

Information Collaboration Growth

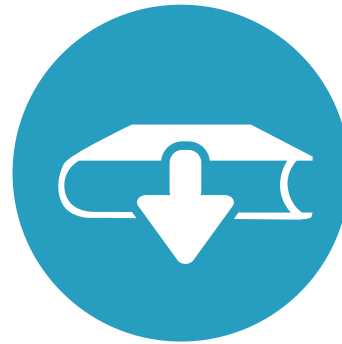
The How's Business
16/17 Story



Key Achievements



42,876 Website visits



123 Downloads of the Start-up eBook



4768 people receiving support from the website



152 people helped through Popup Business Cafes



55 businesses receiving intensive support



£27million of ESIF support programmes

Introduction

16/17 marked the second year of operation for How's Business, the Growth Hub for York, North Yorkshire and East Riding.

For the first three quarters, our model focused on delivering high quality information to our micro business community and ensuring strong collaboration with our partners in order to extend our reach.

In the final quarter of the year, the launch of a new wave of ESIF-funded business support programmes led us to adapt our model to providing additional signposting and handholding services in order to help businesses take advantage of the new opportunities.

This is our story.

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Information

Over the 16/17 period, the key strength of How's Business has been in its skilfull adaptation of content to suit the needs of businesses across the region. Given the size of the region, 11,405^{km2} there are 4.5 businesses per square kilometre, which is a huge barrier to engagement. That said, the Growth Hub's understanding of its audience and its ability to take advantage of different programmes as well as the development of different business support services has been a key part of this.

The use of information as a way of helping businesses to make changes and improvements to their business is essential. The backbones of our region are tourism businesses and retailers, most of which are excluded from ESIF funded support either because of their sector or their modest ambitions.

With the economic impact of Brexit still being uncertain, the need to sustain and maintain this backbone is more important now than ever. High quality information is essential to tying this together.



Covering a region that is 11,405km²



50,000 businesses in the LEP geography



4.5 businesses per Km²



13,910 businesses in the Retail and Tourism sector



42,876 visits to website



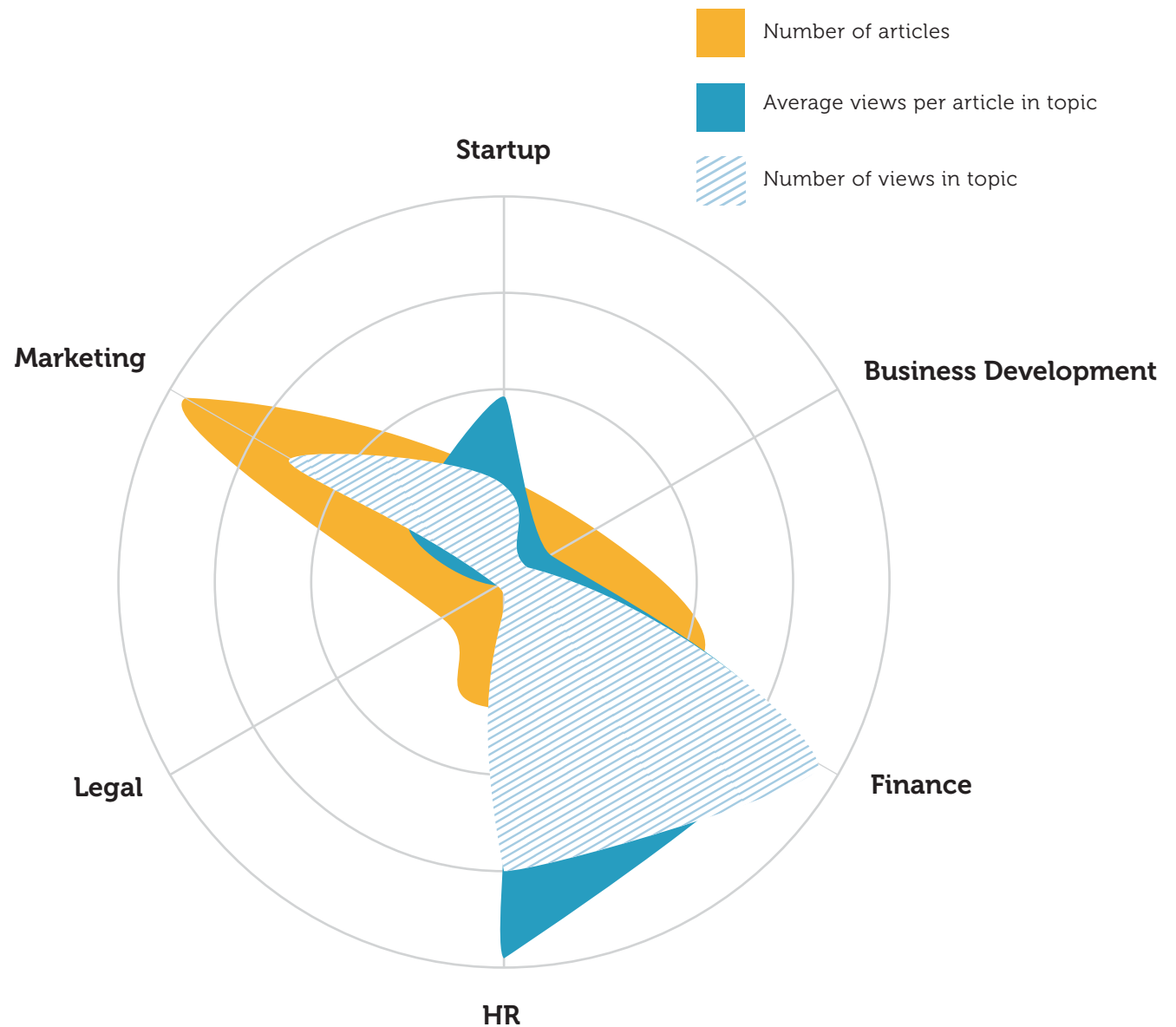
40,220 articles read

What do people want?

