



Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for Growth Hubs (FY 2025 - 2026)

Introduction

This Monitoring and Evaluation framework is designed to help relevant local authorities, through their Growth Hubs, to collect, store and manage data to a) monitor and maximise their operational performance and impact, b) demonstrate “what works” to inform future Department for Business & Trade (DBT) and wider national and local policy thinking, c) to enable development of more seamless customer journeys across the new Business Growth Service (BGS), and d) to enable effective evaluation of the Growth Hubs network including their role as local delivery partner for the BGS. The framework also includes elements to ensure DBT can meet its requirements under Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010.

The Framework sets out the information needed, and in what form, to enable DBT to assess the performance, delivery and achievements of the Growth Hub network. This falls into:

- Collection and collation of aggregated statistics covering a range of indicators including the number of firms benefiting from the different levels of support and advice that is accessible via Growth Hubs, to be provided to DBT by the local authority as part of the annual and biannual reporting requirements
- Collection and retention of more detailed firm level data on individual Growth Hub client businesses to enable DBT or its representatives to evaluate longer term impacts and outcomes of the support provided

The aggregated statistics will additionally be used by DBT to inform ongoing monitoring and assessment – and future development - of the Business Growth Service. The frequency and processes for providing this information (outside of the annual and biannual reporting timetable) are under development and will be appended to this Framework in due course. Elements of the firm level data will, through data sharing agreements and processes, also be used to enable smoother customer journeys and referrals across Government-owned business-facing services under the Business Growth Service umbrella.

As set out in the letter dated 11th March confirming the individual allocations of core Growth Hub funding for 2025-2026 to local authorities, there is an uplift in funding for this period to support the following additional requirements:

Business Growth Service: The Government is implementing a new Business Growth Service (BGS) for which local authorities and their Growth Hubs will play a key role in as the local delivery partner. This is intended to be a partnership delivery model, leveraging the existing role, structure, characteristics and strengths of the Growth Hubs network, whilst providing a more secure locus for Growth Hubs as a convening point for local business ecosystems. We have introduced new, moderate reporting requirements to reflect this, set out in this Framework. As the BGS evolves there will also be development of new data and information sharing standards, protocols and procedures, and potentially technical solutions.

Additional Support for Co-operative and Mutual Businesses: Growth Hubs (at individual and cluster level) will now be required to ensure they offer support to businesses with alternative business models – including co-operatives and mutuals, as a condition of funding. In line with this new condition, light reporting requirements have been added to this Framework. This requirement came into effect from Q2 of this financial year.

Additional Support for High Street Businesses: Growth Hubs (at individual and cluster level) will now be required to ensure they offer support to High Street businesses, as a condition of funding. In line with this new condition, light reporting requirements have been added to this Framework. This requirement also came into effect from Q2 of this financial year.

The Framework details the following:

- Roles and responsibilities for DBT, Growth Hubs and their accountable bodies;
- Data security, privacy and sharing requirements;
- The categories of support for businesses by “intensity level”;
- The aggregate statistics and firm-level data items that local authorities via their Growth Hubs must collect and report into DBT, over what time periods, and under any subsequently agreed data and information sharing protocol(s) implemented under the Business Growth Service;
- The Protected Characteristics data that must be collected;
- Why these statistics are valuable to DBT, local authorities and their Growth Hubs, and to the Business Growth Service.

This Framework should be seen as the **minimum set of data to collect**. Local authorities (via their Growth Hubs) are expected to maintain records of non-aggregated (firm level) data for all medium and high intensity diagnostics and interventions (including primary unique business identifiers, for example Companies House Registration Number, VAT/PAYE or FCA number, and postcode) to be made available to DBT or its designated agents to undertake evaluation of the performance, outputs and impact of all Growth Hubs.

Further Information

Please contact mailto:Growthhubs_localgrowthpolicy@businessandtrade.gov.uk, if you have any questions.

