

## BUSINESS SUPPORT SERVICES

For many years now the UK government (and in some areas the EU) has made funds available for a variety of Business Support Services. The wide range of services both assist existing businesses and help people wanting to set up new businesses. This article outlines the purpose and scope of these services and profiles the range of agencies that provide them, at national/regional, London-wide and London Borough levels. The Yellow pages section includes a Directory of almost 100 of the agencies providing business services. The entries indicate the activities of the agency and provide contact details.

### Why are business support services funded by government?

Business support services are intended to promote economic growth, by enabling existing businesses to grow and new ones to start up. But these services are also intended to contribute to the government's social inclusion goal of improving the employment prospects of BAME groups and the regeneration of the neighbourhoods where a high proportion of these groups live. Increasingly these services are also promoting improvement in the environmental practices of businesses.

Thus the provision of these services is part of the process of implementing government's economic, social and environmental policies. In combination these policies are promoting sustainable development- economic development that improves the competitiveness of businesses, but in ways which ensure that all social groups benefit and that the negative environmental impacts of businesses are minimised.

Many of these services are fully funded by the public sector and are provided free of charge. However, some services are only subsidised and the providers require the payment of a charge for the service, albeit at less than the commercial rate

### What are Business Support Services?

Business support services provide assistance in a wide range of business activity including:

- \* business planning
- \* business premises
- \* access to finance - grants and loans for business development
- \* choosing a legal structure
- \* employing people
- \* IT and e-commerce
- \* environmental Practices
- \* health and safety at work
- \* pest control

- \* food safety
- \* licences and permits
- \* translation facilities
- \* business training
- \* buying and selling a business
- \* marketing and sales
- \* international trade
- \* business rates
- \* business taxation - Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise

### Who provides business support services?

Business support services are provided at national, regional and district levels by a wide variety of agencies most of which receive public funds and are thus approved by central or local government. Most of the national organisations operate through a regional network. At local level the local council - in London the London Boroughs - often have the role of providing access through a central contact point to the range of services in their area and the business support sections of their web-sites are generally a very helpful starting point. Most Boroughs have a Local Enterprise Agency (LEA) that provides a wide range of support services and is usually independent from the local council, although often financially supported by the council.

However there are also a variety of specialist agencies, working with particularly businesses, such as those with Black and Minority Ethnic (BAME) owners, or with particular sectors, such as cultural industries. Whilst most of the agencies are open to any businesses in the locality, some are membership based, such as the Chambers of Commerce

### What types of businesses are these services intended to help?

The services are targeted particularly at SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises), as it these businesses which often need support in order to realise their potential for growth. Government gives a high priority to supporting SMEs owned by Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) groups and there is also an emphasis on those boroughs and neighbourhoods where the job opportunities for these groups are limited. Therefore business support services contribute to the local economic development component of urban regeneration programmes.

### Why a Business Support Services section in this Directory?

The London Business Guide Organisation believes that Turkish businesses could make more use of these services, not least because

they often are provided free of charge or at a subsidised rate and they aim to give priority to SMEs.

Therefore we secured the support of the London South Bank University to create this section of the Yellow pages. This is the first stage of a joint project which aims to more fully involve the Turkish speaking business community in urban regeneration and, particularly in London, to take advantage of the opportunities that the Olympics will bring.

**The intention is to produce a comprehensive Business Support Services Directory, but it is unlikely that we will have achieved this fully in this first edition and we apologise to any organisation that has been omitted. Moreover, we are aware that the provision of business support services changes from year to year, as government policies and funding evolve and efforts are made to improve the delivery of these services. Therefore we will be continually updating and improving our data-base and would be grateful for any comments or suggestions.**

The London Business Guide Organisation intends to build on the work involved in creating this directory. This will involve

\* *further developing its business networking activities by providing an annual programme of five major networking events for Turkish businesses and their commercial partners;*

\* *working as a referral agency which puts people in contact with business support services agencies and recruits Turkish businesses for business development programmes - thus if you want further information before you contact any of the agencies listed, you can call us; and*

\* *providing London Business Guide training workshops and business development programmes for Turkish businesses, in partnership with appropriate specialist training organisations.*

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**We hope you find the Business Support Services section of the Yellow Pages helpful and we would welcome any suggestions as to how it could be improved for the next edition.**

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