



# Transforming Local Infrastructure Social Enterprise Network

## How to... make the most of social enterprise

Social enterprise is a particular approach rather a legal structure, although there are legal structures associated with it eg Community Interest Company. It not a new approach but many groups and organisations are considering social enterprise in response to the current economic and political climate.

### What characterises social enterprise?

When it takes the form of a business, its features include:

- A desire to change things for the better and create social value
- Trading goods or services 'for more than profit', reinvest profit (surplus) back into creating the change you want to see
- Working with others and in an open way.

### The benefits of social enterprise

The benefit to the community or environment is the positive change you want to bring about. The benefits of social enterprise to your organisation include:

- A more varied income stream, giving a more secure future
- Access to a broader marketplace of ideas, networks and buyers
- Refreshing employee skills - encouraging staff and volunteers to spot and take up new opportunities as well as solve problems.

### Top tips for setting up a social enterprise

If you're considering setting up a social enterprise yourself, either linked to your charity or as a new pilot venture, here are some things to consider:

- Make sure you have a strong business idea as well as social passion
- Use a business plan to structure your thoughts

- Take advice. There are business support advisers for social enterprise
- Don't go it alone. Draw on family, friends and the social enterprise community.

And remember, it's not just for charities; many ethical businesses choose to set up a social enterprise so they are clear on how they giving back to the community.



### Top Tips for making the most of enterprise

If you want to support existing social enterprises rather than set up your own you could try the following:

- Check out the Social Enterprise UK website [www.socialenterprise.org.uk](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk) for 'How To' guides and lists of local networks.

- Meet the entrepreneurs - the learning is infectious! Link in to Wolverhampton Social Enterprise Network and/or the many support organisations working in the West Midlands.
- Use social enterprises as your suppliers and do market research to see if you can become a supplier to others.

### More information and support

Part of the TLI project has been about creating the right environment for social enterprises to thrive. This included setting up the Wolverhampton Social Enterprise Network, now led by local enterprises and Wolverhampton Council.

For information on how to become a member contact Mike Shields:  
T | 01902 550469  
E | [Mike.Shields@wolverhampton.gov.uk](mailto:Mike.Shields@wolverhampton.gov.uk)