

Democratising Entrepreneurship 2.0

Libraries as engines of economic
recovery and growth

July 2023



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Their support is vital in helping us to deliver programmes and services that democratise entrepreneurship and help people, from all walks of life, to start up and grow sustainable businesses.

Introduction

In 2019 we released *Democratising Entrepreneurship: Libraries as engines of economic growth*, an evaluation report of the Business & IP Centre (BIPC) Network and our impact on local business communities and economies across the country. We learned that our services were reaching more people from diverse and disadvantaged backgrounds than ever before. Located in public libraries on or near high streets, we were delivering proven social and economic impact, and crucially, our customers were creating robust businesses.

Using BIPC services to research their markets, understand and protect their intellectual property assets, and invest in their skills to learn the 'nuts and bolts' of running a small business, they were positioning themselves to be sustainable for the long-term.

Little did we know, that within a year, the world would change considerably, and our customers would face the hardest challenge of their business lives. Many were forced to completely change their business model, to step back, reevaluate and proceed with caution. Slowly, they reemerged: changed, more resilient and open to new ways of doing things.

During this time many more people were choosing, for the first time, to pursue their long-held dreams of setting up a business. Whether they identified with the term entrepreneur, freelancer, small business owner, self-employed, side-hustler, hobbyist or, more often than not, simply 'shopkeeper' or 'designer', we welcomed and encouraged them, and helped them find the answers they were looking for.

We too, changed. We rapidly expanded our online offer, and established bespoke programmes to help small business owners who were struggling with the effects of the pandemic. We were pleased to discover that the strength of libraries need not be restricted to bricks and mortar. More people were accessing library services than ever before [around three in ten adults in the UK, or fifteen million people, engaged with public library services during lockdown¹], in part because our core principles remained the same whether online or offline – accessible, free and impartial support, delivered by dedicated information professionals and trusted business experts.

As libraries began to reopen their doors and customers returned – ready for real life interaction once again – BIPCs were prepared. With investment of £13 million from the Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport in 2020, the Network expanded to over 100 locations, bringing on board new Centres and supercharging the existing BIPCs, enabling them to deliver their offer through a hub and spoke model in more urban, rural and coastal locations than ever before.

This report, *Democratising Entrepreneurship 2.0* reviews the impact of BIPC services over the past three years. Why 2.0? Like our customers, the BIPC Network has grown, adapted, become more resilient and better connected. The results of this report show how we have continued to democratise entrepreneurship and support economic recovery at local, regional and national levels across the UK.

^[1]Libraries Connected (December 2020). *Libraries in the Pandemic: Evolving Services To Meet Local Need*. <https://gbr01.safelinks.protection.outlook.com/?url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.librariesconnected.org.uk%2Fsites%2Fdefault%2Ffiles%2FLibraries%2520in%2520the%2520pandemic%2520-%2520final>.

Background to the Business & IP Centre National Network

Helping businesses to innovate and grow is one of the British Library's six core public purposes. Since 2006, our BIPC has created a unique model, providing targeted help to aspiring entrepreneurs and early-stage businesses, and helping established SMEs to scale. During this time, over 122,000 entrepreneurs have benefitted from the BIPC support in London.

Building on this success, the Library began in 2010 to explore working with local authorities and library service providers in other parts of the country, starting with a successful pilot in Newcastle. In 2012, with support from the Intellectual Property Office, the BIPC National Network was born, amplifying the unique power of libraries as engines of innovation, economic growth and social mobility in the heart of diverse communities.

The Centres are physical hubs where people can come together to learn, network and access free and low-cost information and support in protecting and commercialising a business idea.

The service comprises:

- Free access to high-quality UK and global market intelligence, customer insights and company data (worth over £5m), combined with intellectual property advice and guidance.
- Free and low cost workshops, one-to-one support and mentoring delivered by library staff and public/private sector business experts and partners.
- Topical and inspirational networking events, featuring role model entrepreneurs.
- Accessible and welcoming spaces with access to PCs, desks and Wi-Fi, plus co-working and maker spaces in some locations.
- A comprehensive package of online support; including webinars, one-to-one business and IP advice sessions and screenings of our programme of inspirational panel discussions, many of which are available to view online on demand.

Following the publication of the original *Democratising Entrepreneurship*¹ report in the summer of 2019, the BIPC Network was awarded £13 million by DCMS (the Department for Digital Culture, Media and Sport) in the 2020 Spring Budget.

The primary aim of the funding was to grow the Network from 12 to a total of 20 regional Centres across England by 2023. Prospective library authorities were invited to apply to set up a BIPC service in their area, with Brighton & Hove, Kent and Worcestershire Library Services subsequently joining the Network in 2020. They were followed by Bristol, Oxfordshire and Tees Valley (Stockton-on-Tees) in 2021. In the autumn of 2022, the final two Centres in Cumbria and Southampton launched their services, meeting the Network-wide target of 20 regional Centres in England, and 22 Centres nationwide (including in Glasgow and the British Library in London).

A second aim of the funding was to expand the reach of services through a hub and spoke model of service delivery, in collaboration with partner libraries and local authorities. Over the course of the funding period 80 BIPC Locals (85 including the London BIPC Locals at Bromley, Greenwich, Lewisham, Waltham Forest and Wandsworth) and 500 BIPC Business Information Points were established by participating regional Centres.

In October 2022, the Library commissioned ERS Research & Consultancy to undertake an economic impact evaluation of the BIPC Network. This report reviews the findings on performance and delivery over the past three years (April 2020 to March 2023)².

[1]Democratising Entrepreneurship: Libraries as engines of economic growth (June 2019).

[2]The findings of this report are based on 1,137 responses to an e-survey, conducted between 5 December 2022 and 23 January 2023, alongside desk-based research conducted by ERS with library teams, delivery partners and stakeholders.

CASE STUDY:

Tas Jennings Founder of Very Craftea, Peterborough

Tas Jennings is the founder of Very Craftea, a tea and craft kit online retailer based in Cambridgeshire.

"I started Very Craftea in January 2017. Before that, I worked in the construction industry my whole life, have two degrees (one in Construction Management and one in Architectural Venue Design and Digital Innovation) and decided to change it all for a life of tea and crafting."

Tas' mission was to allow people to create moments which made them feel comforted and included. Her teas are consciously sourced and embroidery kits are designed and created locally.



"BIPC Cambridgeshire & Peterborough has helped no end! The resources have helped me identify potential wholesale customers who I can contact about my business and products. In addition, it gives access to trend documentation and consumer reports which have helped me plan for possible new products and services. Also, I can't praise the team enough. They are so supportive of everything I have done since we connected and provide assistance and advice all the time, even when I'm not in the Centre!"



Driving economic recovery and growth

In the three-year period, April 2020 to March 2023, the BIPC supported a total of 62,876 individuals, through a combination of 17,831 in-person and online one-to-ones, 4,314 workshops or webinars and 1,121 in-person, online or hybrid events. In addition, BIPC Network staff responded to 51,591 business enquiries, providing aspiring entrepreneurs and established business owners with key information.