Articles give us an impressive insight into what makes our businesses tick. The five best performing articles were:

1. The New Pound Coin
2. How will the changes to National Minimum Wage affect you
3. 10 ways to make your staff feel valued
4. How to handle maternity leave
5. How to turn your hobby into a business

By topic, the most popular articles have been finance and HR. Clearly, HR and finance is a big issue that is being faced by the businesses of the Growth Hub and one that we're going to continue to support.

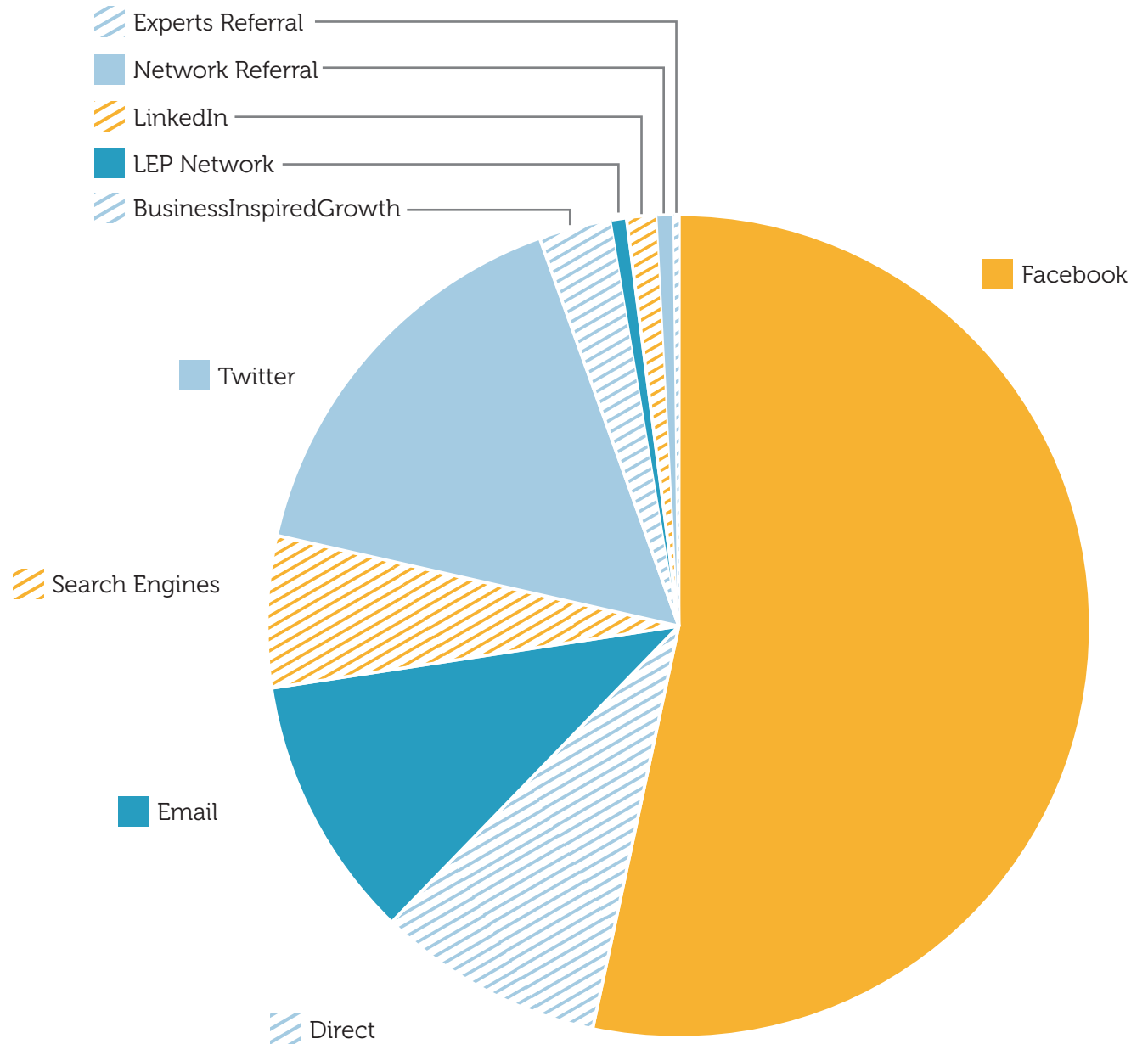


How do they get here

