

Business FOCUS

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Working together, achieving more

Official Magazine of Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce

Autumn 2026

A photograph of three people in a modern, high-tech environment. On the left, a young man with glasses and a plaid shirt is looking at a robotic arm. In the center, a woman with dark hair, wearing a dark blazer and a lanyard, is pointing at a computer monitor. On the right, a young man in a dark sweater and jeans is also looking at the monitor. The background features large computer screens displaying data and charts, and various cables and equipment are visible on the left.

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Official Magazine of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

Our Partners



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members of the Chamber. Your news,
views, features and other items for
possible inclusion are most welcome.

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Working together, achieving more.

Welcome

...to the Autumn edition of Business Focus Magazine.

Many of the conversations I've been part of are returning to one question: how do we turn opportunity into growth when confidence, recruitment and investment remain under pressure?

The national picture remains challenging. Confidence, recruitment and investment are under pressure, with the British Chambers of Commerce findings showing that almost three quarters of recruiting firms are struggling to find the people they need. Businesses remain ambitious, but they need certainty, strong connections and capacity to act.

That is why one of our priorities this autumn is to open more doors for members into major supply chains.

We are already working with a number of local, national and international companies - with more to be revealed soon - to explore how they can engage more widely with our membership and strengthen their local supply chains. These conversations are about more than contracts. They are about building partnerships, understanding what major buyers need and connecting them with local firms able to solve their procurement requirements.

BedX is central to that work. Our Sizewell C supply chain session brought 50 local businesses together to hear about opportunities, procurement expectations and how to prepare. We want to build on that momentum by creating routes into major projects and helping members become visible, credible and procurement ready. That reflects BedX's wider purpose: strengthening bidding capability, building relationships and helping businesses compete confidently for future opportunities.

The opportunity is significant, but it will not happen automatically. Our role is to bring businesses and decision-makers together, turn introductions into relationships and help members position themselves early.

There is more to come. In the meantime, tell us about your capabilities, challenges and ambitions. The better we understand what you can offer, the stronger the case we can make for Bedfordshire companies to be part of the supply chains shaping our economic future.

As always, we are here to connect you to opportunity, represent your voice and provide the practical support you need to grow.

Together, let's make sure Bedfordshire is ready for what comes next.

Justin Richardson

Chief Executive Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce



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The Chairman's VIEW



Rod J Calvert OBE DL
Chairman of Bedfordshire
Chamber of Commerce

The summer of 2026 brought further reminders of the uncertainty facing businesses and communities. Extreme weather, continuing international conflict, yet another Prime Minister and pressures on household incomes are all affecting confidence and making it harder for businesses to plan for the future.

Important questions also remain about the transition to net zero, the competitiveness of UK energy prices and the impact of new employment legislation. These issues are complex, but businesses must have a meaningful voice in the policies and decisions that affect them.

That is where the Chamber network makes a real difference. The views and experiences you share with Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce help to shape our representations locally and nationally. Working alongside Chambers across the country and through the British Chambers of Commerce, we ensure that the concerns of businesses are heard directly by ministers, policymakers and other decision-makers.

We will not secure every outcome we seek, but coordinated business representation can and does influence the direction of government policy. Without that intervention, the voice of employers – particularly smaller businesses – would be far less prominent in national debate.

One of the most important ways you can contribute is by completing our Quarterly Economic Survey. Its findings provide a powerful and credible picture of business conditions and are closely considered by the Bank of England and government. I strongly encourage every member to take part and add their voice.

Our programme of Chamber events also provides opportunities to raise concerns, exchange ideas and help us present a clear and united Bedfordshire business perspective to decision-makers at every level.

Despite the challenges, the scale of investment and opportunity emerging across Bedfordshire is unprecedented. By remaining positive, engaged and united, we can ensure that local businesses are well placed to benefit.

May your business continue to thrive.

Rod J Calvert

“Businesses must have a meaningful voice in the policies and decisions that affect them.”

“Coordinated business representation can and does influence the direction of government policy.”



BEDFORDSHIRE CHAMBER OF COMMERCE Headlines the Inaugural YouthTV Aspire Awards 2026 as Bedford's Young Talent Takes Centre Stage

As headline sponsor of Bedford's first ever youth awards ceremony, the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce joined YouthTV Group CIC in celebrating 60 young nominees across 16 categories at a landmark evening for the county.

On Friday 27 June 2026, Bedford Academy played host to a landmark evening in the town's cultural calendar. The inaugural YouthTV Aspire Awards brought together 60 young nominees, 16 sponsors, local dignitaries and hundreds of guests for a night of celebration, recognition and genuine community pride. The evening was attended by Mohammad Yasin MP and Hannan Ali DL, Deputy Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, whose presence spoke powerfully to the importance the county places on its young people.

Founded by Urban Judge FRSA at just 13 years old, YouthTV Group CIC has grown into one of Bedfordshire's most exciting youth-led organisations. The Aspire Awards gave the county's young people the stage they deserve. "Bedford and Bedfordshire produce talent that rivals anywhere in this country. All young people need is the right stage and the right recognition. The Aspire Awards is that stage and this is just the beginning."

As headline sponsor, Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce Chief Executive Justin Richardson delivered the opening address. "It was a privilege to be headline sponsor of the inaugural YouthTV

Aspire Awards. The evening was an inspiring reminder of the incredible talent that exists within our young people. We are delighted to have been part of the beginning of what I hope will become a lasting Bedfordshire tradition."

