported.

Further, the Local London E-business programme was considered a positive experience and has created stronger relationships between borough partners and programme delivery partners who have all expressed a willingness to work with each other again in future if a similar opportunity arises.

We are delighted that our successful model, born and grown in our sub-region has been modified and expanded across the whole of London. SMEs play an important role in London's economy, especially in our sub-region. Recognising that without intervention around 45% will fold within three years, long-term E-business support could contribute to micro, small and medium-sized businesses defying the odds in greater numbers and enhancing their positive impacting on the local and wider economy.





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