1. Roles and Responsibilities

The local authority must commit its Growth Hub (including any external providers) to use common metrics and evaluation approaches as set out in this Framework. Additionally, they must commit to work with DBT and the Business Growth Service to develop agreed data and information frameworks and data sharing agreements and protocols covering specific needs of the Business Growth Service, and agree to implement any such frameworks, agreements and protocols when required.

DBT reserves the right to use this data - or to instruct a third-party - to undertake evaluation of the performance, outputs and impact of all Growth Hubs. The Department is unlikely to focus evaluations on any particular local authority area or type of business intervention - the responsibility or requirement for that level of evaluation lies with the local authority itself.

Local authorities should use robust monitoring and evaluation systems to seek continuous service improvement for their Growth Hubs, ensure quality of delivery, and enable analysis of impacts and outcomes. DBT is happy to advise on evaluations and recommends that local authorities engage with us at any point during the funding period if they anticipate changes that are significant or that may impact on service levels.

DBT is happy to be approached for advice on monitoring, evaluation, Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems or other analytical support. DBT may distribute analysis of local business populations and business needs and help to “link” Growth Hub data to other datasets to help local authorities develop their Growth Hub strategies and targeting. Additionally, DBT will distribute an annual review template to assist local authorities and their Growth Hubs in collecting and providing firm-level data.

Growth Hubs (with core funding from DBT) are led and delivered by local authorities - as the accountable body, the local authority is therefore responsible for monitoring its Growth Hub’s activities including day-to-day performance, achievement of its wider strategic role, and ensuring effective process and impact evaluations – including value for money at a local intervention level.

Local authorities are expected to develop a robust evidence base¹ of the value of their Growth Hubs to ensure they can demonstrate impact and to develop evidence of “what works”.

2. Data Security, Privacy and Data Sharing

Local authorities need to ensure that the Growth Hub has put in place appropriate data protection arrangements in line with the current UK Data Protection Legislation - including the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018 and UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) - as Data Controllers.

A Privacy Notice (PN) must be made available to Growth Hub customers at the point they first provide their personal data. Those customers who receive “medium” and “high” intensity support must be informed, in addition to any standard provisions in the PN, that their data will be shared with DBT and/or nominated partners for research and evaluation purposes. Local authorities should also maintain CRM records of businesses engaged via separately funded non-core Government programmes, for example Made Smarter Adoption, and be prepared to provide this to DBT or its designated agents on request, to the extent that it is permissible in compliance with UK GDPR.

Data sharing agreements and protocols between all Growth Hubs and the various services also funded or operated by DBT under the Business Growth Service umbrella will be vital to facilitate more seamless customer journeys between these offers. They will be integral in understanding how the different elements of the Business Growth Service interact, and to inform ongoing development of the Business Growth Service and business support interventions. Growth Hubs via local authorities will therefore also need to ensure that any Privacy Notices and data sharing agreements will enable recipients’ information to be shared with DBT and its agents **or other HM Government business support services**.

In order to enable smooth data sharing, we would expect the local authority and its Growth Hub to ensure that relevant CRM data can be extracted and/or shared with these government partner services ideally through live data links (e.g. Application Programming Interfaces (APIs), or where necessary static data using recognised enterprise-standard file types and collaboration platforms. Individual Growth Hubs would not be expected to develop their own APIs.

An updated data sharing agreement template for the 2025/2026 financial year is available for use by accountable bodies and their Growth Hubs, DBT and UMi (Business Support Service), and will have been shared with the Growth Hub by UMi on behalf of DBT. **All Accountable bodies and their Growth Hubs are required to have an agreement in place for the 2025-26 FY**, so Growth Hubs or local authorities should engage with their corresponding UMi contact if they have not already done so.

DBT also intends to develop a more comprehensive data sharing agreement covering all of the DBT-funded services within the Business Growth Service, which **will be a requirement** for all Growth Hubs – this is likely to be in place for the 2026-27 financial year. This may also provide a foundation for similar approaches in due course between Growth Hubs, DBT, Business Growth Service, and other government agencies such as Innovate UK.