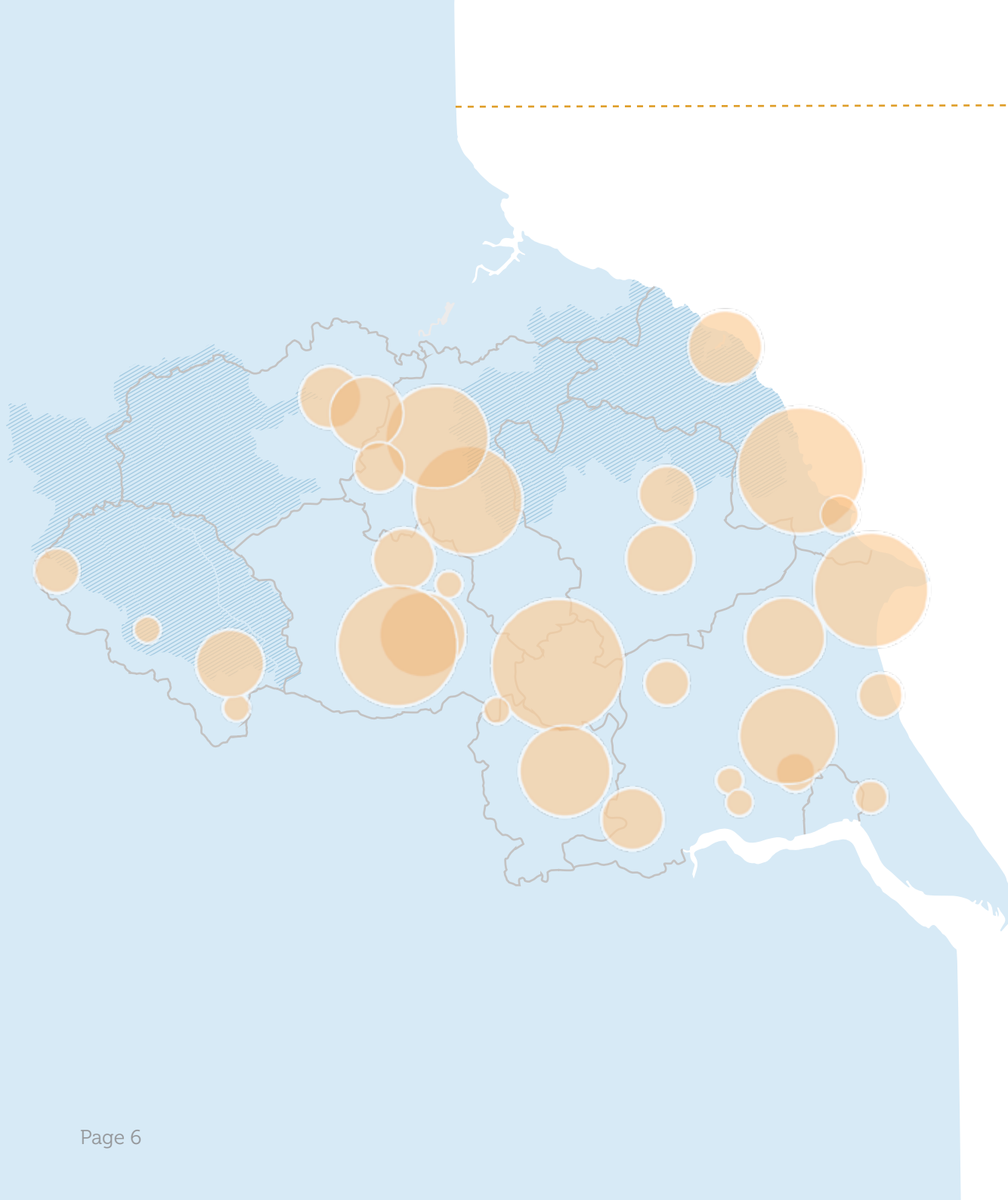
This year, people read over 40,000 articles on How's Business, but where did they come from?

In a crowded market place for business support, social media has been an essential way of cutting through the noise and generating traffic to the Growth Hub.

Impressively, over half of our traffic has come from Facebook. Although Facebook isn't considered a traditional platform for reaching businesses, the people behind those businesses are active on Facebook, they're using it to keep in touch with friends and family, and they're thinking about business too.



Who are they?



