



# GROWTH HUB NEWSLETTER

## January 2025

*Happy New Year, we are looking forward  
to working with you in 2025!*

**Support for your business** – OxLEP Business is the Growth Hub for Oxfordshire, simplifying the business support landscape and helping individuals and businesses to connect more easily. We are here to help SMEs and entrepreneurs find the support they need, offering prompt, friendly, impartial advice. We signpost businesses to the right no cost business support both locally and nationally.

### **Get started..**

Complete OxLEP's Business Support Tool to get started and receive your business support plan signposting you to profit boosting, market growing, fully funded business support:

[Business Support Tool](#)

If you have any questions or requests for support  
please email us directly at  
[business@oxfordshirelep.com](mailto:business@oxfordshirelep.com)

# OxLEP Business

## 'Driving Investment and Sustainable Growth for Oxfordshire' (DISGO)

<https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/repf/>

The new 'Driving Investment and Sustainable Growth for Oxfordshire' (DISGO) report highlights the work of OxLEP with the county's business community, from April 2023 to March 2024.

During the 12 months highlighted in the report, OxLEP announced that it supported almost 1,800 businesses, provided over 2,800 hours of support and retained millions of pounds-worth of apprenticeship levy for the county – investment that would have otherwise been lost to Oxfordshire.

The report highlights how the Oxfordshire business landscape has functioned over the past year, acting as a 'temperature-test' as to the position and mindset of the businesses and communities that have sought support over that period.

It shows that of the businesses that filled out the **Business Support Tool – OxLEP Business' free business support diagnostic tool** – over the period, 321 were start-ups, 178 were scale-ups (20%-plus growth per year), 122 were pre-start, 51 were growing businesses (10% growth per year), and 19 were established businesses.



# OxLEP Business

## 'Driving Investment and Sustainable Growth for Oxfordshire' (DISGO)

With a mission to 'inspire and support business, secure investment and drive opportunities for economic prosperity across communities', OxLEP operates across a series of teams – each with standout achievements highlighted with the report.

During 2023/24, OxLEP delivered:

- Almost 700 support plans via its online tool for businesses
- £842,000-worth of grants for over 50 visitor economy businesses
- Webinars to 750 plus businesses
- Support to over 20 Ukrainian nationals, helping them to start a business
- Through the annual CareersFest event, inspiration to over 3,250 students to discover exciting career paths
- Almost 500 devices to individuals to reduce digital poverty via the 'No Limits' programme
- Support to 429 people, helping them to move closer to the labour market via 'No Limits'
- Via the Oxfordshire Careers Hub, support to 58 secondary schools and further education colleges in the county
- Major awareness for apprenticeships in the county, engaging dozens of businesses and apprentices alike, with 115 entries received for the Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards

Read the full news article here: <https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/news-2/>



# OxLEP Business

## Get your Business MOJO Back in 2025 with free business coaching

OxLEP Business is offering all businesses in West Oxfordshire and Cherwell up to 30 hours of business advice, peer support, mentoring and coaching for the first few months of 2025 to get your business MOJO back.

Best of all, this business coaching programme is FREE!

Whether you are the owner, director or manager of an established business or a start-up, business coaching can help you improve your performance, just like any other kind of coaching, by helping you work on both your strengths and your weaknesses. This business coaching offering is being delivered as part of the Cherwell and West Accelerator Programme to support businesses. It is a time-limited opportunity (only available until mid-Feb 2025) to get expert help with masterclasses, leadership development training, facilitated peer support and one-to-one coaching; all tailored to your business needs.

Our coaches and advisors are highly experienced professionals with deep industry knowledge and a proven track record of helping businesses succeed. This programme will give you an outside perspective on what you are doing and what you want to achieve and help you put steps in place to get there. It might be a review of operations is needed, you might need some personal guidance on management style, time management or a range of things to help you get your unique business MOJO back.

You have nothing to lose.