Sponsors from across the business community each presented their own award category. Talk UK Telecom reflected the mood of the room: "The passion, talent and ambition of the young people was inspiring. Supporting initiatives like this is not just about sponsorship. It is about investing in young people and helping create opportunities for the future."

YouthTV Chairman Ryan Harris closed the evening: "Every nominee chose to show up and give their energy to something bigger than themselves. I could not be prouder of what this team has built."

The Aspire Awards 2026 was the first chapter. It will not be the last.

For more information visit youthtv.co.uk, email office@youthtv.co.uk or follow @youthtvuk across social media.

Pictured left: Skipping Through Theatre winning 'Young Creative' sponsored by Concept Event Solutions



You'll find plenty of opportunities to connect with other Bedfordshire Chamber members and local businesses at our range of upcoming events. Here are just a few of the scheduled events in 2026:



The **SUNDOWN SOCIAL**

10th September – 5pm – 7pm

Basepoint Luton

Free of Charge

Kindly hosted by Talk UK

Soft drinks sponsored by
Sommers Waste Solutions



Understanding Social Value **A PRACTICAL GUIDE WEBINAR**

8th October – 10am – 11am

Free of Charge

Presentation by Kier Construction



CONNECT Over Coffee

24th September – 9.30am – 11.15am

The Leighton Buzzard Railway

Members: Free of Charge

Non-Members: £25 + VAT

Kindly hosted by Jam Crackers



CONNECT Over Coffee

13th October – 9.30am – 11.15am

Bedford Blues

Members: Free of Charge

Non-Members: £25 + VAT

Kindly hosted by Bedford Blues and Bedford Blues Foundation



CHAMPIONING WOMEN Through Collaboration

30th September – 10.30am – 2.30pm

The Bedford Swan Hotel

Members: £35 | Non-Members: £45

In collaboration with The Athena Network & Women in Business



Meet the **NEIGHBOURS**

23rd October – 11am – 1.30pm

Kents Hill Park Training & Conference Centre,
Milton Keynes

Members: £20 + VAT

Non-Members: £35 + VAT

Unique event space

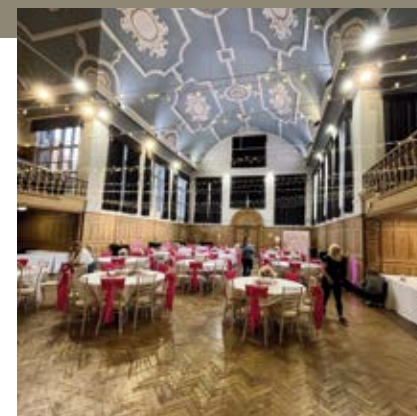
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QES Quarterly ECONOMIC SURVEY REPORT

Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce Quarterly Economic Survey (QES) forms part of the British Chamber of Commerce's national survey and is the principal business survey in the UK. Its results are closely watched by both the Bank of England's Monetary Policy Committee and the Treasury. The data reveals a timely and accurate snapshot of the economic climate for businesses in Bedfordshire and beyond.

Q2 2026 Findings

Confidence strengthens, but costs and capacity constrain growth

Bedfordshire businesses reported a more positive outlook during Q2 2026, with domestic activity, employment expectations and confidence all moving in the right direction. However, the recovery remains uneven. Most businesses continue to operate below capacity, investment remains cautious and recruitment difficulties are preventing many employers from securing the people they need to grow.

Domestic Performance: Positive movement but limited momentum

More than a third of businesses (35%) reported an increase in UK sales, bookings or custom during the quarter. A further 40% experienced no change, while 25% reported a decrease. Forward orders provide further evidence of modest improvement. Some 29% of respondents reported increased advance orders or bookings, compared with 20% experiencing a decline. However, with 51% reporting no change, the domestic market remains relatively static for many businesses. The findings suggest that conditions are gradually improving, but not yet at the pace required to generate broad-based growth across the local economy.

Overseas Markets: Export activity remains subdued

International performance was considerably more restrained. Only 9% of exporters reported an increase in overseas sales, while 13% experienced a decline and 78% saw no change. Although the results do not indicate a significant contraction in international trade, they demonstrate how difficult it remains for businesses to generate meaningful export growth in uncertain global markets.

Workforce and Recruitment: Ambition meets a skills shortage

The employment outlook was more encouraging. During the previous three months, 26% of businesses increased their workforce, compared with 19% that reduced staffing levels. Looking ahead, nearly a third (32%) expect their workforce to grow during the next three months, while only 7% anticipate a decrease. Translating those ambitions into new jobs remains challenging. Almost two-thirds of respondents had attempted to recruit during the quarter and, among those businesses, 80% experienced difficulties finding suitable staff.

Investment and Capacity: Businesses remain cautious

Cash flow remained finely balanced, with 27% reporting an improvement and the same proportion experiencing a decline. Investment intentions were similarly cautious. For plant, machinery and equipment, 23% increased their plans while 23% reduced them. Investment in training was slightly more positive, with 25% increasing expenditure compared with 16% cutting back. Significantly, 70% of respondents said they were operating below capacity. This indicates that many businesses have the ability to take on additional work but remain constrained by demand, confidence, costs or access to skills.