70% of website visitors from Facebook are Women



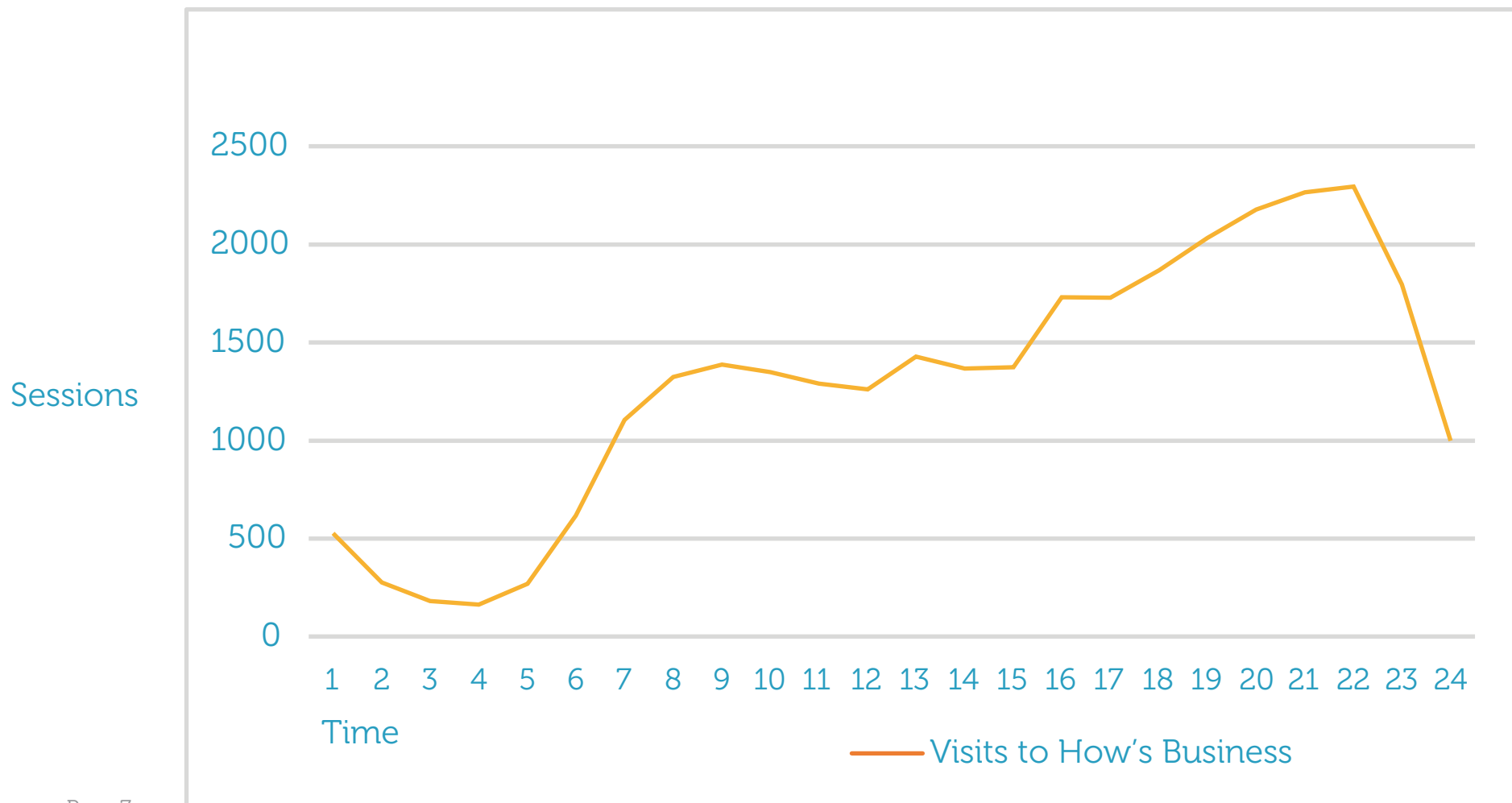
19% of website visitors from Facebook are 35-44

Facebook has brought information from the Growth Hub to businesses across York, North Yorkshire and East Riding with strong representation from our key centres of business.

Of key note however, is the number of women in business who the Growth Hub is able to reach through Facebook. 70% of our audience are women, and our audience is predominantly people between 35-44 suggesting that the Growth Hub offers a viable alternative to traditional business support options which can be seen as unapproachable for women.

When do they visit?

When we set up the Growth Hub, we wanted to create a resource that could solve the problems keeping people up at night. True to form, 22:00 is when Growth Hub Traffic is at its busiest, especially when we're pushing out content about how to solve knotty HR problems. When you can't sleep at night because you're worried about an underperforming member of staff, the Growth Hub is here to help.



Collaboration

This past year has seen How's Business collaborate with networks and intermediaries to great effect.

Although the Growth Hub team itself is small, employing only four members of staff, through our work with networks, intermediaries and other business support programmes we have been able to dramatically increase the reach of our Hub as well as the expertise and resources that we can tap into.

Despite our small budget in comparison with other Growth Hubs across the UK, these excellent working relationships with other organisations across York, North Yorkshire and East Riding allows us to have an incredible reach.



25 experts contributed to eBooks



20% Weclome to Yorkshire Members downloaded the tourism eBook



98.5% popup cafe delegate satisfaction



23 networks work with us



75 experts gave advice at popups



1,771 eBooks downloaded

How we run a Popup Advice Cafe

How's Business Popup Business Advice Cafés bring together our trusted business experts and small business owners to allow them to ask specific questions and improve their businesses. Last year, we ran 13 popup cafés all over the region, from York to Northallerton, Skipton and Hawes to name a few.

We find great locations by working with 23 local networks and businesses to find appropriate venues to host popup cafés in and get set up to facilitate helpful conversations between delegates and experts.

Last year, 152 business owners attended How's Business Popup Advice Cafés to discuss their businesses and find solutions to their problems.

Over the past year, 75 business experts have volunteered their time to speak at How's Business Popups. Experts in social media, tax and accountancy and start-up business advice are always popular and we've had specialists in: raising finance, website review, apprenticeships, training, marketing, and branding share their knowledge and experience with delegates.

98.5% of delegates found the advice they received at the popup useful for their business.