The evaluation found that the Network is:

- **Creating enterprises:** over the last three years supported the creation of **18,175 new businesses**, equivalent to **24** new businesses every working day.
- **Creating jobs:** services helped new and established businesses to create an estimated total of **6,124 FTE jobs**.
- **Increasing turnover:** net additional sales growth was an estimated **£248 million**.
- **Boosting local economies:** net additional GVA (Gross Value Added) for BIPC supported businesses was an estimated **£168 million**.
- **Delivered excellent value for money:** with a Benefit Cost Ratio (BCR) of **£6.63 for every £1 invested**.



Laura Curling, founder of Higham Refill,
BIPC Northamptonshire customer



The survey found that, of those that started a business, 25% had been unemployed or made redundant when they started their business.

Businesses that used the services demonstrated strong survival rates. For those supported in 2020/21, the 12-month survival rate was 96%¹ and for those in 2021/22, the 12-month survival rate was 95%².

“ BIPC Oxford has been there for me at a tough time and at each turn have provided me with vital advice and contacts and support to keep my business developing. ”

E-survey respondent, Oxford

Photos: Luca Sage

^[1]BIPC Annual User Survey (2021).

^[2]BIPC Annual User Survey (2022).



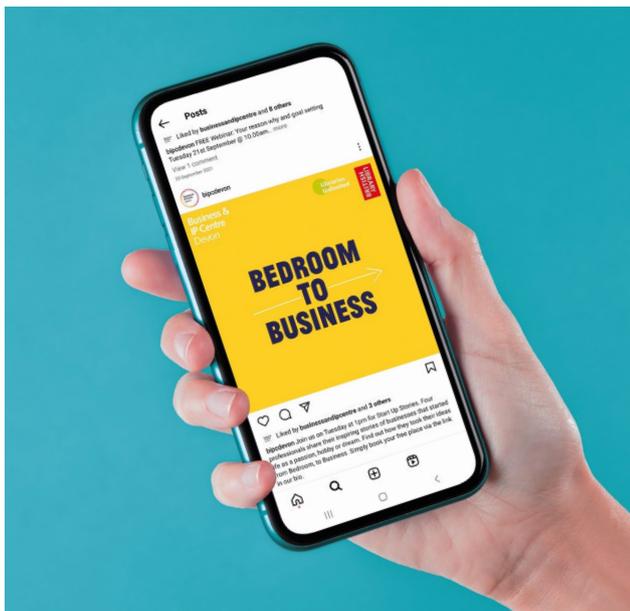
CASE STUDY:

BIPC Devon Bedroom to Business Programme

Launching in September 2021, BIPC Devon's Bedroom to Business programme was a 13-week course of webinars delivered by local delivery partners. Covering a diverse range of topics such as exploring the motivation to become an entrepreneur, researching business ideas, planning customer journeys, and setting goals, the programme was designed to help aspiring entrepreneurs take their first steps towards running their own business.

At the end of the course, five participants were selected to receive an extra three months of one-to-one support from a qualified business coach and entrepreneur.

Bedroom to Business was repeated in 2022 due to popular demand, with recorded content and webinars uploaded onto BIPC Devon's website, where anyone who missed the programme, or wanted to revisit it, could access the learning free of charge.



Photos: Elliott Wilcox

BEDROOM TO BUSINESS

With BIPC Devon

"We'd been in business for about nine years but during the pandemic we moved back down to Devon, so for me it was about making connections in Exeter.

"The online sessions have been really handy as I've been able to do those in my own time, and it covers everything you need to know, whether you are a start-up, or whether you've been in business a bit longer like myself it's got a bit of everything for everyone!"

(Rebecca Reece, Bedroom to Business Participant and Owner of Devon Aqua Natal)

▲ I have used several of the things I have learnt on the course already. This has resulted in my product being better-placed with more suitable markets saving me time and money whilst increasing my predicted profit margins. Also looking at my customer journey more closely will make my overall service far better for the customer and therefore my brand. 10/10. ▼

E-survey respondent, Devon

CASE STUDY:

BIPC National Network Reset. Restart Programme

The Reset. Restart programme launched in October 2020, in response to the Coronavirus pandemic, and the need, identified by the BIPC, for SMEs and aspiring entrepreneurs to pivot their businesses to meet the challenges posed by the pandemic. Running initially for six months, the programme comprised a series of eleven webinars and follow-up support sessions, presented by delivery partners, through the BIPC each month.

To enhance the core programme of support, BIPCs across the network provided tailored webinars and one-to-one sessions. A system of cross-referrals between the local and national programme enabled customers to pick the most useful sessions for their own needs and access more tailored support.

In the first six months there were over 6,500 attendances on the programme, which received excellent customer feedback. Following the successful delivery of the first phase, the programme continued throughout 2021, and a final third phase, in partnership with Barclays, was delivered between April 2022 and March 2023. In total there were over 17,000 attendances for Reset. Restart programme activities.

As well as supporting our customers to meet the challenges of 2020, Reset. Restart enabled BIPCs to deliver a joined-up national programme of support, demonstrating the value that can be achieved with being part of a national network of support services.



■ ■ *Reset. Restart really helped me to focus on my customer and think about their needs and what they might like to do. As a business that pivoted during the pandemic, making masks with a creative nod to the local area, the webinar made me think about messaging and how to communicate my appreciation for the local community through blog posts on my website. ■ ■*

Susan Widlake, Saffron Walden, Mill House Millinery



CASE STUDY:

Suki Pantal Founder of Suki's Curries and Spices, Worcestershire

Suki decided to have a career change during the pandemic and used BIPC Worcestershire at the start of her business journey. Suki does cook-alongs to teach people how to make Indian dishes from scratch, pop-up kitchens as well as exclusive catering services for small parties. She has appeared as a contestant on *The Great Cookbook Challenge* with Jamie Oliver, had a recipe appear in the BBC's *Good Food Magazine* and is working with her agent to publish a cookbook.

"Originally from Delhi in India, I have been in the UK for over seven years, living in Malvern, Worcestershire. A marketing professional, I quit my day job to start my business in 2020. I launched Suki's Curries and Spices on social media where I wanted to share my Indian culinary heritage with other Indian food lovers in the UK. The response I got back was very encouraging and that gave me the required boost to launch my business full-time."

Suki was able to visit her local BIPC to get support from the team.



"BIPC Worcestershire's free resource directory on its website has been most helpful. The webinars on how to set up your own business, how to use social media for business and other informative topics have been very useful to me. I have been advised on IP rights as well. A constant connection with BIPC Worcestershire by way of phone calls and emails from the staff has boosted my confidence."

Suki's passion remains cooking, proof that it is possible to mix business with pleasure. She also spends her time researching and reading about different styles of Indian cooking and regional cuisines.

"Outside of work, I will still always be found in my kitchen, trying out new Indian recipes or recreating those from my family cookbook! Best time spent! I read a lot of blogs and articles online on Indian cooking and regional dishes as India is very diverse and so are its cuisines. I also read a lot about social media and how you can promote your business on social platforms without investing a lot of funds as a start-up."

CASE STUDY:

Vicky Armitage Founder of Meraki Cacao, Morpeth, Northumberland

Vicky Armitage is the founder of Meraki Cacao, which started in 2018. Vicky produces raw cacao bars made from organic and nutritious ingredients. The bars are a healthier alternative to mass-produced chocolate; they're all free from dairy, refined sugar and ingredients containing gluten.

Inspired by her travels, and struggling to find chocolate she enjoyed, Vicky decided to create her own product.