Outlook: Confidence improves despite continuing pressures

There are encouraging signs in the longer-term outlook. More than half of businesses (56%) expect turnover to improve during the next 12 months, compared with 46% in the previous published survey findings. Profitability expectations have also strengthened, with 48% expecting an improvement, up from 35%. However, 22% still expect profitability to worsen, demonstrating the continuing pressure on margins. Labour costs were the most commonly reported source of pricing pressure, identified by 67% of businesses. Fuel, utilities and raw material costs also remained significant concerns. Inflation re-emerging as the leading concern with taxation not far behind.

The Bottom Line

Responding to the findings, Head of Research at the British Chambers of Commerce, David Bharier, said:

"The continued fall in SME investment sentiment is further evidence of a longer-term pattern that no single shock explains. Our data shows a risk-aversion cycle taking hold. Firms have not lost ambition, but years of compounding cost pressures and geopolitical shocks have produced defensive behaviour for the average SME.

Most firms are now experiencing policy as downside risk rather than opportunity – with the rise in employer NICs a prominent example, still being felt almost two

years on. Reducing the cost and complexity of the administrative burden would give many firms the space to grow. But more broadly, government policy needs to pass a 'growth delivery test'.

Each proposal should start from the question of exactly how it will cause firms to increase investment, exports, hiring, or expansion. Until that test is being applied, more announcements will produce fewer decisions – and our survey will continue to show the same pattern quarter after quarter."



David Bharier
Head of Research at the British Chambers of Commerce

BEDFORD'S NEXT CHAPTER Starts With Its People



Bedford is entering an exciting period of growth. Major investment, ambitious development projects and new employment opportunities are set to reshape the local economy. For businesses, success will depend not only on responding to change but on having the capability, leadership and expertise to make the most of these opportunities. That's where Haris Solutions is helping organisations prepare for the future.

Based in Bedford, Haris Solutions is a management consultancy, professional services and training provider that helps organisations improve performance by developing skilled people, strengthening project delivery and delivering practical business improvements. Working across public, private and not-for-profit sectors, the company enables organisations to build the confidence, capability and capacity needed for sustainable growth.

"Businesses don't grow because opportunities appear; they grow because their people are ready to seize them. Our mission is to help organisations with leadership, project management expertise and professional capability to turn ambition into measurable results. When our clients succeed, Bedford succeeds," explains Kousar Hussain, Founder and Managing Director of Haris Solutions.

Haris Solutions delivers accredited training in leadership, project management, PRINCE2®, Agile and AI, available on-site or virtually to suit organisational needs.

Alongside training, the company provides professional services and consultancy, including project and programme management, PMO support, organisational change, and leadership development. By combining consultancy with practical learning, Haris Solutions helps organisations build lasting capability rather than relying on short-term solutions.

As a proud member of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce, Haris Solutions is committed to supporting local organisations as Bedford continues to grow. Whether you're developing future leaders, improving project delivery or planning your next phase of growth, Haris Solutions is ready to help your organisation build the skills, confidence and capability to succeed.

www.harissolutions.co.uk | hello@harissolutions.co.uk



RESTORING DIGNITY, CONNECTION AND Joy for Older Adults

Julian Busing RN, Founder of Royal Elderly Care and Wellbeing

Loneliness can quietly affect an older person's confidence, wellbeing and sense of belonging. At Royal Elderly Care and Wellbeing CIC, we believe growing older should never mean becoming invisible.

Based in Luton, our work focuses on companionship, wellbeing and meaningful community connection for older adults. One of our key initiatives is the Royal Day Experience, a free community wellbeing and companionship day designed to give older people a welcoming space to connect, enjoy activities, share stories and simply feel valued.

The Royal Day Experience was created from a simple belief: everyone is somebody, and every person deserves dignity, kindness and human connection. Our sessions bring together older adults, volunteers and community partners in an atmosphere of warmth, conversation and joy. Activities may include memory games, music, wellbeing activities, refreshments and opportunities for people to build new friendships.

We are also developing wider support through Royal Elderly Care and Wellbeing CIC, helping older adults and families access compassionate, person-centred companionship and wellbeing support in the community.

We welcome conversations with local businesses, organisations and community partners who would like to support this work through sponsorship, volunteering, referrals or collaboration. Together, we can help build a Bedfordshire where older people feel seen, connected and valued.

Find out more: www.royalelderlycare.com | 07438 375874



LIQUID
INSIGHTS

LIQUID INSIGHTS: HELPING BUSINESSES Unlock Their Next Stage of Growth

We're really pleased to have joined the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce — and even more pleased to start meeting the brilliant businesses that make up this community.

For those we haven't met yet, we're Liquid Insights: an insight led growth consultancy based here in Bedfordshire. We're co-founders, Darren & Binanti, and much of our work centres on helping ambitious brands understand their customers more deeply so they can unlock their next stage of growth.

We believe that better decisions start with better insight. Before any strategy, channel plan or proposition change, we get under the skin of how customers think, choose and buy — the behaviours, barriers and opportunities that shape real world performance. Recent projects have seen us help brands refine their proposition, diagnose slowing acquisition, and understand how shoppers make decisions both in store and online.

But more than anything, we love working closely with founders, marketers and commercial teams who want clarity on where to focus next. Marketing can shape messaging — but customers respond to product, value and experience. We help bridge that gap by showing businesses what truly drives choice, repeat purchase and loyalty.

Joining the Chamber is something we've been looking forward to. Bedfordshire has a strong, supportive business community, and we're excited to build relationships, understand the challenges local businesses are facing, and support more organisations who want to grow with confidence.