152 attendees



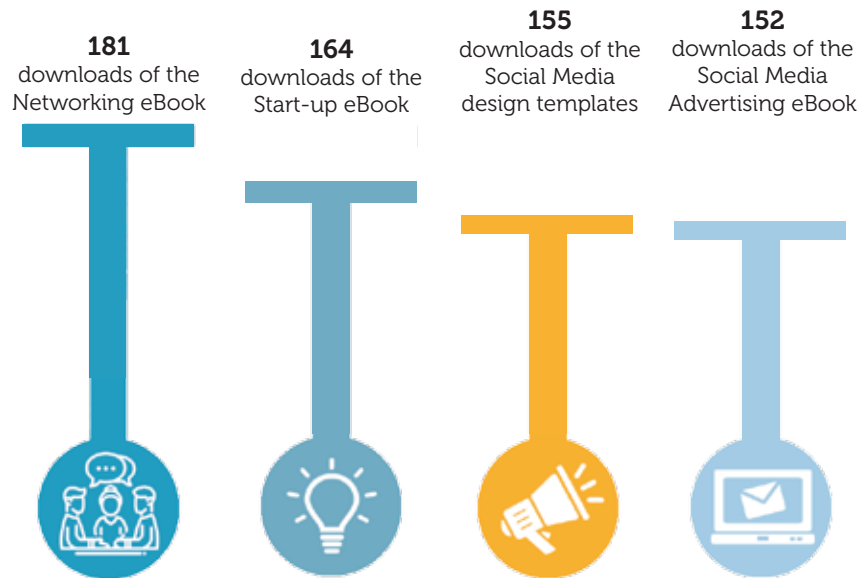
98.5% delegate satisfaction



75 experts volunteered advice



Best Performing eBooks

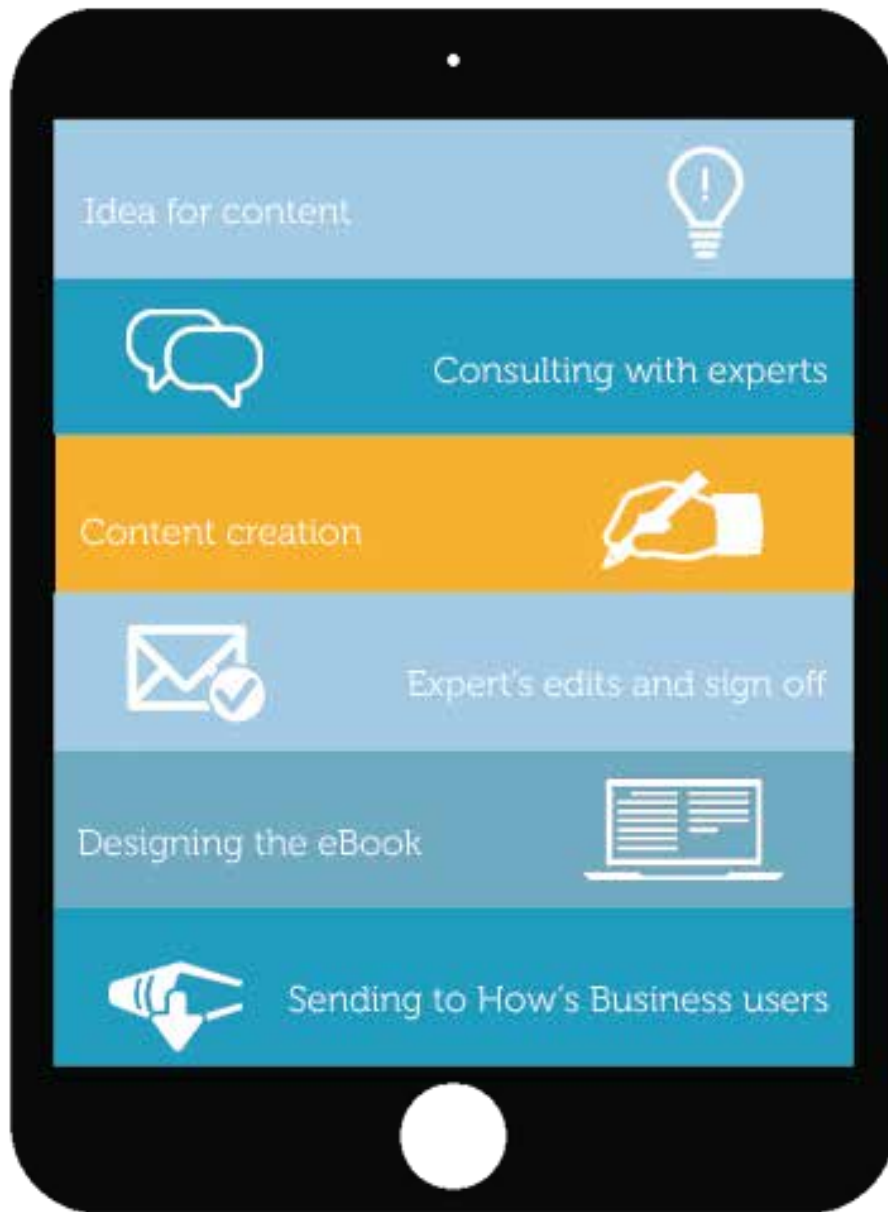


One of this year's key successes has been the creation of eBooks on a number of business support topics. How's Business's eBooks were downloaded 1,771 times this year. They offer in-depth information and guidance on a particular business topic which can be downloaded and accessed both online and offline, making it easy for our users to take up support.