**Email [Lesley.Parsons@Oxfordshire.gov.uk](mailto:Lesley.Parsons@Oxfordshire.gov.uk) to claim your spot or gift this opportunity to someone who needs it.**

**Let's make 2025 your most successful year yet!**



# OxLEP Business

## Cherwell Business Support Programme

<https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/cherwell-business-support-programme-overview/>

Entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses wanting to grow in Cherwell are set to benefit from two new business support programmes. These two new programmes will support organisations to develop, commercialise ideas and bring them to market, as well as supporting already established businesses to grow.

**14th January 2025 - Business Fundamentals and the Business Model Canvas -**

**Cherwell SPARK -** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-fundamentals-and-the-business-model-canvas-cherwell-spark-tickets-1044731268347?aff=oddtcreator>

**14th January 2025 - Business Planning for Growth Masterclass - Cherwell Accelerator**

**-** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-planning-for-growth-masterclass-cherwell-accelerator-tickets-1059478070429?aff=oddtcreator>

**21st January 2025 - Mastering Innovation For Your Business - Cherwell Accelerator -**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/mastering-innovation-for-your-business-cherwell-accelerator-tickets-107041111449?aff=oddtcreator>

**28th January 2025 - Mastering Operational Efficiency - Cherwell Accelerator -**

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/mastering-operational-efficiency-cherwell-accelerator-tickets-1077284560119?aff=oddtcreator>

## West Oxfordshire Business Support

<https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/west-oxfordshire-business-support-programme-overview/>

It is for entrepreneurs, start-ups and businesses wanting to grow that are based in West Oxfordshire.

The two new programmes will support organisations to develop, commercialise ideas and bring them to market, as well as supporting already established businesses to grow.

**8th January 2025 - Business Fundamentals and Business Model Canvas - West**

**Oxfordshire SPARK -** [https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-fundamentals-and-business-model-canvas-west-oxfordshire-spark-tickets-1044728630457?](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-fundamentals-and-business-model-canvas-west-oxfordshire-spark-tickets-1044728630457?aff=oddtcreator)

[aff=oddtcreator](https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-fundamentals-and-business-model-canvas-west-oxfordshire-spark-tickets-1044728630457?aff=oddtcreator)

**23rd January 2025 - Business Planning for Growth Masterclass - West Oxfordshire**

**Accelerator -** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-planning-for-growth-masterclass-west-oxfordshire-accelerator-tickets-1026872863377?aff=oddtcreator>

## Combined Cherwell and West Oxfordshire support:

**13th January 2025 - Leadership Development - West Oxfordshire/Cherwell Business**

**Accelerator -** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/leadership-development-west-oxfordshirecherwell-business-accelerator-tickets-1053437412659?aff=oddtcreator>

**22nd January 2025 - Peer Networks - Cherwell/West Oxfordshire Business**

**Accelerator -** <https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/peer-networks-cherwellwest-oxfordshire-business-accelerator-tickets-1088575150579?aff=oddtcreator>

# OxLEP Business Events

All our planned fully funded events can be accessed and booked here: <https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/events-overview/>

## OxBOoSt Network - January

Date and time: Tue, 7 Jan 2025 16:00 - 17:00 GMT

Location: Online

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/oxboost-network-january-tickets-1113843729579?aff=oddtcreator>

OxLEP Business engages with thousands of business owners and leaders every year providing knowledge, advice and other business development support. But until now there hasn't been an easy way to help these businesses to network. Problem solved...



## Business Growth Peer Network

Date and time: Wed, 8 Jan 2025 12:00 - 14:00 GMT

Location: Online

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/business-growth-peer-network-tickets-1037698061837>

As small-medium business owners it can be hard to deliver the day job whilst keeping an eye on the future of your business and adapting to change.

Peer Networks provide the time, space and skill sets to step back and move forwards on challenging issues. Working in a small group, for a focused period of time, you can move forwards faster on things that matter to you in your business. You'll find that your fellow group members have been in your position and have some valuable perspectives to offer.

