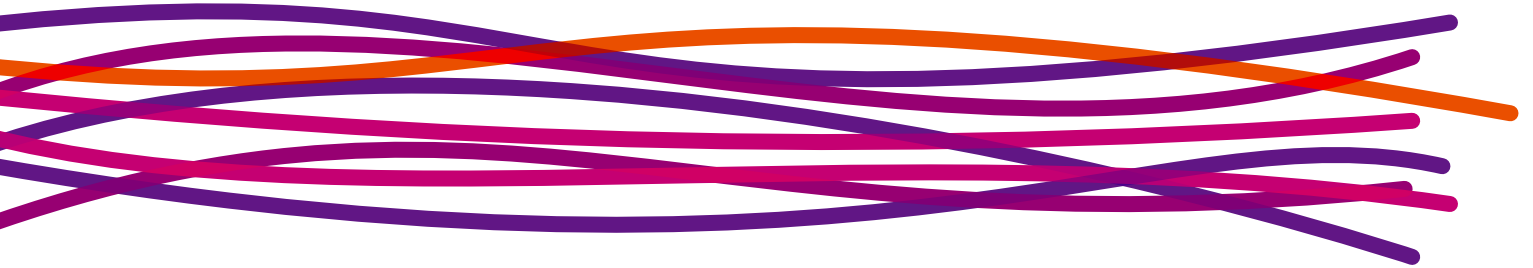


# Social Enterprise



**A quick guide** to social enterprise,  
to help you **explore** the possibilities  
and point you in the **right direction**

- A **rewarding** career
- Volunteering and work experience **opportunities**
- Starting a **social enterprise** business
- A new **beginning**

## What is a social enterprise?



A social enterprise is a business that trades for social or environmental purposes.

Like any business a social enterprise makes its money through the sale of goods and services. Many businesses have social objectives, but social enterprises are distinctive. This is because their social or environmental purpose is central to what they do. The profits they make are reinvested towards achieving that purpose.

Well known examples of social enterprises include **The Big Issue**, Jamie Oliver's restaurant **Fifteen**, and the Fairtrade chocolate company **Divine Chocolate**.

Rather than making money for shareholders and personal gain, social enterprises largely plough their profits back into the business to achieve their objectives.

They also have some form of 'social ownership' which means they can be collectively owned by the staff, members, representatives from the local community, or other stakeholders. So in other words, they are not privately owned. But anyone can start a social enterprise, as long as they have a good idea and have the determination to succeed. ○

## Thinking about starting a business?

If you've ever considered starting your own business, social enterprise may be an option if:

### **You want to make a difference.**

Many people start a social enterprise because they want to put something back into the community. Successful social enterprises are often started and run by people with a passion for what they do. Often people want to do something to help the community or have been affected by an issue and wish to help others avoid the same problem. Rather than rely on fundraising and charitable donations, they finance their goals by running a business – a social enterprise.

### **You're not just in it for the money.**

Owners, leaders and employees of social enterprises can earn a decent living, but the business isn't used as a vehicle for building personal wealth because the bulk of profits are reinvested into furthering social aims.

### **You do things differently.**

Social enterprises often break with conventional business approaches to find new and more sustainable ways of improving the world around them. Wherever there's a social or environmental need, social enterprises are working on solutions.

Social enterprises are becoming increasingly popular as more of us care about what we're buying, from whom, the source, and who is profiting. ○

## Working for a social enterprise



Social enterprises operate in almost every industry in the UK, and offer rewarding career opportunities for graduates right through

to people that have a wealth of experience and looking for a change.

From health and social care to renewable energy, from retail to recycling, from employment to sport, from housing to education. Whatever they do, they do it differently from typical business, and are often very good employers.



Sustainability is critical for any business, and many social enterprises value commercial experience and business acumen as

well as other transferable skills developed from your previous work.

Social enterprises generally have fared well during the recession and can open your eyes to a whole different world of work and rewarding opportunities. ○

## Did you know?

- There are estimated to be over **62,000** social enterprises in the UK, or **5%** of all businesses, with employees with a turnover of over **£24 billion** a year.
- About **5,500** of these are based in the West Midlands. That's almost **3%** of the total number of registered companies in the region!
- Many public services in health care, leisure services, education, and housing to name a few are increasingly delivered by social enterprises because they provide innovative and high quality people-centred services.
- Well known examples near you include **Halo Leisure** (Leominster), **Gateway Family Services** (Birmingham), **Marches Energy Agency** (Shrewsbury), **PM Training** (Stoke-on-Trent) and **Fordhall Community Land Initiative** (Market Drayton).



- A new **Social Enterprise Mark** (similar concept to the Fairtrade label) has been launched with government backing to enable the general public to easily identify and buy from social enterprises. Look out for this.

## Some local social enterprises...



**50Fifty** | Lee Blake was excluded from school six times in two years, graduated five years later, gained a teaching qualification, lived and worked abroad for five years, then got a job helping young people who were excluded from school. He started 50Fifty, a social enterprise that sells branded streetwear and merchandise, tapping into the talent and energy of young people, teaching them how to make money legally. [www.50fiftyclothing.com](http://www.50fiftyclothing.com)



**Where Next? Association** | Worcestershire-based Where Next? runs several social enterprises including a retail garden centre and horticultural nursery, a light assembly and woodworking factory, a garden maintenance landscaping business and a training division. Through these they provide supported employment, work experience and training to people disadvantaged by learning difficulties or other special needs. [www.where-next.org](http://www.where-next.org)



**Marches Energy Agency** | Shrewsbury based MEA is one of the UK's leading sustainable energy and climate change social enterprises. It enables

communities, organisations, businesses and households to embrace sustainability energy opportunities. [www.mea.org.uk](http://www.mea.org.uk)



**Concept Conference Centre** | Concept, in central Birmingham, provides competitively priced conference facilities. They serve locally sourced, home cooked

food and offer external catering. Concept's social aim is to provide employment and training opportunities for blind or partially sighted people. [www.conceptconferencecentre.com](http://www.conceptconferencecentre.com)

## Getting started...

For general information about social enterprise...

**Social Enterprise West Midlands** provides central access to information, resources, contacts and sources of business advice and finance for anyone interested in starting, developing or working with social enterprises in the West Midlands.

[www.socialenterprisewm.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprisewm.org.uk)  
024 7663 3911  
[info@socialenterprisewm.org.uk](mailto:info@socialenterprisewm.org.uk)

## Got a business idea?

If you're interested in starting a social enterprise, you can speak to your local business advice agency. Specially trained advisors can help you decide if social enterprise is right for you and provide the training and practical help you need to get your idea off the ground.

To find your local business advice agency, see:

[www.socialenterprisewm.org.uk/access-to-support](http://www.socialenterprisewm.org.uk/access-to-support)