If we haven't met yet, we'd love to say hello — whether over coffee or at a future Chamber event.

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Member NEWS

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Located on Brewers Hill Road, The Incuba provides modern office space designed to help businesses thrive. Close to local transport routes and with ample parking, including electric vehicle charging points, the Incuba is convenient for both your staff and any visiting clients.

Whether you are taking the first steps in launching a new venture or looking for a larger base for an expanding team, the centre offers a range of office options to suit different needs.

What makes The Incuba stand out is our focus on creating an environment where businesses can succeed. Not just the physical environment, although the bright, modern offices with fast Wi-Fi included do help boost productivity; but also, the community of businesses and professionals it provides. This creates opportunities for collaboration, knowledge sharing, and valuable business connections, helping tenants become part of a wider network while maintaining their independence.

Businesses have access to their offices 24 hours a day, seven days a week, allowing teams to work in a way that suits their schedules. With competitive pricing from just £351 net per month, and a range of offices, giving you the opportunity to upscale as your business grows.

The Incuba in Dunstable offers a practical solution that combines convenience, flexibility and supportive business environment. To support your business growth, Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce members qualify for an exclusive offer of three months free when you take out a tenancy at Incuba.

theincuba.com

Bedfordshire is evolving. The question is - are you keeping pace?

Investment is accelerating. Markets are shifting.

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Member NEWS

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TERRORISM ACT 2025

Are You Ready For Martyn's Law?

The Terrorism (Protection of Premises) Act 2025 (the "Act") or as it is more commonly known 'Martyn's Law' received Royal Assent on 3 April 2025, with statutory guidance published in April 2026.

The legislation is currently in an implementation period and is not expected to be enforced until April 2027 with the government cognisant that duty holders will need sufficient time to assess and implement any necessary measures to make sure, they comply with the Act.

Its introduction represents one of the most significant developments in UK counterterrorism planning in recent years. The Act places new duties on organisations and individuals with control or responsibility for publicly accessible premises or events to assess terrorism risk; implement proportionate protective security measures; and ensure they can respond effectively to a terrorist incident at their premises or events.

The Act applies to qualifying publicly accessible premises with an expected capacity of 200 people or more; and qualifying public events with an expected capacity of 800 or more people.

The duty imposed on those premises and events within scope is split into two tiers, Standard and Enhanced.

STANDARD TIER – this duty applies to qualifying publicly accessible premises with an expected capacity of 200–799 people. The standard tier dutyholder is required to consider reactive public protection procedures in the event of a terrorist attack, such as evacuation, invacuation, lockdown and communication.

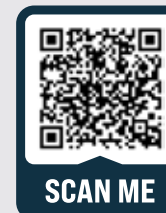
ENHANCED TIER – this duty applies to all qualifying premises or events with an expected capacity of 800 people or more. The duties applying to enhanced dutyholders are more onerous. They are required to respond reactively (as applicable for standard tier dutyholders) but they are also required to implement appropriate preventative measures. This may include implementation of physical safety measures such as installing barriers, controlling the movement of attendees into, or out of and within premises/ events and monitoring of sites.

Duty holders under the Act are called Responsible Persons. This is the individual, organisation or company that has control of the premises for the purposes of its primary use (known as a Schedule 1 use) or qualifying event.

Weightmans specialise in all aspects of regulatory law including Martyn's Law compliance.

To find out how to navigate the law, and understand your obligations, please contact Elliott Kenton on elliott.kenton@weightmans.com / 0207 227 6643 or Donna Helgeson on [donna.helgeson@weightmans.com](mailto:helgeson@weightmans.com) / 0121 616 6619.

Alternatively, please scan the QR code to help assess whether you may be caught by Martyn's Law.



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Safety Rocks Wins Third Consecutive CORPORATE LIVEWIRE AWARD

Safety Rocks has added another major accolade to its trophy cabinet after being named Corporate LiveWire Global Awards' Health & Safety Training Provider of the Year for the third year running.

The awards recognise organisations that consistently deliver excellence across their markets, with entries open to UK and international businesses of all sizes – from SMEs to multinational corporations.

Operating across high-performance and high-risk industries including motorsport, aerospace and film production, Safety Rocks provides specialist risk assessment, risk management and safety training tailored to complex operational environments.

The Corporate LiveWire judging panel highlighted the company's sustained performance, sector expertise and commitment to raising standards.

Founder Carla Crocombe said: "This is testament to the Safety Rocks team's dedication to outstanding provision year-on-year.

"We work hard to ensure every client receives training and support that genuinely improves safety culture and confidence – so to be recognised again is incredibly rewarding."

This third consecutive win reinforces Safety Rocks' credibility as a trusted, leading provider in the health and safety training landscape, supporting organisations that demand robust, practical and forward-thinking risk management.

Corporate Livewire commented: "Safety Rocks was selected as Health & Safety Training Provider of the Year for its industry leading, bespoke approach to safety education and its proven ability to transform organisational safety culture. The judges were particularly impressed by the company's commitment to replacing generic 'tick box' training with its Truly Tailored® methodology, delivering concise, relevant and memorable learning experiences that create lasting behavioural change.

"As a NEBOSH Gold Learning Partner, Safety Rocks demonstrates exceptional accreditation standards and consistently delivers high quality, sector specific training across high risk industries including motorsport, defence, construction, pharmaceuticals, transport and manufacturing.