"I'm a scientist by training. I have a PhD in ecology and enjoyed working in the conservation/ecology sector for 20+ years. I decided to leave my job and take some time to reevaluate my life. I've always loved chocolate but I didn't like the brands I was trying, so I started investigating how to make my own healthier versions of it.

After completing an online course in raw chocolate, I started experimenting with flavours and trying them out on friends and family. They all liked them and encouraged me to sell them so I did."



It's not all about taste for Vicky, ensuring sustainability is also key to her business.

"Being as sustainable and eco-friendly as possible is a core ethos of my company. Each bar is wrapped in recyclable materials and the labels are recycled paper and printed with vegetable-based inks. All mail order packaging is also recyclable and eco-friendly too."

Vicky turned to BIPC North East to use the free market research databases as well as their Experts in Residence.

"BIPC North East has been a huge source of help and information. They helped me to research the trends in healthy eating and in chocolate; knowing what consumers wanted and that my product matched these desires has helped me develop strategies for marketing. Running a business on your own can be a daunting and lonely place sometimes and I've been able to benefit from expertise in marketing, social media, website and IP."



Inspiring Entrepreneurs, British Library
Photo: AO Photography



Dynamic and diverse businesses

Overall the demographics of the BIPC National Network are little changed by the expansion and rollout to new areas across the country. Similar to the 2019 evaluation, the survey revealed that 21% of BIPC users come from the 20% most deprived areas in their towns and cities.

The results of the survey also showed that **47%** of our customers were existing business owners and **53%** had not yet started their business when they first used the BIPC Network services. **57% of users went on to start a business**, mostly within a year.

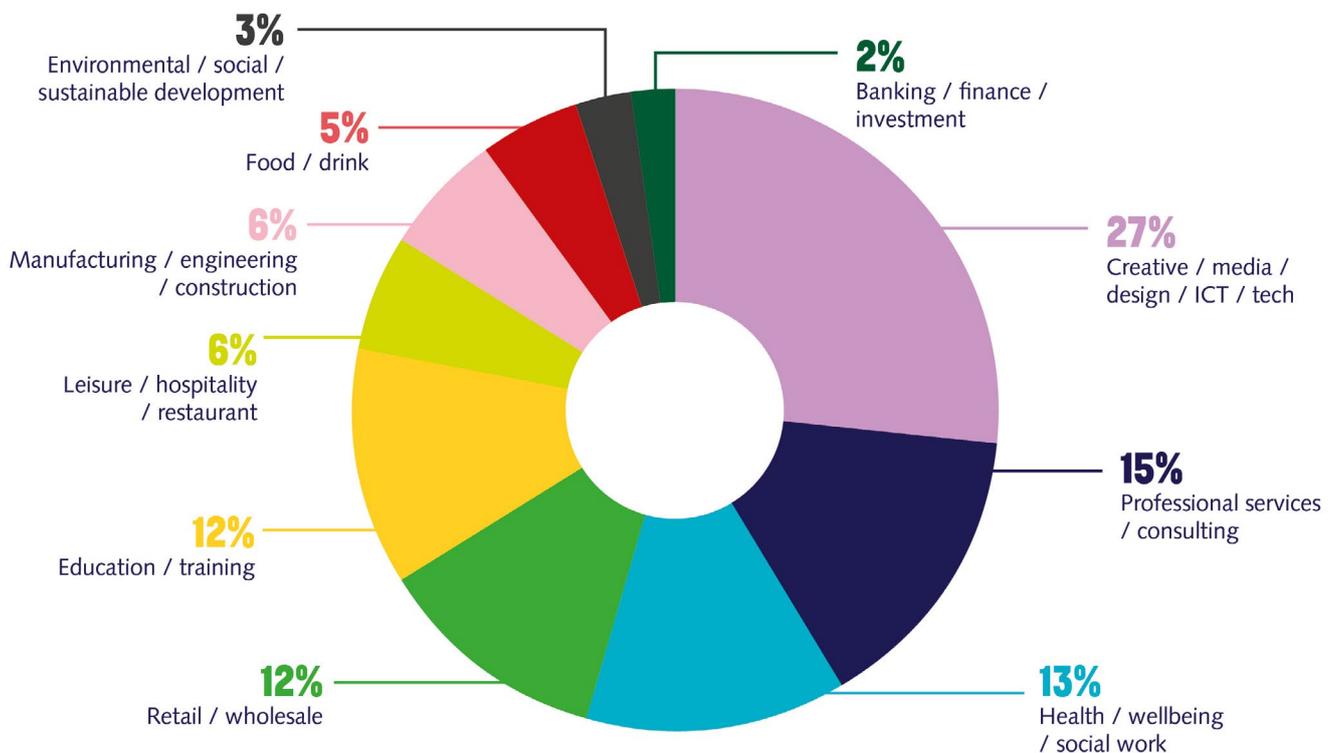
The Network is reaching people who are under-represented in business. According to figures published by the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy only 20% of businesses (without employees) are owned by women and only 5% are owned by individuals of Black, Asian and minority ethnic origin¹.

Of the BIPC users who went on to start a new business, **72%** were women (**60%** in London), **26%** identified themselves as from a minority ethnic community (e.g. Black British, British Asian, British Chinese, etc.) (**43%** in London) and **10%** had a disability (**14%** in London).

Almost half of BIPC users were already running a business when they used the services. Of these, **66%** were owned by women and **28%** were owned by people who identified themselves as from a minority ethnic community (e.g. Black British, British Asian, British Chinese, etc.) and **13%** were disabled.

The highest proportion (27%) of businesses supported by the BIPC were in the **creative, media and technology sectors**; this is more than double the proportion of businesses in the UK as a whole, where these sectors make up just 11%².

Businesses supported by market sector



Source: BIPC Monitoring Information.

¹BEIS Business Population Estimates 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2022> (businesses with no employees).

²BEIS Business Population Estimates 2022, <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2022>.

CASE STUDY:

Carolynn Bain Founder of Afrori Books Brighton

Carolynn Bain is the founder of Afrori Books, the UK's biggest supplier of books by black authors. Started amid the protests of 2020, Carolynn was looking for funding to expand her business into a physical shop.

"The BIPC in Brighton & Hove supported me when I was looking for ways to get funding... I had some one-to-one sessions with a staff member... she helped me to work out exactly what it was I needed and how the BIPC could help with that. I went in for a morning session and spent some time looking through the databases and tried to match my needs to what was available.

It's particularly helpful for me to have the BIPC in my local area, because it's easy for me to access... and having a staff member who's local – they understand the area, they understand the way that the city works and so the information they can give me and where they can point me is obviously much better."



“ The BIPC has provided invaluable support to my development and my business. I highly recommend it to anyone and everyone. Thank you BIPC! ”

E-survey respondent, Greater Manchester

“ BIPC has been extremely supportive and have provided invaluable guidance and access to resources. Starting my own business was daunting, but having expert advice available has made the process much clearer. ”

E-survey respondent, BIPC Local Stockport

Purpose-driven businesses

With the impact of the climate and environmental crisis being felt globally and locally, research has shown that consumers hold companies most responsible, i.e. more responsible than governments or themselves, for a host of environmental and social targets and standards¹.

No matter how small the business or what industry it is in, a commitment to sustainability could make a real difference – to the planet, to customers and to their running costs. Small businesses will soon be asked to commit to cutting carbon emissions in half by 2030, reaching 'net zero' by 2050.