3. Intervention Intensity

The key factor determining the aggregate statistics and firm-level data that local authorities are required to report is the “intensity level” of support that the Growth Hub has provided to a business. We recognise that in practice the intensity of support exists on a continuum (both in terms of time spent with a business and in

¹ At the evaluation design stage (strongly recommended to be before implementation of a new type of intervention), the score of the evaluation on the Maryland scale should be considered and justified.

terms of the nature of support), so the following categories are a practical means of measuring support provided:

- **“Light touch” (up to 1 hour)** – transactional interactions with Growth Hubs which do not consume significant dedicated resource. Examples:
 - telephone enquiries and basic signposting
 - face-to-face appointments (involving very light-touch diagnostics)
 - web-based interactions (e.g. contact form, user registration to members area, use of live chat, online diagnostic tools, message through social media) [note: only **interactive** actions should be counted – not **passive** actions like views of a web page]
 - Attendance at Growth Hub organised events, festivals, conferences or pop-ups (note, these are large events that deliver high-level information around business support and advice options. They are not more intensive workshops.)
 - Other contact (only interactive actions) not listed above
- **“Medium intensity” (between 1 and up to 12 hours)** – interactions which use moderate Growth Hub resource and broadly align with the point in the customer journey at which Growth Hub starts collecting basic firm-level data. Example:
 - to include multiple engagements over the financial year - (Please use the cumulative number of engagements with a business to decide whether the support totals between 1 to 12 hours)
 - business diagnostic with Growth Hub advisor, or business attendance at a support workshop
 - referral to business support schemes and programmes (local and national)
- **“High intensity” (12 hours or over)** – interactions representing sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource, broadly aligned to standard business support metrics of support in excess of 12 hours. Examples:
 - to include multiple engagements over the financial year - (Please use the cumulative number of engagements with a business to decide whether the support totals over 12 hours)
 - businesses with managed accounts
 - services and support directly provided by Growth Hub

Local authorities, on behalf of their Growth Hubs, are required to report:

- aggregated statistics (set out below) for firms who have only benefited from “Light touch” interactions.
- both aggregated statistics and firm-level data (set out below) for firms who have benefited from “Medium intensity” or “High intensity” interactions.

4. Aggregated Statistics

DBT requires the following information to be provided by Growth Hubs via local authorities **every six months** via the Bi-Annual and end of year Growth Hub Annual Reporting process, which covers all interactions with businesses and individuals (including those at group events, business festivals and pop-ups). **The data gathered at the Bi-Annual report will cover the first six months of a funding period. The data gathered at the Annual report will cover the full year funding period.**

The aggregated statistics will also be used by DBT as part of ongoing monitoring and assessment of the Business Growth Service, as well as to inform development of future services and business support interventions. The frequency and processes for providing this information (outside of the annual and biannual reporting timetable) are under development and will be appended to this framework in due course

Notes: Businesses should be counted only once, for example they will either appear under light intensity, medium intensity or high intensity categories. Measures such as “total number of referrals” do not need to reflect whether (or not) the referral was taken up.

- Total number of unique businesses that have been supported (i.e., receiving **light, medium** or **high intensity support** as defined above) by the Growth Hub in the defined period (6 or 12 months)
- Total number of unique visitors to the Growth Hub website
- Number of businesses that have received ‘**Light touch**’ triage, information and/or signposting support
- Number of businesses receiving ‘**Medium intensity**’ information, diagnostic and brokerage support.
- Number of businesses receiving ‘**High intensity**’ support i.e., sustained support and using significant Growth Hub resource.
- Total number of businesses that have received ‘**Medium**’ and ‘**High intensity**’ support, that have the opportunity, ambition and greatest potential to grow, or that could be classified as potential Scale-Ups, defined as: “The aspiration and potential - with support - to deliver significant turnover growth over the next three-year period of at least 50%, and who have at least 5 staff in the current period”.
- Total number of individuals who have been helped to start a business.

