

# State of Social Enterprise

## in the East of England

November 2024

Headline statistics on social enterprise in the East of England, based on data from Social Enterprise UK's latest State of Social Enterprise (2023) research and wider evidence in their Social Enterprise Knowledge Centre.

### Economic contribution



There are around **13,000** social enterprises in the East of England, creating around **97,000** jobs for the region

These social enterprises generate around **£4bn** in turnover - equivalent to **2%** of regional GDP

They generate around **£59 million** in profit, re-investing **£53 million** into their social missions

**43%** developed a new product or service for their business to deliver, while **23%** reported developing a new product or service for the market



### Financial performance



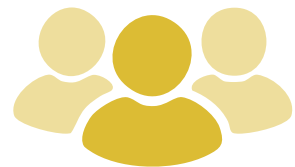
**48%** of social enterprises in the East of England made a profit last financial year - up from **43%** in 2021 - while **22%** broke even

**65%** of social enterprises here saw their turnover increase in the previous 12 months - up from **48%** in 2021 - and a further **14%** reported turnover had remained the same

### Leadership

**63%** of social enterprises in the East of England are majority-led by women

**4%** are majority-led by people from ethnic minority backgrounds



### Mission and impact

**10%** of social enterprises here operate in the most deprived parts of the region



**75%** of social enterprises believe social and environmental friendliness are equally or more important than cost when procuring products



**87%** pay the real Living Wage to all staff members

**58%** have a target to reduce carbon emissions over the next three years

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## Regional distinctions

### More social enterprises in health and retail

Social enterprises in the East of England address a more limited range of social and environmental missions compared to national average. They're also less likely than other English regions to be supporting other social enterprises as part of their mission. The most common sectors they work in here are healthcare and retail.

### Lower turnover, profits, net assets and income through trading

Median social enterprise turnover in the East of England is lower than the national average, and has decreased since 2019, while net profits are also lower. 43% of social enterprises in the region made a profit or surplus in the last financial year - slightly less than the 48% nationally.

Income generated through trading for social enterprises in the region is slightly lower than the national average, at 80%, and yet to recover to pre-Covid levels of 87%.

### Public sector work

Slightly more social enterprises in the East generated income through trading with the public sector than in other areas of England. Those in the region have increased work with the public sector more than is the case nationally, and more than in previous years.

Social enterprises trading with the public sector here are most likely to trade with local or combined authorities - more so than is the case nationally - and this has increased since 2019 for the region. By contrast, trading with central government has significantly decreased, and more social enterprises here were not in a position to bid for public contracts than was the case nationally.

### Concerns about growth

Social enterprises in the East of England are less optimistic about growth than is the case nationally. However, this is mostly explained by a higher than average proportion expecting turnover will remain static.

Social enterprises here reported lower average number of staff in 2023 than previous years, and 28% of those with paid employees didn't have any full time staff. Most didn't grow staff teams the previous year and didn't expect staff numbers to grow in the year ahead.

Growth expectations for the year ahead were also lower than in previous years, and slightly below the national average - although only 2% expect to reduce staff numbers. In terms of barriers to growth, skills issues are a bigger concern here than elsewhere, particularly around recruiting staff.

### Reduced repayable finance

Just 2% of social enterprises in the East of England said they'd applied for external finance (other than grants) in the previous 12 months, compared to 11% nationally - down from 26% in 2021 and 36% in 2019. 25% considered applying for finance, which is below the 35% national average but up from the region's previously reported 20% in 2021.

Risk appetite around finance appears lower here than is the case nationally; time pressures, lack of resources, cost and timing are all cited by social enterprises in the region as affecting applications for finance. 20% lacked the confidence and skills to take on finance - far more than the national average of 8%. 40% agreed that suitable finance is available, which is 5% below the national average but 5% higher than 2021 results.

Overall appetite for finance in the region looks set to remain limited. 32% said it is fairly or very likely that they'll approach external finance providers in the next three years, compared to 48% nationally.

For full details of the State of Social Enterprise 2023 research methodology, sponsors and partners, see [www.socialenterprise.org.uk/social-enterprise-knowledge-centre/the-state-of-social-enterprise](http://www.socialenterprise.org.uk/social-enterprise-knowledge-centre/the-state-of-social-enterprise). Due to sample sizes, we have been unable to report on certain data in each of these regional reports. Thank you to all the social enterprises who have participated in Knowledge Centre data collection. Thank you to all the social enterprises who have participated in Knowledge Centre data collection. For any queries, contact [research@socialenterprise.org.uk](mailto:research@socialenterprise.org.uk).

## Case study – FUSE Norwich

FUSE Norwich is committed to empowering social entrepreneurs and enterprises across Norfolk by helping new social entrepreneurs successfully launch, supporting existing social enterprises to strengthen and grow, and nurturing sustainability across the sector for long-term impact.

FUSE was founded in 2022 by a group of successful social entrepreneurs and supporters, all working in Norwich, following a successful application to win the city accreditation as a Social Enterprise Place in November 2021.

So far this year, FUSE has supported 33 social entrepreneurs on their journey to register their social enterprise, as well as working with more than 80 existing voluntary, community and social enterprise organisations across Norfolk. FUSE has also brought the local social enterprise community together for 22 workshops, networking and peer learning events, with a further ten planned before the end of 2024.



FUSE stimulates Norfolk's social enterprise sector, providing tailored support at critical stages and expanding access to financial resources. Through strategic partnerships, FUSE works to foster a diverse and inclusive community, while also raising awareness and advocating for the social enterprise model.