## Cybersecurity Starts with People: How Small Teams Can Stop Big Threats

Date and time: Mon, 13 Jan 2025 13:00 - 14:00 GMT

Location: Online

<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/cybersecurity-starts-with-people-how-small-teams-can-stop-big-threats-tickets-1118711067919>

In today's digital landscape, cyber threats are more prevalent than ever, and small businesses are prime targets. But here's the good news: protecting your business doesn't require a massive budget or a dedicated IT team. It starts with empowering your people.

Join our free webinar to discover how small businesses like yours are turning their employees into frontline defenders against cyber threats.

# OxLEP Business Events

## **OxLEP Start-Up Club - Bootcamp (1) - Business Planning**

**Date and time:** Wed, 15 Jan 2025 17:00 - 19:00 GMT

**Location:** Online

**<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/oxlep-start-up-club-bootcamp-1-business-planning-tickets-1061920265099>**

### **Start-Up Bootcamp**

For start-ups and early-stage entrepreneurs - this bootcamp is designed to encourage businesses to focus on the fundamentals of a successful business and develop a viable, successful and sustainable business.

Three intense sessions, each delivered by one of our experienced business experts, providing practical content to help you learn and make progress, alongside a group of supportive peers.

You will finish the Bootcamp with a clear plan on how to move your business forward and reach your next milestone.

**Session 1 - Business Planning** In this first session Lesley McKie, Director at Positively Media and long-term supporter of small businesses and businesses with purpose, will introduce the Business Model Canvas - a great tool to help you create your first business plan on one page! Completing your own Business Model Canvas will also help you to refine the business idea, and consider all of the key ingredients to help you to make it a success.

**Session 2 - Your Value Proposition and Your Customers** - Register for that event separately.

**Session 3 - Managing your Business Finances** - Register for that event separately.

This Start-Up Bootcamp is perfect for individuals who are thinking of starting their own business - sole trader or Limited Company. Or for businesses who are looking for some help with developing their early-stage business or pivoting their plans.

Attending this Bootcamp will also enable you to access further Business support from OxLEP.

### **How to Effectively Recruit in 2025**

**Date and time:** Mon, 20 Jan 2025 13:00 - 14:00 GMT

**Location:** Online

**<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/how-to-effectively-recruit-in-2025-tickets-1113928834129>**

In an ever-changing employment market, it has never been more vital for Oxfordshire businesses, large and small, to ensure their recruitment strategy is effective. For many businesses, their people will be their biggest asset, but they can easily become their biggest cost. During this hour-long webinar, Ben will provide a comprehensive overview of how to effectively recruit in 2025.

# OxLEP Skills

## Apprenticeships webinar for parents and carers

<https://careersliveuk.com/partner/oxfordshire-careers-hub>

(click on upcoming events and scroll down to register)

Are you a parent or carer? Would you like to know more about apprenticeships to help you support your young person with deciding what to do when they leave school or college? There is so much choice for young people in terms of what they can do at 16 and 18 and it's important that all young people learn about all the pathways available to them so that they can decide on their best next step.

As parent/carers we know the important role you have in supporting your children with these choices, so we'd like to invite you to join Oxfordshire Careers Hub and CareersLive (young people are welcome to attend too!) on Tuesday 11 February from 18:00 – 19:00, which is during National Apprenticeship Week, to hear from local employers and apprentices and learn more about a pathway that has opportunities for everyone.

**OxLEP Skills**

## Explore your young person's career dreams!

Oxfordshire Careers Hub is teaming up with CareersLive to run an apprenticeships awareness broadcast for parents and carers (students are encouraged to attend too!) on 11 February 2025 from 18:00-19:00, which is during National Apprenticeship Week.

**Webinar**  
February 11, 2025  
6:00 pm - 7:00 pm

Careers Live | Oxfordshire CAREERS HUB | CAREERS & ENTERPRISE COMPANY

## Careers Fest 2025 – session for parents and carers

<https://careersfest2025twilightsession.eventbrite.co.uk>

Are you a parent or carer of a young person in Year 9 or above? Like to know more about their options for when they leave school or college to help you support them with taking their best next step?