Provide tabulated responses to the customer satisfaction question “**How would you rate your overall satisfaction with the support provided by the Growth Hub?**” (for ‘Medium’ and ‘High’ intensity interventions only), rated on a five-point scale², and detail the sample size. A survey approach is sufficient³.

For each of the following data fields, please only provide an aggregate figure covering only for “Medium” and “High” intensity interventions.

- Total number of High Street Businesses⁴ that have been supported by the Growth Hub in the defined period (from Q2 of this Financial Year onwards)
- Total number of Co-operative and Mutual Businesses⁵ that have been supported by the Growth Hub in the defined period (from Q2 onwards)⁶

² 1 Very Dissatisfied - very poor, 2 Somewhat Dissatisfied - poor, 3 Neither Satisfied nor Dissatisfied- average, 4 Somewhat Satisfied - good, 5 Very Satisfied – Excellent

³ Acknowledging that at the point of reporting, customer satisfaction data may not yet have been received for all businesses supported. The data should be provided to DBT once it becomes available.

⁴ For reporting purposes, a high street business is defined as an enterprise operating within a cluster of businesses in a designated urban environment. Growth Hubs and local authorities have discretion to determine eligibility of businesses within the high street or a broader town centre area (including shopping precincts and parades), but this should not include businesses operating outside of such locations.

⁵ Co-operatives and mutuals are businesses which are both collectively and democratically owned by their members, with the aim to deliver a benefit to their members or the wider community. Member ownership structures typically comprise employees, suppliers, or the community and/or consumers that they serve, rather than external shareholders. The term ‘mutual’ is seen as the umbrella term for all common ownership structures. Co-operatives are a type of mutual - jointly owned and democratically controlled, aiming to serve members’ common economic, social or cultural needs (inc. but not limited to housing, agriculture, energy, and consumer goods). ‘Mutual’ may also refer to a mutual business operating specifically in the financial services sector (e.g. a building society or mutual insurer).

⁶It is at the Growth Hub’s discretion whether to separately capture/report on other alternative business models.

Note: If a business is both a high street business **and** a co-operative/mutual business, please count them under both categories.

For all of the following specific programme types you should capture **all** business referrals to third party services (whether operated by HM Government or other public/private/academic sector providers), and the total figure in each field should **include** referrals to any services under the Business Growth Service umbrella, for example business.gov.uk.

- Total number of referrals to a mentoring programme (e.g. MentorSME)
- Total number of referrals to a skills or training programme (e.g. HtG Management)
- Total number of referrals to a finance and/or funding programme
- Total number of referrals to an innovation and/or R&D programme (including Catapults)
- Total number of referrals to an export support programme
- Total number of referrals to an import support programme
- Total number of referrals to an investment support programme
- Total number of referrals to an energy or Net Zero programme (e.g. Department for Energy Security & Net Zero (DESNZ))
- Total number of referrals to other targeted support programmes not captured above (e.g. Made Smarter Adoption, sector-specific initiatives, digital adoption)

Please capture the following inward and outward referral statistics relating to the Business Growth Service:

- The total number of **outward** referrals made by the Growth Hub to any service under the Business Growth Service umbrella⁷ (for example, business.gov.uk, Business Support Service, International Trade Advisors), including - but not exclusively – any specialised programme areas above. Results should be tabulated to identify those that are a direct referral as a result of a data sharing agreement.
- The number of **inward** referrals to the Growth Hub from any other service under the Business Growth Service umbrella. Results should be tabulated to identify individual sources of referral, and also to identify those that are a direct referral as a result of a data sharing agreement.