The BIPC survey revealed that over half (55%) of surveyed businesses indicated they were driven by a social impact and over one quarter (27%) an environmental impact.

In response to customer need, BIPCs across the Network have established programmes and support services for small businesses that wish to make a positive environmental or social impact, such as BIPC Greater Manchester's *How to start a business that makes a difference* and BIPC North East's *Green Business Guide*² and accompanying activities offered by their green business experts in residence.

Many BIPCs have also become co-signatories of the *Green Libraries Manifesto*, outlining a sector-wide commitment towards a shared vision: to lead by example through our own environmental actions and use our power and reach to inform and inspire people to take positive action and build resilience in the diverse communities we serve.

CASE STUDY:

Paul Pringle Managing Director Solarglide Ltd, Newcastle

"The support from BIPC North East allowed us to look at our carbon footprint in the business, and that's the thing we want to reduce... we've changed our packaging completely, so that our products now have fully biodegradable packaging.

If small companies sat down with their teams and brainstormed how to make a difference, they'd find that it's not that hard to make changes and it doesn't cost the world to do it.

The thing I love about the support we've been getting is it's really accessible. You can access it via local libraries... and now I feel a lot more confident that I know where we're heading."



^[1]Mintel Sustainability Barometer 2021.

^[2]<https://www.bipcnortheast.co.uk/green-agenda/green-business-guide/>.



BIPC South Yorkshire, Barnsley Library
Photo: Luca Sage

Strong and productive businesses

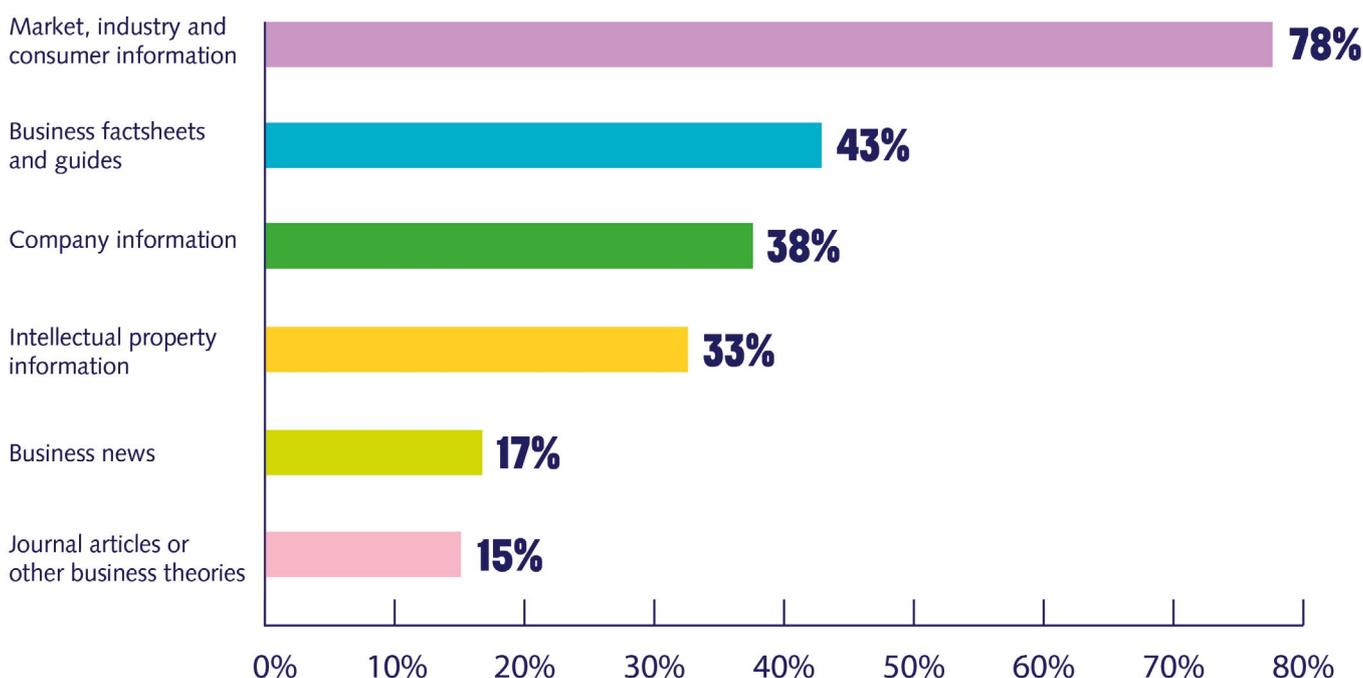
Among the reasons that businesses fail is a lack of planning and research, a lack of skills, and a lack of knowledge about their sector and the consequent failure to make informed decisions¹. Conversely, people who seek advice and information either before setting up their business or at a very early stage are better able to assess the viability of their business idea, protect their IP assets and get the essential building blocks in place.

The user survey highlighted the importance of business information and research to BIPC customers, with 55% of survey respondents

stating that they accessed business databases through the service. Of these, most customers accessed databases at a library (34%), or online assisted by BIPC staff (16%), with a further group searching databases independently (21%) from their home or office.

BIPC customers consulted a range of databases for different purposes. Mainly this was in support of market research (market, industry and consumer information). Other main uses included searching for specific company information or intellectual property information.

BIPC resources and database use (%s based on people who used them)



Source: ERS Survey of 1,137 respondents, February 2023.