"Their groundbreaking achievements – such as launching the first NEBOSH verified Motorsport Safety Course and becoming the Official Health & Safety Training Partner of Motorsport UK. This further highlights their innovation and leadership within the field."

safetyrocks.co.uk



Machins Solicitors strengthens Commercial Property team with **APPOINTMENT OF HARSHINDER HUNDAL**

Machins Solicitors LLP is pleased to announce the appointment of Harshinder Hundal as a Partner in its Commercial Property team.

Based at the firm's Luton office, Harshinder brings more than 20 years' experience advising investors, developers, landlords, tenants, banks and private funders on a wide range of commercial property matters. She has spent many years supporting clients across Hertfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire and the surrounding areas, earning a reputation for delivering commercially focused advice and exceptional client service.

Harshinder joins Machins at a time of continued growth for the firm and was attracted by its strong reputation, collaborative culture and commitment to delivering legal excellence with human understanding.

She specialises in acting for investors, landlords, tenants, developers, banks and private funders and has significant experience in development, leisure, retail and investment property work. Her expertise includes acquisitions and disposals, development projects, landlord and tenant matters, property securitisation and financing, business sales and acquisitions, and plot sales and residential leasing.

Harshinder joins Machins' highly regarded Commercial Property team, which advises property owners, developers, investors, lenders and tenants on acquisitions and disposals, development projects, portfolio management, landlord and tenant matters and property finance. The team is known for combining technical expertise with commercial insight to help clients achieve the right outcome.

In addition to her legal practice, Harshinder is a Trustee of Women's Aid in Luton, reflecting her commitment to supporting the local community.

Commenting on her appointment Harshinder said, "I am delighted to be joining Machins and becoming part of such a respected and well-established firm. The Commercial Property team has an excellent reputation, and I am looking forward to working with colleagues across the business and supporting clients with their commercial property requirements."

Simeon Clipstone Head of Commercial Property at Machins Solicitors, said, "We are delighted to welcome Harshinder to the firm and to our Commercial Property team. Her reputation, depth of expertise and client-focused approach make her an excellent addition to the department. We are excited about the experience and leadership that Harshinder brings to the firm and look forward to the positive impact she will have for our clients, colleagues and future growth."

For further information, please contact
Sonya Gosling or Abi Hall (Marketing
Managers) on 01582 514000 or email
marketing@machins.co.uk.



SOLVING BEDFORDSHIRE'S WORKFORCE CHALLENGES: Why Local Recruitment Matters More Than Ever

by Stephanie Ikolo, Director, ST HECS Limited

Across Bedfordshire, employers are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain dependable staff. Schools need qualified teachers and teaching assistants at short notice, care providers continue to face workforce shortages, and businesses require reliable partners to keep operations running smoothly.

The challenge is no longer simply filling vacancies, it's finding people who are skilled, compliant and ready to contribute from day one. Working with a local recruitment partner that understands the region can make a significant difference, reducing hiring delays while ensuring quality and compliance.

At ST HECS Limited, we support organisations across Bedfordshire by providing recruitment solutions for education and healthcare, alongside professional commercial cleaning services. We supply qualified teachers, teaching assistants, cover supervisors and SEN support staff, as well as fully vetted care assistants, support workers and healthcare assistants. Every candidate undergoes enhanced DBS checks, reference verification and compliance screening before placement.

Our commercial cleaning team also helps businesses maintain safe, clean and welcoming environments through office, communal, end-of-tenancy and void property cleaning services.

As demand for skilled professionals continues to grow, investing in trusted local recruitment partnerships is becoming increasingly important for organisations that want to maintain high standards and deliver consistent services.

ST HECS Limited is a Bedfordshire recruitment agency specialising in education recruitment, healthcare staffing and commercial cleaning services. Based in Luton, the company supports organisations across Bedfordshire with compliant, fully vetted professionals and dependable operational support.

sthecs.co.uk | info@sthecs.co.uk | 07766 300175



Pictured: Members undergo oxygen therapy in the hyperbaric chamber at MS Centre Beds & Northants, one of the specialist services offered to support people living with neurological conditions.

BUILDING STRENGTH FOR PEOPLE, Communities and Workplaces

Bedford MS Therapy Centre is more than a therapy centre. We are a specialist wellbeing centre dedicated to helping people from across Bedfordshire and Northamptonshire with Multiple Sclerosis (MS), Parkinson's and other conditions live well, stay active and maintain their independence.

Every day, we provide therapies, exercise programmes, counselling, wellbeing activities and practical support that empower individuals to improve their physical and mental wellbeing, build confidence and continue participating fully in their communities.

Our work also extends into the workplace.

With more people remaining in employment while managing long-term health conditions, employers increasingly recognise the importance of creating inclusive and supportive environments. Our experienced team can provide practical guidance, awareness sessions and specialist insight to help organisations better understand MS and Parkinson's, support employee wellbeing and enhance the experience of customers living with other conditions.

We are also proud to work alongside local businesses through a range of corporate volunteering opportunities. Whether it's supporting improvement projects at our Centre, helping at fundraising events, assisting in our charity shop, or taking part in gardening and decorating projects, volunteering offers a rewarding way to bring teams together while making a tangible difference in the local community.

Strong partnerships create stronger communities. By working with the Bedford MS Therapy Centre, businesses can support a vital local charity while demonstrating their commitment to wellbeing, inclusion and social impact.