Oxfordshire Careers Hub are holding a twilight session for parents and carers at Careers Fest on Wednesday 19 March from 16:00 – 19:00 at The Kassam Conference & Events Centre, which will be an opportunity for you to meet with a wide range of employers, further education colleges, universities and training providers and find out about all the options on offer. Visiting Careers Fest with your



# OxLEP Skills

young person is a fantastic way to get those careers conversations started and help you feel equipped with the right information to support them with deciding on their next step.



Supporting Oxfordshire schools and colleges

<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/events>

Like to get involved with informing and inspiring the next generation by engaging with local schools and colleges? Our website has a list of the events and initiatives that they are looking for business volunteers to support, including human libraries, careers fairs and work experience placements.

Engaging with students in your local school is a fantastic opportunity to raise awareness of your business and industry with the next generation, becoming an employer of choice and supporting your local community.



# OxLEP Skills

Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2025 now open for entries and nominations  
<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/oaawards>

The Oxfordshire Apprenticeship Awards 2025 are open for entries and nominations until midnight on the evening of Monday 24 February.

Winners will be announced at a special celebration evening, set to take place on Thursday 22 May in one of the most prestigious venues in the world, the iconic Long Library at Blenheim Palace, itself a World Heritage Site, an attraction for local and global visitors and central to the everyday lives and livelihoods of the neighbouring communities.

The awards are organised by OxLEP Skills on a not-for-profit basis, with the generous support of a number of sponsoring organisations.

The 2025 headline sponsor is The Hill Group, who will choose the overall Apprentice of the Year from the winners of the five apprentice awards. The award categories and sponsors are as follows:

- Intermediate Apprentice of the Year – Abbott Diabetes Care
- Advanced Apprentice of the Year – NielsenIQ
- Higher / Degree Apprentice of the Year – Siemens Healthineers Magnet Technology
- Special Recognition Award – Milestone Infrastructure
- Rising Star Award – Popham Hairdressing
- Shining Star Award – IST INTECH
- Apprenticeship Ambassador Award – Grundon Waste Management
- Inspiring the Future Employer Award – Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust
- Skills Champion Award – The Engineering Trust
- Training Provider Individual Award – Oxford Brookes University
- Apprenticeship Employer of the Year (<250 employees) – Olamalu
- Apprenticeship Employer of the Year (250+ employees) – Assure UK

OxLEP Skills are also grateful to have the support of High Spec Composites, Darke & Taylor, Jonas Software UK & Europe, Oxford North, Activate Learning, Oxfordshire Advanced Skills, the South East Apprenticeship Ambassador Network, Oxfordshire County Council and the University of Oxford.

Entering the awards as an employer, or nominating an individual, is a fantastic way to showcase your organisation and celebrate the achievements of your star apprentices and the colleagues and training providers who support them along their journey. Finalists and guests will have the opportunity to join us at Blenheim Palace for a fantastic evening of apprenticeship celebrations.

# OxLEP Skills



## **'No Limits' inclusive employability support programme** **<https://oxlepskills.co.uk/employability>**

The 'No Limits' inclusive employability support programme, developed by OxLEP Skills, aims to remove barriers that Oxfordshire residents might have getting into, or returning to work, education or training.

The programme is being delivered through two of Oxfordshire's most inclusive charities, SOFEA Didcot and Aspire Oxfordshire and is funded until March 2025 by Cherwell District Council, Oxford City Council, South Oxfordshire District Council,

Vale of White Horse District Council and West Oxfordshire District Council through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund (UKSPF).

The programme provides up to 30 hours of 1-1 support with finding employment, education, or training through help such as CV writing, application forms and preparation for interviews. It also offers support through the provision of travel bursaries for getting to interviews or the first month of a job or apprenticeship, if this is a barrier – and the provision of electronic devices, data and informal digital training programmes for individuals experiencing digital poverty.

Other barriers to employment, education or training – such as access to certifications or training – can also be funded through the programme.

Funding has also been secured in some districts through the UKSPF to provide courses in sectors where skills are in demand, such as green construction and care, to help people to get closer to employment and/or training. 'No Limits' will signpost and create awareness of these courses to open opportunities to new career pathways for Oxfordshire residents.