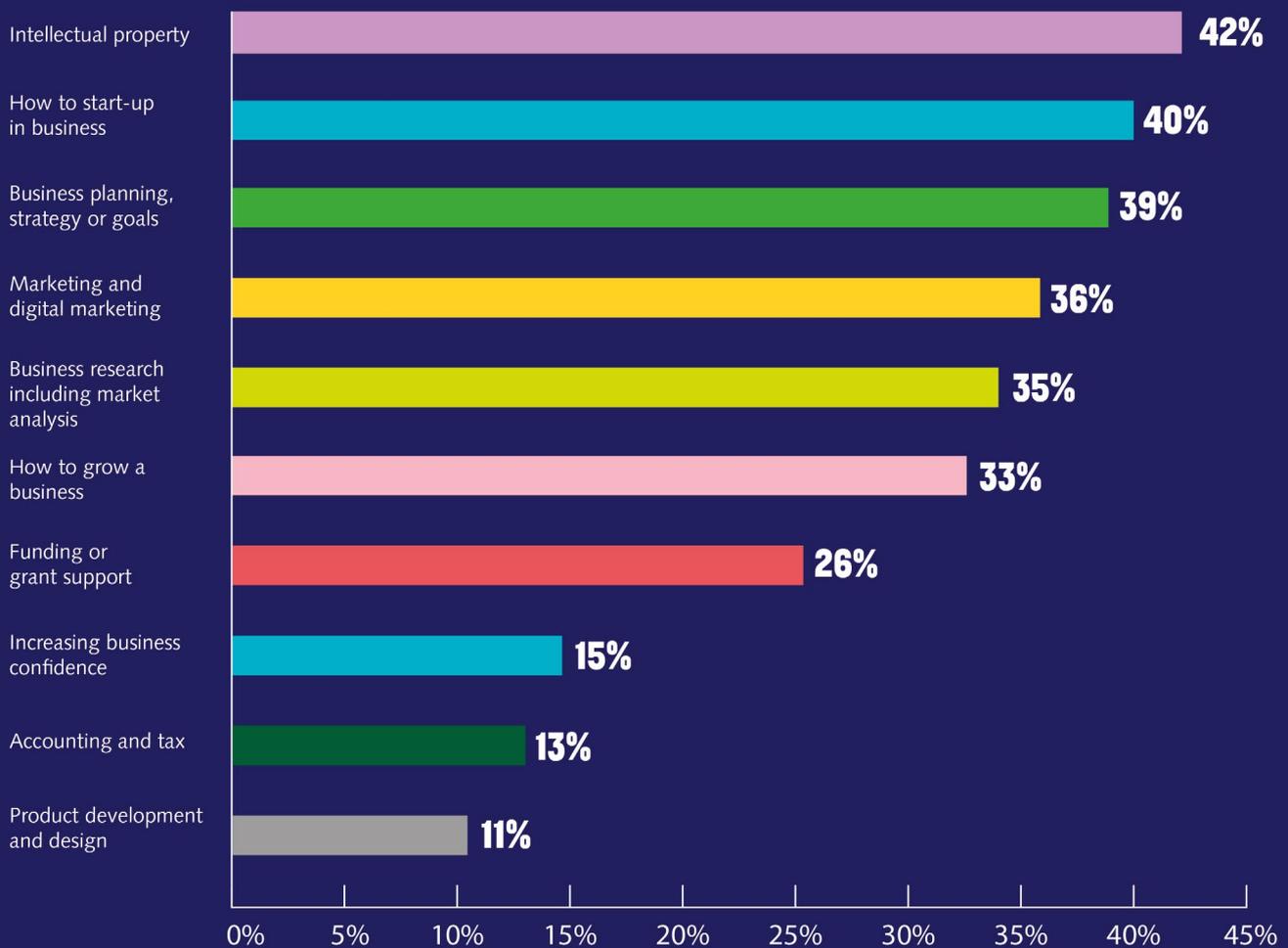
On average, BIPC customers accessed over 10 hours of support, typically engaging with a variety of services offered by their Centre. The most popular types of support identified were: Intellectual property, How to start-up in business, Business planning, Marketing and digital marketing, Business research and How to grow a business.

“ BIPC is exceptional, the resources and staff members are professional, a very important service to help SMEs to start their business. Market research is so expensive and you have important databases such as Mintel. Amazing work. Thank you. ”

E-survey respondent, London

^[1]DBIS (July 2014), The Case of Public Support of Innovation. https://dera.ioe.ac.uk/20551/1/BIS_14_852_The_Case_for_Public_Support_of_Innovation.pdf.

Most popular topics of support



Source: ERS Survey of 1,137 respondents, February 2023.

▲▲ *The start-up session provided me with more confidence to move forward with my business idea. It has saved me a lot of time researching what to do next so was very worthwhile for me. ▼▼*

E-survey respondent, Leeds

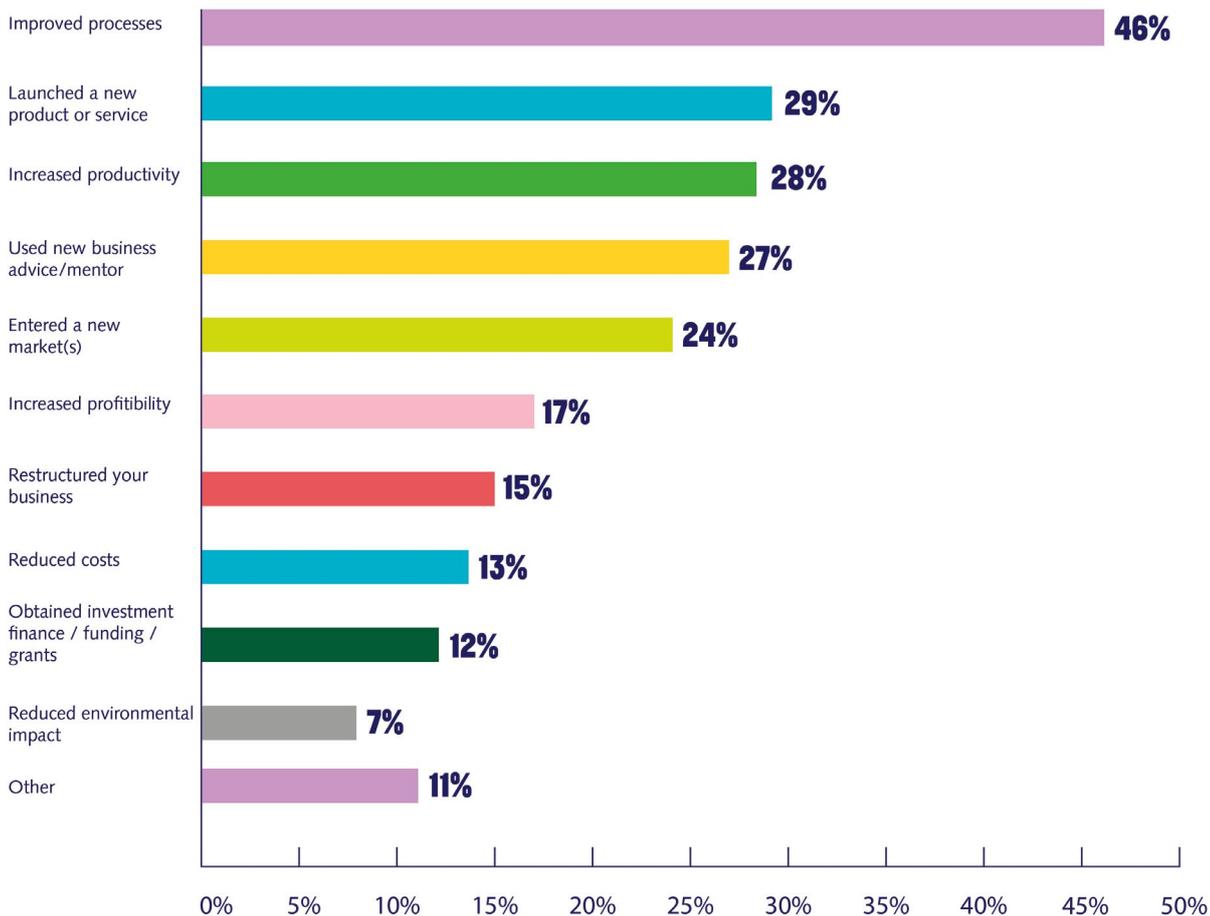
▲▲ *I was made to feel so welcome... this opened the doors to the wonderful support and breadth of valuable services the BIPC Brighton & Hove has to offer. I look forward to using more of the services in 2023 now that I have registered my company. Thank you for making this information and service available to people like me. ▼▼*

E-survey respondent, Sussex, Brighton & Hove

Innovation and improved productivity

For established businesses, BIPC support was associated with a number of positive outcomes. The most frequent outcomes cited related to innovation, including improved processes (46%), launching new products or services (29%) and entering new markets (24%).

Business outcomes



Source: ERS Survey of 1,137 respondents, February 2023.