Together, we can help ensure that people affected by long term health conditions have the support, opportunities and resources they need to thrive.

To learn more about corporate partnerships, volunteering opportunities or workplace support, we'd love to hear from you at fundraising@mscentrebedsandnorthants.com

Building strength. Creating opportunities. Changing lives.

<https://www.mscentrebedsandnorthants.com/>



BUILDING BEDFORDSHIRE'S FUTURE WORKFORCE:

Skills, Talent and Business Growth



As Bedfordshire prepares for a decade of unprecedented economic opportunity, one challenge sits at the heart of every growth conversation: how do businesses attract, develop and retain the skilled people they need to succeed?

From major infrastructure investment and airport expansion to growth across professional services, logistics, construction, digital and visitor economy sectors, demand for skilled talent continues to rise. For employers across Bedfordshire and the surrounding counties, investing in workforce development is no longer simply a training issue, it's a business growth priority.

The good news is that employers have more options than ever before.

The Bedford College Group works with thousands of employers across the region, helping businesses access training, develop existing teams and recruit new talent through a range of technical, professional and business focused programmes. From apprenticeships and T Levels to professional development and higher-level qualifications, there are flexible pathways designed to meet the needs of organisations of all sizes.

Developing Skills for Modern Businesses

Today's business environment demands a broad mix of skills. Alongside technical expertise, employers increasingly require people with strengths in leadership, project management, finance, customer service, marketing, digital capability and business administration.

To support this need, the Group offers a wide range of Business and Professional programmes, helping employers develop talent across key functions and career stages. Whether an organisation is looking to upskill existing employees, strengthen succession planning or attract new entrants into the workforce, training can be tailored to align with business objectives.

For many employers, apprenticeships are proving particularly valuable because they combine practical workplace experience with structured learning, enabling businesses to grow their talent pipeline while developing skills that directly support organisational goals.

Apprenticeships: A Practical Solution to Recruitment Challenges

The Bedford College Group know that recruitment remains a persistent challenge for many organisations. Finding candidates with the right skills, attitude and potential can be difficult, particularly in a competitive labour market.

Apprenticeships offer a practical and cost effective way to address this challenge. Employers can recruit new talent or develop existing employees while benefiting from training programmes designed around real workplace requirements.

Importantly, businesses do not need to navigate the process alone.

The Group supports employers throughout the apprenticeship journey, from identifying suitable programmes and understanding funding options to attracting candidates and managing onboarding. The dedicated Business Engagement Account Managers and Apprenticeship Recruitment Advisers work closely with businesses to simplify what can often seem like a complex process, helping organisations maximise the benefits available to them.

Making Funding Work for Your Business

One of the most common misconceptions surrounding apprenticeships is that they are difficult to fund or come with lots of administration. In reality, significant government support is available and funding arrangements vary depending on business size and circumstances. Understanding which options apply, however, can be time-consuming for busy employers.

There are several financial incentives available to employers looking to grow their teams through apprenticeships. In many cases, these payments can be combined, meaning you could be eligible for up to £6,000 in total incentive payments*.

The team at The Bedford College Group provides guidance on available apprenticeship funding and incentives, helping organisations identify the most effective route for their workforce development plans. By reducing complexity and providing ongoing support, employers can focus on what matters most which is building capability within their teams.

Partnership Beyond Training

Successful workforce development is built on collaboration. Through employer partnerships, businesses can influence curriculum development, offer industry insight, provide work placements and engage directly with learners who represent the future workforce. This helps ensure training remains aligned with current business needs while creating valuable connections between employers and emerging talent.

These partnerships are becoming increasingly important as Bedfordshire prepares to capitalise on major regional investment and expansion projects. Ensuring local businesses have access to skilled local people will play a crucial role in maximising the long-term economic benefits for our communities.

Supporting Growth Across Bedfordshire

The opportunities ahead for Bedfordshire are significant but realising them will depend on having the right skills in the right places at the right time.

Whether through apprenticeships, professional qualifications, workforce upskilling or strategic employer partnerships, businesses have access to a growing range of support designed to strengthen talent pipelines and future-proof their organisations.

For employers looking to invest in their people, develop future leaders or explore apprenticeship recruitment, now is the time to start the conversation.

The Bedford College Group proudly continues to work alongside employers across Bedfordshire and beyond, helping them develop the skilled workforce needed to drive productivity, innovation and sustainable growth for years to come.

Start the conversation today and call the Business Engagement Team on 01234 291747 or email training@bedford.ac.uk

*Subject to eligibility. Terms and Conditions apply.

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Has your telecoms bill gone up twice this year and you're not sure why?

TALK UK TELECOM

THE CLOCK IS TICKING ON THE UK'S DIGITAL SWITCHOVER. IS YOUR BUSINESS READY?

By **Justine Maroudias**,
Director of TalkUK Telecom

Over the past year, we've been visiting businesses across Bedfordshire and the surrounding areas carrying out free telecoms reviews. And one thing keeps coming up time and time again.

Businesses that thought they were ready for the digital switchover. That aren't.

The UK's PSTN network, the traditional copper phone network that has carried calls for decades, is being switched off on 31st January 2027. Most businesses already know this. Many have already upgraded their phone systems to VoIP. And many believe that means the job is done.

It often isn't.

What surprises a lot of businesses is how many services are still running across the old PSTN network without them realising it. It isn't always obvious. These lines don't always appear on your bill under a name you'd recognise as old technology. But a quick check of what you're actually paying for can reveal PSTN lines that have been quietly sitting there for years, sometimes long after the services they were supporting have been upgraded or replaced.