By providing our users with something really useful in eBook format, they are willing to share some of their personal information and business details with us. As many of our users download more than one eBook, we can slowly establish a detailed profile of them. This means that over time, we can build up a comprehensive understanding of who our users are, what types of things interest them and what types of content would be relevant to their business.

We can also find out what issues they are facing in real time, by tailoring the questions people are asked as they download. When the decision to leave the European Union was announced we were able to respond. We created a guide to business resilience and emailed it to our users and asked them what impact they thought Brexit would have on their business. 155 people answered our question and 35% of them did not know what to expect, and only 12% believed it would positively impact their business.

How we create our eBooks



Our process for creating eBooks with experts

The majority of the eBooks How's Business produce are researched and created in-house, but when our users need a specific piece of content that extends beyond our knowledge base, we turn to the How's Business experts. Our experts are usually established business owners themselves or experts in a specialist area of business support who have volunteered their time at a popup advice café or shared some of their expertise for articles on the website.

The Cyber Security eBook was a collaborative effort between the How's Business team and five cyber security experts. Some of these experts were known to us already through past work, but with chapters considering the payment card industry data security standard (PCI DSS) we knew we required expertise we'd not had before.

We found them by speaking to our networks and asking for recommendations, as that way we could be confident in the quality of experts we'd be working with. How's Business celebrates peer-to-peer support and work to create a network of reliable and trustworthy experts for both our own content and for our users.

Working in this way means that the business owners using How's Business benefit from the expertise that can be found in the private sector. Within the business community, there is lack of trust for public sector support, so by encouraging business-to-business connections we can help stimulate economic growth in York, North Yorkshire and East Riding.

Case Study: Welcome to Yorkshire

We know that our eBooks are well received by our users given that we had 1,771 eBook downloads last year. We thought that we could build on our relationships with our networks and collaborate on eBook content that they could share with their users.

By collaborating on eBooks, we can increase the number of people accessing support through How's Business, as well as providing added value to the networks. They are able to provide their users with useful content and increase their value to their users, and we are able to extend our reach and offer support to businesses that otherwise might not have known about what the Growth Hub can offer them.



A link to the eBook was emailed to 500 users



We adapted successful content for the Welcome to Yorkshire audience



200 members visited the landing page for the eBook



106 members downloaded the eBook



Created from articles written by the How's Business Popup Advice Café experts and designed specifically for tourism businesses, the Marketing to Tourists eBook was incredibly popular.

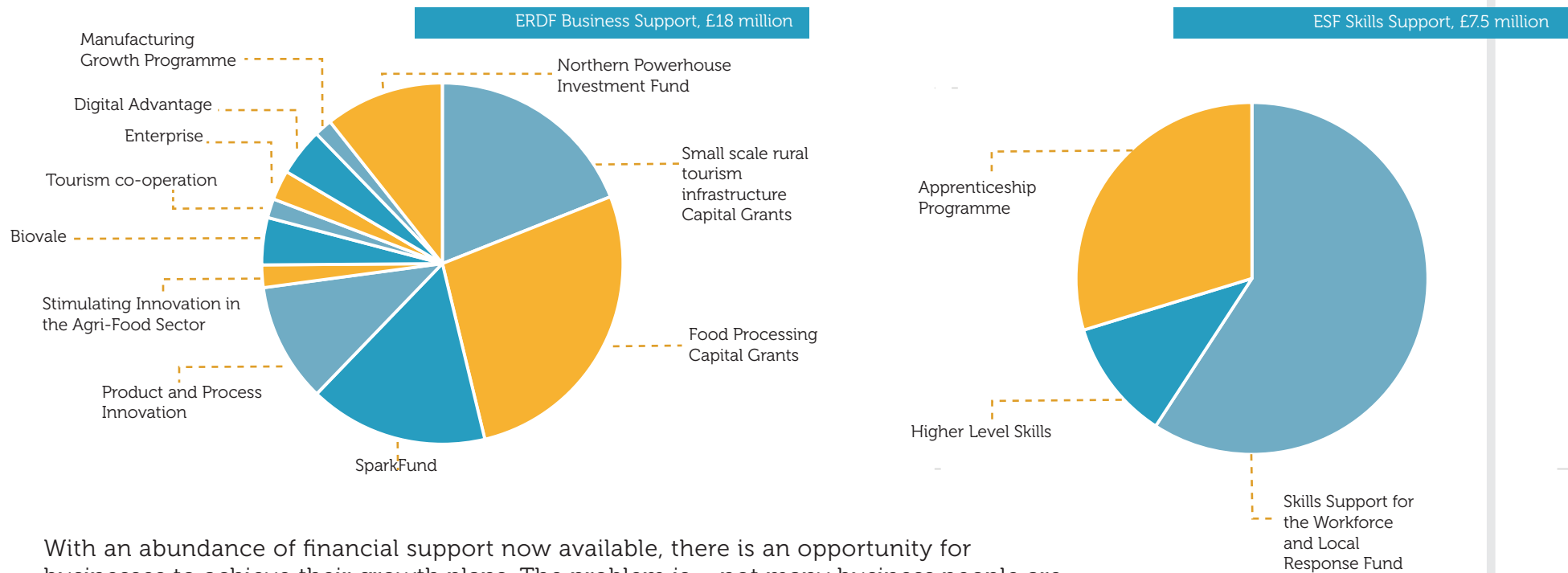
As the eBook was emailed from an influential and trusted membership organisation, our content was greatly received and was downloaded by 20% of Welcome to Yorkshire members in the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding area.