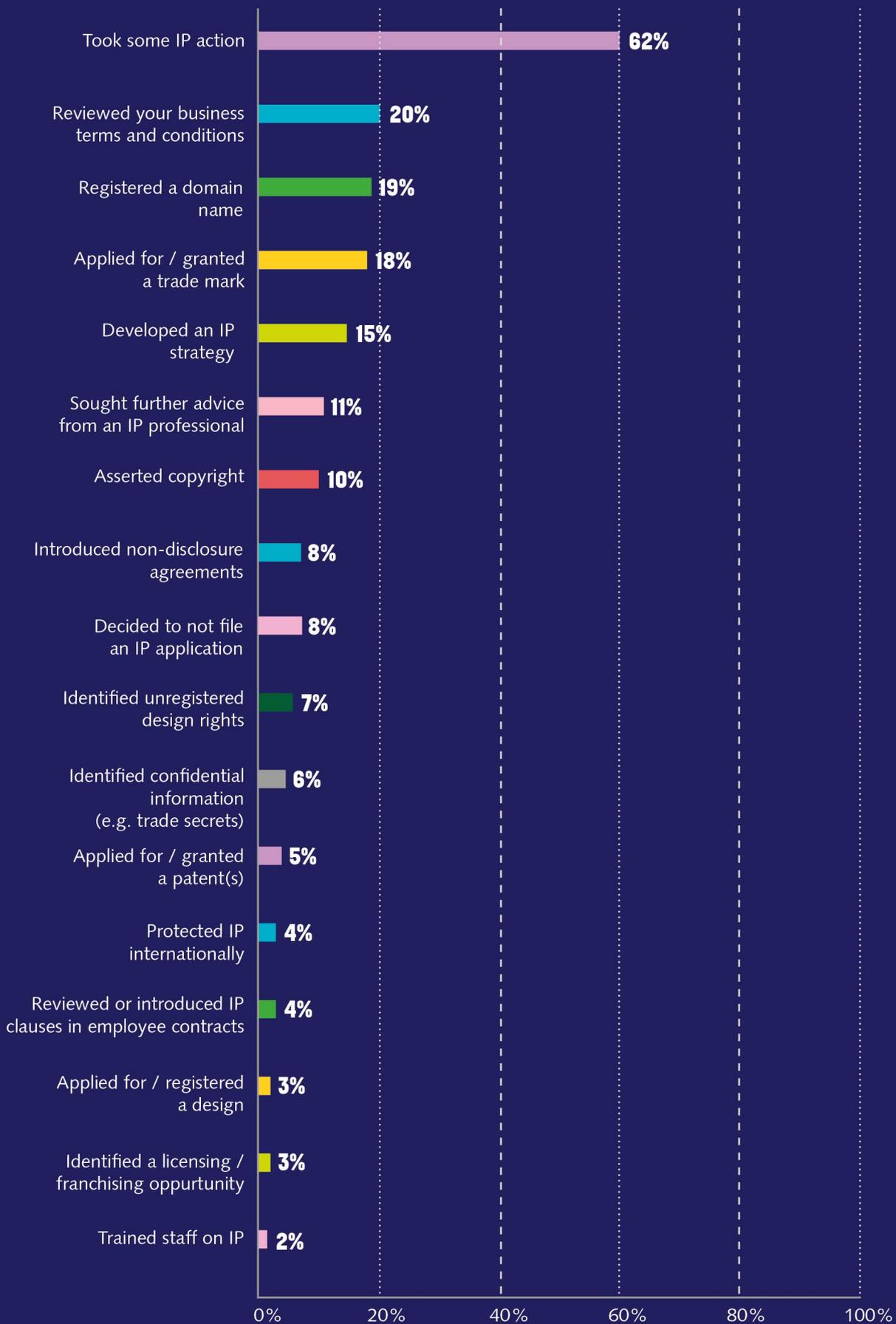
Most of the outcomes represent improvements in business performance such as productivity, profits or costs. As a result of BIPC support, 28% of users attributed productivity increases, 17% attributed profitability increases and 13% attributed reduced costs.

Productivity in new businesses increased from £7,326 per head to £17,231 per head, an improvement of 135%. For established businesses, productivity increased from £33,160 per head to £42,608, an increase of 28%.

Working together with the Intellectual Property Office, BIPC services empower business owners to innovate and to protect and exploit their intellectual property, whether it be a new product, design, logo or company name – or indeed a combination of these. Intellectual property is particularly important to the creative industries, allowing the owner of the rights in literary or artistic works to control how those works are used.

Most BIPC-supported businesses (62%) took some action in relation to intellectual property as a result of the support they received. The most popular IP outcomes were reviewing terms and conditions (20%) and registering a domain name (19%).

Actions taken to protect / invest in intellectual property





BIPC Brighton & Hove, Jubilee Library
Photo: Luca Sage



National network, local reach

Business & IP Centres are located in 22 city or central libraries in England and Scotland, harnessing the public library infrastructure to offer support in cities, towns and rural areas. Each Centre operates to a standard service level and a blueprint acts as a guide on all aspects of setting up and running the service.

BIPC staff are trained to meet the needs of small businesses by both the British Library and the Intellectual Property Office. The programme of activities for each Centre is tweaked according to local needs, opportunities and sector clusters. Each Centre works within the local business support ecosystem, partnering with public and private sector organisations to co-deliver the services and ensure effective cross-referrals to relevant support.

Across the Network, libraries have rolled out their offer to 80 BIPC Locals – a hub and spoke model of service delivery, broadening the reach of their library-based business support offer to even more communities in towns and villages.



BIPC Sussex, Jubilee Library
Photo: Luca Sage



BIPC Nottinghamshire, Mansfield Library
Photo: Neil Pledger

Regional hubs provide support to their BIPC Locals to deliver core aspects of the BIPC service, ensuring effective cross-referrals to further support between sites. The offer has further expanded to 500 BIPC Business Information Points in branch libraries, offering access to business databases, with staff trained to answer basic business enquiries and provide materials to direct customers to further support from their nearest regional or local hub. At each level, BIPC staff are on-hand to signpost customers to further support within their own region, harnessing the power of an interconnected network of business support and ensuring that customers are able to access the support that they need.

Local hub and spoke models

Regional BIPC teams across the network approached the hub and spoke model in different ways, to reflect and respond to the local economic and political landscape of their area. In some instances, Centres partnered with neighbouring local authorities to establish BIPC Locals. In other areas, where a single library service covers a large geographical area, they established BIPC Locals within their county boundaries. In some instances, Centres have developed a mixed approach of a district, city and county hub and spoke offer.

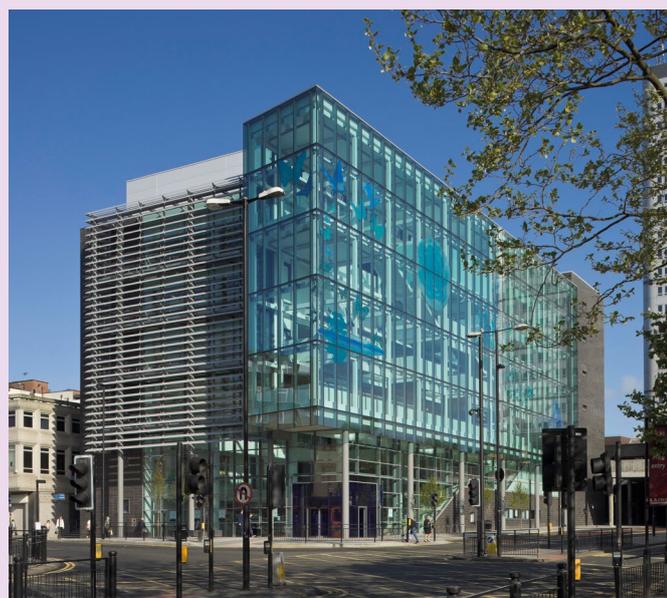
CASE STUDY:

BIPC North East

Operating as BIPC Newcastle for ten years, primarily out of Newcastle City Library, in 2021 the service successfully launched seven BIPC Locals across the region and rebranded as BIPC North East. The BIPC Locals provide a front door to business support within North Tyneside, South Tyneside, Sunderland, Gateshead, and Northumberland (Berwick, Hexham and Morpeth).