5. Firm-level Data

The following tables set out the **minimum** data to be collected for all businesses⁸ benefiting from either “Medium intensity” or “High intensity” support from the Growth Hub. Annex 1 provides rationales for collecting each data type. Note: DBT will distribute an annual review spreadsheet template to assist local authorities and their Growth Hubs in collecting firm-level data.

⁷ The list of all current BGS services can be found in the “Business Growth Service Handbook for Growth Hubs”, first issued 31 July 2025. The handbook may be updated during the financial year.

⁸ “Businesses” throughout this paper excludes individuals in the pre-start up or pre-registration stage.

Business details and unique identifiers

	Type	Format	Notes
1.1	Contact name	Free text (no character limit)	
1.2	Contact e-mail address	Free text (no character limit)	
1.3	Contact telephone number	Free text (no character limit)	
1.4	Business name	Free text (no character limit)	Validate with lookup service
1.5	Company Registration Number (CRN) Issued by Companies House	8 digit number or 2 upper case letters and 6 digits e.g., 89675265 e.g., SL007945	Find/validate with lookup service If not a limited company and lookup failed, then leave blank If company is being registered soon, collect this once registered
1.6	HMRC VAT Registration number (VRN) [only needed if no CRN reference is available]	9 digits e.g., 123456789	Found on business VAT certificate Validate with lookup service Find VAT service from name If not VAT registered, leave blank
1.7	HMRC employers PAYE reference number (not accounts office reference) [Only needed if CRN or VAT references are not available]	DDD/LDDDDD or DDD/LLDDDDD e.g., 135/A56789 e.g. 135/AB56789	L = Letter (upper case) D = Digit Also called Employer reference. It can be found on HMRC business ePAYE letters, or by asking an accountant If not employing anyone on payroll, then leave blank
1.8	FCA number (where appropriate) - required for co-operatives and mutual businesses.		
1.9	Number of FTE employees at local business's office receiving support	Decimals allowed. e.g. 13.5	Full time, part time and subcontractors only
1.10	Turnover - should only include the local business	XXX,XXX	Total income/sales.

	office receiving support (in the case of multi-site businesses). (£)		
1.11	Full address of local business's office receiving support	Free text (no character limit)	
1.12	Postcode of business local business's office receiving support	Free text (max 8 characters)	
1.13	Is this a multi-site business	"Yes" or "no"	
1.14	Brief description of what the business does	SIC Code(s) only	The product/service it delivers. The customers it serves.
1.15	Growth/Scale-up potential	Free text (100 words max)	Brief description of the firm's levels of ambition and potential to grow
1.16	Month/Year business started trading	MM/YYYY	Month the business first started making sales Provides an objective measure of the maturity of the business

Notes:

In relation to unique business identifiers: Only one of CRN, VAT registration or PAYE reference number need be collected. For non-employers, who are not limited companies, and who are below the VAT threshold, all three fields can be left blank.

Summary of support

	Type	Format	Notes
1.16	Cumulative length of interaction since very first contact with the Growth Hub	Hours (whole number digits)	Round up to nearest hour
1.17	Summary of what support the business says it needs	Free text (no character limit)	What is the nature of their enquiry and subsequent business need

Support given in each interaction (1 or more) - Separate spreadsheet cells for each interaction

1.18	Type of support	Free text (no character limit)	Brief description of the support given during an interaction. Examples: Diagnostic, Referrals, Answer question, Ongoing support, Follow up. A single interaction can involve several types of support.
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1.19	Date of this support	DD/MM/YYYY	This is the date of interaction with the GH (not the date a referral is taken up).
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Notes:

Some CRM systems can more easily report at the level of project (or project stage/output). Where this is the case, it is sufficient to record/describe each project (or project stage/output) completed and the completion date.