Then there are the services that nobody thought to check. Alarm lines still running on the old network. Lift emergency phones that haven't been looked at in years. CCTV systems, door entry, PDQ terminals, building management systems, all quietly relying on analogue connections that are going to stop working when the switch off happens.

These services are often managed by different departments, owned by different suppliers, or simply forgotten over time. Nobody joined the dots. And when the deadline arrives, they will stop working.

There's another issue we're seeing regularly. Businesses whose providers have said nothing.

The price rises connected to the switchover have already begun. April brought a 20% increase on many legacy services. July brought another 40%. October will bring a further 40% rise. That's 100% more expensive within just seven months. April to October.

And yet many of the businesses we visit have received no call, no letter, and no explanation from their provider.

We think that's simply not good enough.

If you're not sure whether your business is fully ready for the switchover, or if your bills have been rising and nobody has explained why, we'll come and carry out a full readiness assessment at no charge and with no obligation. We'll look at everything, tell you exactly where you stand, and give you a clear picture of what needs to happen before the deadline.

Five months is still enough time to get everything sorted. But the window is closing.

www.talkuktelecom.co.uk

PAUSE AND EMPOWER: Helping Women Navigate Change with Confidence

Life rarely follows a neat plan. Careers evolve, relationships end, priorities shift, redundancy happens, confidence wobbles, and sometimes we simply reach a point where we want more from life than we have today.

After more than 25 years in senior HR roles, I founded Pause and Empower to help women navigate these moments of change with confidence, clarity and purpose. Combining professional coaching, mentoring and HR expertise, I support women through career transitions, redundancy, divorce, menopause, workplace challenges and the pursuit of a better quality of life.

My approach is practical, supportive and focused on action. Together, we explore what matters most, identify barriers, and create realistic steps towards meaningful change. Whether someone is returning to work, seeking a promotion, rebuilding confidence after a setback, or questioning whether their current path still fits, coaching provides the space to think differently and move forward.

The impact is reflected in client feedback. One client described coaching as "life-changing", while another said it helped her move from feeling stuck to feeling excited about the future. Others have spoken about gaining confidence, clarity and a renewed sense of direction.

At a time when change feels constant, investing in people has never been more important. My mission is simple: to help women recognise their value, embrace new possibilities, and create lives and careers that work for them.

To learn more, visit www.pauseandempower.com



Employers urged to review workplace facilities as MENOPAUSE ACTION PLANS BECOME MANDATORY

Employers are being encouraged to review their workplace washroom facilities following the introduction of Menopause Action Plans, and ahead of plans to make them mandatory for organisations with 250 or more employees from spring 2027.

According to the Fawcett Society, one in ten women have left a job due to menopause symptoms. Meanwhile, research from the CIPD found that 53% of women aged 40-60 who experience menopause symptoms have been unable to attend work because of their symptoms.

Inter County Service Group Ltd, a leading provider of washroom services and workplace hygiene solutions and a member of the Independent Washroom Services Association (IWSA), is encouraging employers to take a proactive approach to feminine hygiene provision, ensuring sanitary disposal bins are available in washrooms, providing access to period products, and maintaining clean and hygienic environments with handwashing and drying facilities. The company is also offering workplace washroom and hygiene reviews, helping organisations to identify opportunities to enhance employee wellbeing, improve hygiene standards and ensure ongoing compliance.

Lorna Nicholson, Managing Director at Inter County, said: "We're working with organisations to review their washroom and hygiene provision and identify improvements. For women experiencing menopause symptoms, access to clean, comfortable and well-equipped washroom facilities and sanitary bins can make a real difference during the working day. Employers don't need large budgets to make meaningful improvements to overall employee health and wellbeing."

To find out more about Inter County Service Group, visit <https://intercountyltd.co.uk>.

Member PROFILES



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Member PROFILES are provided as part of membership to the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. You can learn more about becoming a member, so you too can enjoy this and a host of other benefits, simply by calling us now on 01582 522448 or by emailing info@chamber-business.com

3 Heads Agency

👤 Jodie Testa
☎ 01234 608228
✉ jodie.testa@3headsagency.com
📍 3headsagency.com



3 Heads Agency is a family run creative agency with a 20 person in house team specialising in video production, social media and personal branding. Working across all industries, we're trusted by brands including TUI, University of Bedfordshire, The Bedford College Group, Silverstone, E.ON, LEGO and Just Eat.

Full Circle Website Design Ltd

👤 Adam Gold
✉ info@fullcirclewebsitedesign.co.uk
📍 fullcirclewebsitedesign.co.uk



Full Circle Website Design helps businesses grow through professional website design, SEO, Google Ads and emerging AI visibility strategies. Our current focus is ensuring clients are not only found on Google, but also recognised and recommended across platforms such as ChatGPT, Claude, Gemini and Perplexity.

Liquid Insights

👤 Binanti Cuzner
✉ hello@liquidinsights.co.uk
📍 liquidinsights.co.uk



Liquid Insights helps consumer brands unlock growth by turning real customer behaviour into clear, commercially grounded strategies. We work with founders and marketing leaders to diagnose what's holding growth back and build insight-led solutions that strengthen acquisition, loyalty and brand performance.