Out of the seven BIPC Locals, Northumberland has the largest offering, with a total of three situated across geographical locations to provide free business support to the county's diverse business community and creating further opportunities of support for rural-based businesses.

Working closely with the library teams within each council and collaborating with local business support partners, BIPC North East has embedded itself in the local business support ecosystem, providing a unique offering which complements the existing provision and enhances the support available to businesses and individuals across the region in urban, rural and coastal locations.



Newcastle City Library
Photo: Newcastle City Council

BIPC North East regional map



“ Attending workshops in the first six months of business was fantastic and the advice on IP at the start meant the launch of our product was much sooner than it would have been otherwise. ”

E-survey respondent, North East

Why libraries?

The last three years have shown how the Business & IP Centre Network is highly scalable and offers excellent value for money, capitalising on the existing public library infrastructure (c.2,900 libraries in England alone) and knowledge resources, with the potential to bring business and innovation support to every high street.

The Network provides unprecedented reach for business support services into urban, rural and coastal communities, supporting job creation and business resilience. While growth of the Network has accelerated in recent years, this is also a story of long-lasting impact, with the BIPC Network reaching its 10th anniversary in 2022. Indeed, many libraries have offered business information and support to industry for well over 100 years¹.

For those who are part of the recent expansion, developing a new BIPC Regional or Local service, some are serving business customers for the first time. Similarly, **many BIPC customers (43%) were accessing business support for the first time**, through their library. The BIPC Locals attracted a higher percentage of aspiring entrepreneurs (60%) compared to the regional Centres, with customers citing an increase in their general awareness of business support, and a developed business confidence as their top two outcomes from the services.



BIPC Southampton, Southampton Central Library
Photo: Wayne Cee



BIPC Sussex, Jubilee Library
Photo: Luca Sage

Regardless of their size or longevity, one of the great successes of the BIPC Network is its co-location and signposting to other support services. Working closely with their local authority Economic Development departments, Adult Education Services, and Youth Education services as well as external support services such as Jobcentre Plus (Department for Work and Pensions) and Growth Hubs, they ensure beneficiaries from a variety of backgrounds and needs are signposted and supported effectively.

The pandemic has shown that libraries are not just about physical spaces, they are about community – whether online or offline. They are about being warm spaces, places for families, especially those parents with young children who are looking to self-employment as a return to work option. With flexible opening hours and accommodating spaces and staff, BIPCs make it possible for parents to grow their business skills while juggling parenting responsibilities.

^[1]Manchester Commercial Library opened its doors in 1919
<https://manclibraries.blog/2019/10/12/celebrating-our-business-library-centenary/>.

- 1 **Birmingham**
Library of Birmingham*
Acocks Green
Handsworth
South Yardley
Sutton Coldfield
- 2 **Bristol**
Bristol Central Library*
Junction 3
Knowle
Southmead
- 3 **Cambridgeshire & Peterborough**
Cambridge Central Library*
Ely
Huntingdon
Peterborough
Wisbech
- 4 **Cumbria**
Carlisle*
Barrow Library
- 5 **Devon**
Exeter Library*
Barnstaple
Okehampton
Paignton
Seaton
- 6 **Glasgow**
Mitchell Library*
- 7 **Greater Manchester**
Manchester Central Library*
Altrincham, Trafford
Ashton, Tameside
Blackpool
Bolton
Bury
Eccles, Salford
Lancaster
Oldham
Stockport
- 8 **Humber Partnership**
Hull Central Library*
Beverley
Bridlington
Goole
Grimsby
- 9 **Kent**
Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone*
Deal
Sandwich
Whitstable
- 10 **Leeds City Region**
Leeds Central Library*
Bradford
Dewsbury
Halifax
Wakefield
- 11 **Liverpool City Region**
Liverpool Central Library*
Allerton
Birkenhead
Crosby
Halton
Huyton
Spellow
St Helens
- 12 **London**
British Library*
Bromley
Catford
Leytonstone
Wandsworth (York Gardens)
Woolwich
- 13 **Norfolk**
Norfolk & Norwich Millennium Library*
Cromer
Great Yarmouth
King's Lynn
Thetford
Wroxham
Wymondham
- 14 **North East**
Newcastle City Library*
Berwick
Hexham
Morpeth
North Shields
Sunderland
- 15 **Northamptonshire**
Northamptonshire Central Library*
Brixworth
Kettering
Towcester
Wellingborough
- 16 **Nottinghamshire**
Beeston
Bulwell
Mansfield
Sutton-in-Ashfield
- 17 **Oxfordshire**
Oxfordshire County Library*
Bicester
Blackbird Leys
- 18 **Southampton**
Southampton Central Library
- 19 **South Yorkshire**
Sheffield Central Library*
Barnsley
Doncaster
Rotherham
Crystal Peaks, Sheffield
- 20 **Sussex**
Jubilee Library, Brighton*
Crawley
Eastbourne
Hastings
- 21 **Tees Valley**
Stockton Central Library*
Middlesbrough
Redcar
Darlington
Hartlepool
- 22 **Worcestershire**
The Hive, Worcester*
Bromsgrove
Evesham
Kidderminster
Malvern
Redditch



* denotes Regional Centre

Local economic development

BIPC services deliver proven economic impact both nationally and locally. The Network helped to create over **18,175** new businesses and over **6,124 FTE** jobs over the three-year analysis period of this report. The businesses supported generated **£248m** in extra sales, an estimated **£168m** GVA (Gross Value Added) for the economy.

Value for money

Libraries deliver unrivalled value for money and return on investment, standing at **£6.63** generated for every £1 of public funding.

Libraries as placemakers

Libraries already exist in cities, towns and villages across the UK. They anchor major urban redevelopment projects, they appear in shopping centres and on high streets and sympathetically remodelled landmark libraries exist as proud civic icons in our major cities.

▲▲ *The team are very welcoming and dispelled any nervousness etc. on arrival. A great environment that encourages people to flourish.* ▼▼

E-survey respondent, Oxfordshire

Reinvigorating the high street

Libraries are community assets, on or near high streets across the country. As inspiring spaces and hubs for interaction, BIPCs offer part of the solution for local government to transform their high streets and town centres into viable and vital spaces for their communities. BIPCs provide informal co-working spaces for customers to set up and run their business (**12%** of BIPC-supported businesses operated in shared workspaces, including libraries) combined with proven support to start up and run viable businesses.

Leading the way in diversity and inclusion

Libraries have unique reach into diverse and disadvantaged communities, and are vehicles for social mobility. **14%** of BIPC users who went on to start a business were unemployed and **11%** had been made redundant.