**Helping you find employment, education and training**

**We can support with:**

- Finding and applying for courses
- Writing a CV
- Applying for jobs

**We can also help with:**

- Laptops and digital devices
- Wi-Fi dongles and data
- Digital training

**'No Limits' Programme**

[www.oxlepskills.co.uk/employability](http://www.oxlepskills.co.uk/employability)

**Funded by UK Government**

**Cherwell**

**Oxford City Council**

**Vale of White Horse**

**West Oxfordshire District Council**

**OxLEP Skills**

# Oxfordshire Net Zero Business Support

## **Fully funded Energy assessments for South & Vale businesses, delivered by Energy Solutions Oxfordshire**

Energy assessments worth a minimum £1,500 consultancy advice are being offered at no cost for organisations based in South & Vale, delivered by Energy Solutions Oxfordshire (ESOx). Any organisation that signs up will get a site-specific building decarbonise plan and pointers to funding to help them to action the energy saving recommendations. The deadline to apply is 13th December. There are only a limited number of assessments available so register early to avoid disappointment. This support is funded by the UK Government through the UK Shared Prosperity Fund.

<https://www.energysolutionsoxfordshire.org/free-energy-assessments-for-smes-in-south-and-vale/>

# Oxfordshire Business Support

**Other Resources:** As part of our ongoing commitment to provide the best possible service to Oxfordshire's SME's we always ensure that other services and opportunities which may be available to business within Oxfordshire are highlighted and signposted.

For more information visit here: <https://oxlepbusiness.co.uk/external-resources/>

## **Business & IP Centre Oxfordshire**

At the Oxford Westgate Library

Supporting Oxfordshire residents to start, protect and grow their own business.

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/business/business-and-intellectual-property-centre-bipc>



## **OSEP**

OSEP provides support, empowerment, and advocacy for local social enterprises, enterprising charities, and purposeful businesses in Oxfordshire.

OSEP, a local Social Enterprise itself, plays a crucial role in fostering a community where businesses prioritise positive societal impact alongside their financial success.

Website: <https://www.osep.org.uk/>

Email: [hello@osep.org.uk](mailto:hello@osep.org.uk)

# Non OxLEP News/Events

## Free expert energy advice for Cherwell SMEs

Are you a small or medium-sized enterprise in Cherwell? Are you looking to reduce energy costs and improve sustainability? Energy Solutions Oxfordshire (ESOx) can help. They are offering a limited number of free energy assessments (worth at least £1,500) for SMEs in the Cherwell area.

Identifying energy-saving opportunities can be challenging. ESOx provides comprehensive energy assessments tailored specifically to your business's needs. Their expert team will analyse your energy usage, identify areas for improvement, and provide actionable recommendations that deliver tangible results.

To register your interest and learn more, visit the ESOx website:

**<https://www.energysolutionsoxfordshire.org/cherwell/>**

The deadline is 14 March, but organisations are encouraged to apply early.



# Non OxLEP News/Events

## **Social Impact Business Bootcamp**

Date and time: Friday, February 7 · 9:30am - 2:30pm GMT

Location: 40 Lydalls Rd, 40 Lydalls Road Didcot OX11 7HX



**<https://www.eventbrite.co.uk/e/social-impact-business-bootcamp-tickets-1082183232179?aff=oddtcreator>**

This fully funded business bootcamp is designed to give early stage entrepreneurs a solid foundation to developing an attractive, resilient and successful business by embedding processes and practices that have a positive social or environmental impact. The sessions, tailored for early stage and start up businesses based in South Oxfordshire and the Vale of White Horse, will also help you to identify your business mission and increase the positive impact your idea has.

**The Oxford Magazine:** What's on in Oxfordshire -

<https://theoxfordmagazine.com/>

**Oxfordshire County Council News:** [News from Oxfordshire County Council](#)

**Experience Oxfordshire:** [Top 10 Things to Do in Oxford and Oxfordshire – Experience Oxfordshire](#)

**Oxfordshire County Council:** <https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/>