A total of 115 eBook downloads came from our work with Welcome to Yorkshire last year, with 92% of those coming from the cobranded Marketing to Tourists eBook.

The success of our collaborative work with Welcome to Yorkshire has encouraged us to reach out to more of our networks with the intention to share our content with their members.

Growth

Business markets are fluid and continuously evolving, so it's only appropriate that the Growth Hub is adaptable and able to offer the most relevant and up-to-date support. In the past, we have focused dominantly on helping SMEs through our online resources, but there was a gap in the service we offered when numerous funding programmes launched.



With an abundance of financial support now available, there is an opportunity for businesses to achieve their growth plans. The problem is – not many business people are aware of what funding is actually available and their eligibility. Searching online can take precious time out of a busy working day, and unnecessary jargon can leave business people more confused than when they started. The Growth Hub wanted to counteract this issue and provide a service that would make it quicker and easier for businesses to find funding support.

The Growth Hub Support Process

Stage 1

The business will let us know about their growth needs via email or they've been referred into the Growth Hub.

Stage 2

If the need of the business is clear, then we'll signpost them into appropriate support. If the need is more complex, we'll arrange a time to speak to them.

Stage 3

Once business needs and expectations have been clarified, the Growth Hub will speak to the relevant support programmes to check eligibility.

Stage 4

The Growth Hub will introduce the best and most appropriate schemes to the business.

Stage 5

Ongoing support is provided. We double check that contact has been made and check when support has been completed at which point we can survey the business. If the business is then rejected by the programme, they are referred back to the Growth Hub for alternative help.

Rik Currie, Anthropods

"As the owner of a start-up enterprise, I was looking for advice and clarity on the numerous grant and funding schemes that were out there; after contacting [the Growth Hub] I didn't have to look any further.

Within a day, [the Growth Hub] had identified relevant funding organizations, created a heads-up document and I was having conversations within a week. [The Growth Hub] continues to support and expand the service with energy, focus and professionalism. In short, I would be very happy to recommend the York, North Yorkshire and East Riding Partnership."

Eleanor Gittings, JCJ Design & Construction

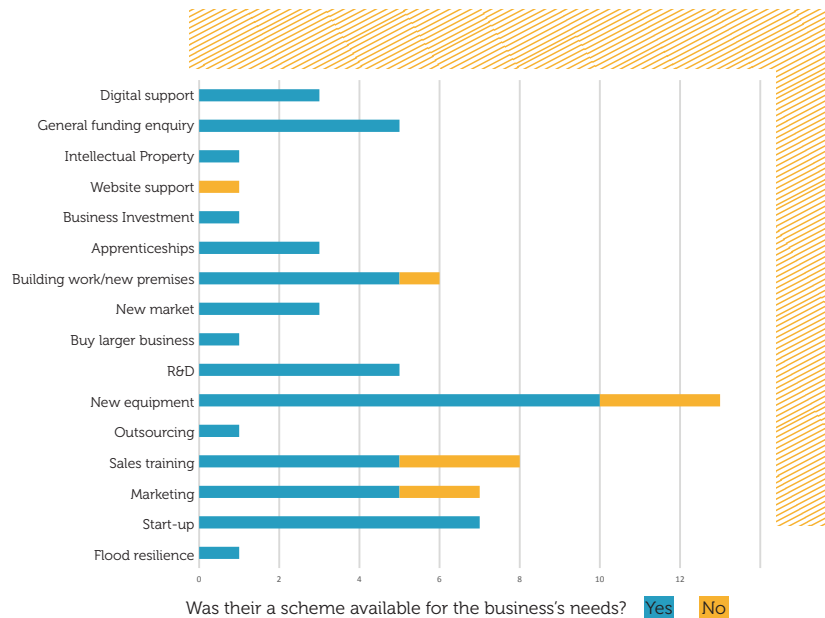
"[the Growth Hub] has been wonderful in supporting and understanding our business's needs. We have learnt about a number of relevant schemes and funding opportunities, all of which we wouldn't have known about if it wasn't for [the Growth Hub]."

Signposting

The business support landscape in York, North Yorkshire and East Riding has exploded since the start of 2017. This is great for businesses but comes with its own set of challenges. The support is delivered by different schemes, it's fragmented, and there is a lot of different private schemes as well. It is difficult for businesses to know where to go, which is why the Growth Hub is useful. We are an impartial broker of business support services.

By engaging with more businesses and offering a central point for support services, we can not only help businesses to achieve their growth ambitions, but collect data that could improve future business support. For example, we can keep track of the demographics and business needs.