BIPCs have unparalleled reach and engagement with diverse audiences, when compared with other business support providers, supporting a high percentage of women (**66%**) and customers from diverse ethnic communities to realise their ambitions to start up and grow their business. **33%** of customers identified themselves as from a minority ethnic community (e.g. Black British, British Asian, British Chinese, etc.). Further 43% of customers had never used another business support service.

Trusted, impartial information and support

Libraries are widely acknowledged as open and accessible spaces, trusted hubs of information offering impartial advice, with no agenda other than to provide the best service possible to their users.

Now more than ever, with changing global markets, shifting consumer behaviour, the rise of fake news, and intellectual property theft and infringement, small businesses need access to reliable and trusted information.

The OECD found that the total volume of lost sales by UK IP rights owners amounted to £8.6 billion, or 1.95% of their total sales in 2013¹. Our unique intellectual property support, and access to world-class business and market intelligence, empowers our customers to make informed decisions, and avoid the losses that could have a devastating impact on their business.

Making all areas of the UK the best place to start and grow a business

With sustained investment, matched by local authority budgets and private sector investment, the BIPC Network could work with many more library services to continue the expansion of the BIPC offer to communities across the UK, further propelling the evolution of libraries as hubs of innovation and enterprise.

^[1]Trade in Counterfeit Products and the UK economy, (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development), <https://www.oecd.org/gov/risk/trade-in-counterfeit-products-and-uk-economy-report-update-2019.pdf>.

CASE STUDY:

Adeola and Ronke Jane Adelakun, founders of Cultureville, Manchester

Cultureville was created by sisters, Adeola and Ronke Jane Adelakun, who were born in Nigeria and brought up in the UK. They longed to walk into a store and see clothes that reflected their African heritage in designs that they could incorporate into their day-to-day wardrobes. Recognising this need, they set about filling the gap in the market.

The company, which was founded in 2018, specialises in hand-crafted clothing and accessories that feature bold African wax prints in contemporary designs. The prints are ethically sourced from West Africa, where they are proud to work closely with local tailors, artisans and suppliers. Their production is based in Nigeria and Ghana, led by a female team.

Cultureville has experienced rapid growth and the sisters have poured everything they have into building the brand, hosting showcases, pop-ups and fashion shows, and launching their Freedom Collection.



“The BIPC has a lot of training sessions, a lot of things to help guide new business owners, and even experienced owners to adapt their business and make it more sustainable.”

BIPC Manchester has been an invaluable resource for Cultureville. Adeola and Ronke Jane have attended training sessions on a wide range of topics, from social media to intellectual property, as well as taking part in events such as Start-up Day.

“Support from the BIPC has been instrumental in giving us strong foundations on which to sustain and grow our business.”



CASE STUDY:

Simon Evans Head of Product, Castrads Manchester

Castrads was founded in 2006 and makes bespoke cast iron radiators. Head of Product at Castrads, Simon Evans, is responsible for the design and development of the product range and used BIPC Greater Manchester for help with IP.

“Initially Castrads was a small five man team, based on a farm in Cheshire. Now, we have showrooms in Manchester, London, New York and Poland. A family-run-turned-international company, we continually seek to innovate improved products and methods, whilst keeping our carbon footprint small and our approach personal and tailored to each customer, new and old.”

Sustainability is at the heart of Castrads’ ethos.

“Over the last five years, we’ve shifted our focus from manufacturing heating products that are widely available on the global market to creating a line of radiators that is entirely our own. We pride ourselves on making radiators that will last centuries rather than decades. One of our company’s core values is to manufacture with a positive impact on the planet and we abhor the inbuilt obsolescence practised by so many companies and the throwaway culture that has come from making low cost goods. This ethos runs very much through my day-to-day life as well, I believe very strongly in trying to fix something and often take things apart to fix them rather than sending it straight to landfill.”



Simon used the BIPC to help with expanding into international markets, as well as IP.

“BIPC Greater Manchester was incredibly useful in helping us get in contact with law firms that specialise in IP protection. This has been especially useful as we have begun to expand our product offerings into America and Europe. By ensuring that we have control over our intellectual property as we expand into further markets, we can ensure there are no imitations and the customer knows that what they have purchased is a quality product.”



CASE STUDY:

Natalee Onyeche Founder of Skin Solace, Nottingham

Originally from Nottingham, after a successful career in London, Natalee moved back to her home city. Natalee originally ran Skin Solace as a side hustle alongside her other business as a psychotherapist, but has turned the business into her main income stream and opened a shop in Nottingham.

“We are a handmade skincare business. I make soaps, candles, body butters, all those kinds of things, and it really has a keen focus on self-care through skincare.”

Natalee came to BIPC Nottinghamshire as she was looking for funding opportunities to upscale her business.

“I didn't quite meet the criteria for other business support organisations, so was forwarded to the BIPC. Through them I've been able to sort out my intellectual property and trade marks, and I've been able to develop a business plan. If there are any problems or questions, I can sort them out through my business coach; we can think about them together and come up with the best possible solutions.

The survey identified a small group of users (4%) that described themselves as operating a side hustle, while being primarily employed. One quarter of this group turned their side hustle into their main income as a result of BIPC support.



There are also loads of databases that they provide access to. There's a huge database of every fund that's going on in the UK. We're currently going through all of those to see which ones are the most appropriate and going to be the most successful for Skin Solace.

The BIPC in the local area has been really brilliant. It's an invaluable resource because you look at the charges for business coaches etc, and sometimes it's beyond your reach.

Having the BIPC there and their huge amount of resources has been a godsend to me. If I need some information, I can go to them and get that support. Having that available, for free, in my local community is brilliant. It's on my doorstep, literally.”

Driving economic growth

Helped to create
18,175
new businesses

and
6,124
additional jobs

96%
of existing businesses
were still trading*

£168m
GVA* created
*Gross Value Added



A payback of
£6.63
for every £1 of
public money spent

Supporting diverse entrepreneurs



Of those who started a new business:

72%
were women

25%
were aged
35 and under

26%
were from a
minority ethnic
community**

12%
were from the
most deprived
areas

10%
were disabled

25%
were previously
unemployed

-
- A map of the United Kingdom with 22 numbered circles placed across various regions, corresponding to the list of locations provided.
- 1 Birmingham
 - 2 Bristol
 - 3 Cambridgeshire & Peterborough
 - 4 Cumbria
 - 5 Devon
 - 6 Glasgow
 - 7 Greater Manchester
 - 8 Humber Partnership
 - 9 Kent
 - 10 Leeds City Region
 - 11 Liverpool City Region
 - 12 London
 - 13 Norfolk
 - 14 North East
 - 15 Northamptonshire
 - 16 Nottinghamshire
 - 17 Oxfordshire
 - 18 Southampton
 - 19 South Yorkshire
 - 20 Sussex
 - 21 Tees Valley
 - 22 Worcestershire

Citation: Democratising Entrepreneurship 2.0: Libraries as engines of economic recovery and growth.
Available at: <https://doi.org/10.23636/wbk4-7b32>.

*Of businesses created in 2020/21.

**e.g. Black British, British Asian, British Chinese, etc.

Source: ERS Research Services, based on 1,137 responses to an e-survey, conducted between 5 December 2022 and 23 January 2023.