Referrals and signposting (0 or more) - Separate spreadsheet cells for each referral

	Type	Format	Notes
1.20	<u>Name</u> of referral program / service	Free text (no character limit)	Included all referrals of any kind made by the hub.
1.21	<u>Purpose</u> of referral	Free text (no character limit)	e.g. developing management capabilities, access to finance, recruiting technical skills
1.22	Date of referral?	DD/MM/YYYY	
1.23	Was the referral accepted and taken up?	Free text (no character limit)	If known, please record whether a referral was “accepted” or “not progressed”. If pending, please record as “pending”. If not known, please record as “unknown”.
1.24	Notes about this referral (optional)	Free text (no character limit)	

6. Protected Characteristics

DBT must meet its requirements under Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010, including via any programmes that it funds or operates. In order to support this, the following reporting requirements are designed to assess the equality impact of Growth Hub activities on business support users. We expect Growth Hubs to take steps to comply with this requirement, as the collection of protected characteristics data is a condition of funding to which local authorities have committed by their acceptance of the Grant Offer Letter. We recognise that a proportion of Growth Hub clients may decline to provide an answer.

To ensure uniformity of the data being collected across the network it should be presented in the format below, not in any locally used format. This information should be collected at the same time as the other data fields above.

We require local authorities through their Growth Hubs to collect the following information for users who have benefited from “Medium intensity” or “High intensity” interactions:

1.25	Is the user the business owner?	Yes – sole owner Yes – one of the owners No	
1.26	Gender	Male Female Prefer to self-describe Prefer not to say	
1.27	Age	16-24 25-34 35-44 45-54 55-64 65+ Prefer not to say	
1.28	Ethnicity	White Mixed/Multiple ethnic groups Asian/Asian British Black/African/Caribbean /Black British Other ethnic group Prefer not to say	
1.29	Disability (Physical or Mental Health Condition or Illness Lasting or Expected to Last 12 Months or more)	Yes No Prefer not to say	

ANNEX 1 - The Rationale for Data Collection

- **What:** Contact name, telephone number, email address
Why: *Future contact is more likely to succeed with a named contact to call back.*
- **What:** Business name, trading address (including postcode)
Why: *For direct mail, site visits, event planning and geographical analysis*
- **What:** Companies House Reference Number, VAT Number and /or PAYE Number
Why: *These help to uniquely identify businesses, especially useful where businesses have common names. Data matching can be used to generate an analysis of the growth and behaviours of your customers, to enable targeting and marketing services more effectively.*
- **What:** Unique visitors to Growth Hub website
Why: *Provides an indication of the Growth Hub's reach into the local business community.*
- **What:** Interaction type, dates of interaction, time spent with business
Why: *A record of previous interactions helps case managers to assess a business maturity and allows analysis of which types of businesses are seeking which advice. Enables operational benefits such as automatically scheduled call-backs X months after the previous interaction which secure repeat business and are useful for building relationships and "closing the loop" on growth hub activity. Not only useful management information for resourcing, but very strongly recommended for informing future interactions via the Business Growth Service "single company view".*
- **What:** Description of business (maturity, sector, aspirations)
Why: *So that Growth Hubs can understand their users and tailor their services appropriately. Local economies also have different strategically important sectors, and different business demographics, so this allows for understanding and comparison of local business population, evaluate growth hub support and activity for these sectors or demographics, and can inform local authority economic plans or strategies.*
- **What:** Services, schemes or partners to which clients are referred to, for example Innovate UK, Department for Energy Security & Net Zero
Why: *Important for customer relationship management and sourcing of alternative assistance, also provides evidence to inform engagement with other programme owners. For evaluation, can be source of counterfactual evidence. Will also help in monitoring and assessing Business support services, and inform future policy or business support approaches.*
- **What:** Protected characteristics data
Why: *To assist DBT with the development of Growth Hub and Business Growth Service policy/future business support approaches, and to meet our legal duty under Section 149 of the Equalities Act 2010 to have regard to the need to:*
 1. *Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment, victimisation, and any other conduct prohibited by the Act.*
 2. *Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a particular protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*
 3. *Foster good relations between people who share a particular protected characteristic and people who do not share it.*