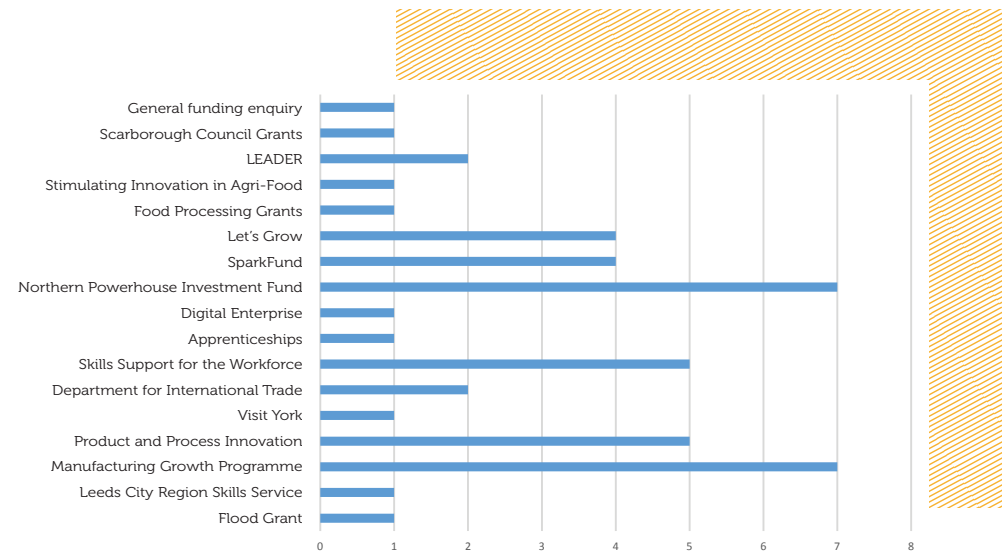
Business Needs, Jan '17- March '17



There may not have been funding available if the business was in an ineligible industry (e.g. retail). In this case, they will be directed to alternative support.

Signposted out of the Growth Hub, Jan '17 - Mar '17

(since the launch of the new wave of business support programmes)



If the Growth Hub is unable to signpost towards an ESIF programme due to ineligibility, we will find alternative forms of support. From the available resources on How's Business (eBooks and articles), to the National Business Support Helpline, networking events and the Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs mentor scheme.

Case Study: Mia & Dom



Jennifer Feltham was at a crossroads with her business, Mia and Dom. She wanted to grow, but there was no clear map on where to go next. Fortunately, How's Business was here to give her a guiding hand and make sure she knows all the potential options available. We want to make sure Jen doesn't reach a dead end and we have been here to help almost since day one.

Jen's How's Business experience

Free advice

Counting the pennies is always important for a business, so Jen was eager for any free advice she could get. She signed herself up to our Business Popup Cafe in Ripon in March, 2016.



Awards Time

Jen has come a long way from attending a Popup 2 years ago. All of the How's Business online resources have been there, ready to help. Jen's even earned herself awards, including the Green Parent Natural Beauty Awards 2016.



Consultancy

Jen needed strategic support and she could access this through the Manufacturing Growth Programme. Juggling marketing and manufacturing had made it difficult for Jen to balance her time, so the Manufacturing Growth Programme was here to guide her with suggestions such as outsourcing. Like most businesses, financial worries played on her mind...



Extra Support

Jen has spoken to the Northern Powerhouse Investment Fund and has been able to access a loan through their microfinance support. She has now moved into new premises and is looking to take on staff.



Staff Support

At the Popup, Jen was introduced to Caroline Todd from Hot Toddi, a social media marketing advisor. Jen took Caroline on board for the first 12 months to help get the ball rolling in her business and attract customers.



What now?

With awards under her belt and selling into a few shops and online retailers, Jen has developed a stable business. But where does she go next and what support is out there?



Funding

Jen would like to increase her working capital first before she proceeds with the Manufacturing Growth Programme. With all of the funding support that has just launched, Jen has picked the right time to start growing.

How's Business is here to help Jen grow by connecting her to a suite of programmes that complement her business needs.

But not all business problems are easily solved or appropriate for ESIF funding. If this is the case, the Growth Hub is here to go the extra mile and make sure that the business is not left in a state of limbo. We'll direct them towards appropriate help and ensure they can reach their full potential.

What do businesses think?

The Growth Hub looks to continuously improve and provide a high level of support.



"[the Growth Hub] has provided some excellent contacts that have helped guide our direction, through [the Growth Hub] we have been able to take significant steps towards securing investment for our business."

Simon Tomlinson,
Agware

Ashley Mason, YorMed

"The support from [the Growth Hub] has been instrumental in helping the business source funded training to help develop our people. We also received funding advice however this was slightly fragmented and possibly more factsheets of what is required to apply for funding would assist as in the end we were referred to another organisation but was unsure if they would charge for their support in helping us develop future financial plans. Over all I am very satisfied and [the Growth Hub] has been tremendous in keeping me in the loop and ensure I am accessing the support needed.

Sarah Botez, Studio Botez

"Since being introduced to [the Growth Hub], we have received wonderful assistance with the areas we need the most advice and support in, whether it be looking for funding or information regarding investors. There is so much information out there which takes a lot of time to read through and source what is relevant to our business that finding someone who can assist with this and point you in the right direction is invaluable. This support is free to businesses which is also very beneficial."