Twenty-Two Business Support & Development Ltd

👤 Rachel Redondo
☎ 07852 422 733 / 01923 562 558
✉ rachel@twentytwobusiness.com
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Twenty-Two is your answer to a complete business solution, driven by people! Founded by an unstoppable mother-daughter team, Twenty-Two work with SMEs, large businesses, global organisations, and charities to deliver flexible, outcome-focused services that add value and support sustainable growth.

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👤 Adam Clements
☎ 01480 276620
✉ info@acryliconuk.com
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Green Light Consultancy Group

👤 Alistair McDougall | Carl Warner | Adam Tysoe
✉ a.mcdougall@glcg.co.uk | c.warner@glcg.co.uk | a.tysoe@glcg.co.uk
📍 glcg.co.uk



Green Light Consultancy Group helps UK businesses compare, switch, and manage electricity, gas, water, and utility contracts. They focus on reducing costs, simplifying energy management, and supporting sustainability through renewable energy solutions and independent consultancy services.

Pendragon Protect

👤 Adam Kaplan
☎ 01604 807531
📍 pendragonprotect.co.uk



Pendragon Protect provides specialist whole-of-market advice on Life Insurance, Critical Illness Cover and Income Protection. We work with individuals, families, and business owners, comparing the whole of market to find the most suitable cover and delivering clear, tailored recommendations that protects what matters most.

Women's Aid Luton

👤 Gaby Price, CEO
☎ 01582 876636
✉ info@womensaidinluton.org
📍 womensaidinluton.org



Women's Aid Luton is a specialist, women-led charity supporting women and children affected by domestic abuse. For over 50 years, we have provided refuge accommodation, a domestic abuse helpline, community-based support, and awareness-raising campaigns that promote healthy relationships, encourage help-seeking, and challenge violence against women and girls.

Bunzl Cleaning & Hygiene Supplies

👤 Elle Uddin
☎ 07858 308 580
✉ elle.uddin@bunzlchs.co.uk
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Bunzl Cleaning & Hygiene Supplies delivers high quality, sustainable cleaning and janitorial products, alongside tailored solutions for local businesses. Combining reliable supply chains, expert support, and innovative hygiene technologies, we help organisations maintain safe, compliant, and efficient environments, improving standards, reducing risk, and supporting operational excellence every day across all sectors.

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👤 Bradley Jones
☎ 0800 056 3030
✉ brad.jones@hdbservices.co.uk
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An award-winning family business self delivering Construction projects, M&E and fabric Maintenance, yard safety and industrial door services from our Bedfordshire HQ. With a team of over 50 and a fleet of vehicles to support our services nationwide. Our client list includes Muller Dairies, Savills, Huntsman, Cullina, Amazon & Indurent.

Response Personnel Limited

👤 Aimee McGrath
☎ 01582 618100
✉ info@responsepersonnel.co.uk
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Established in 1997, we are an independently owned industry recognised employment agency & business. Specialising in permanent, temporary & contract recruitment across the UK within the Engineering, Industrial and Office sectors. We are members of the Recruitment Employment Confederation and Association of Labour Providers with a valid Gangmasters Licence.

Woodfines Solicitors

👤 Kerry Ransby
✉ marketing@woodfines.co.uk
📍 woodfines.co.uk



Woodfines is a leading full-service legal firm delivering solutions to businesses individuals. We pride ourselves on our approachable attitude, attention to detail and providing forward-thinking advice in your language. Well-established in the Oxford-Cambridge growth corridor, we work at the heart of our communities to deliver personal and pragmatic solutions.

D & G Short Ltd

👤 Victoria Williams | Chris Short
☎ 01525 712587
✉ info@dandgshort.com
📍 dandgshort.com



D & G Short are a family business trading for 100 years. Specialists in security – automated gates, bollards, barriers, shutters and access control/intercoms. Covering a wide range of home counties, residential and commercial. Plus 24 hour locksmith services. Also a DIY, ironmongery and lock shop in Flitwick.

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👤 Hina Sohrab
✉ hello@itvisionists.com
📍 itvisionists.com



When work is scattered across many tools, things slip, enquiries go cold, clients leave, revenue walks out the door. IT Visionists builds one connected system to run your team, your operations and your day-to-day work, so growth doesn't break what you've built. Powered by Certified ClickUp Partner. 200+ implementations.

Royal Elderly Care and Wellbeing CIC

👤 Julian Businge
☎ 07438 375874
✉ royalcivility@gmail.com
📍 royalelderlycare.com



Royal Elderly Care and Wellbeing CIC supports older adults and vulnerable people across Bedfordshire through companionship, befriending online, wellbeing activities, home support, and community engagement. Our mission is to reduce loneliness, promote dignity, and help people live healthier, happier, and more connected lives within their communities. Contact us for care support, partnerships, sponsorships or referrals.

Viking Visuals

👤 Micky Mills
✉ micky@vikingvisuals.co.uk
📍 vikingvisuals.co.uk



Viking Visuals is a Bedford-based media agency specialising in professional videography and photography for brands and businesses. From product and promotional films to campaign photography, we've helped over 100 businesses tell their story with polished, high-quality visuals. Delivered end to end.

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We would like to extend a very warm welcome to all **New MEMBERS** of the Bedfordshire Chamber of Commerce. You can learn more about becoming a member and all of the associated benefits by calling us now on 01582 522448 or by emailing your enquiry to info@chamber-business.com

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uk.linkedin.com/in/anthony-assih-33044217b

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socialinterestgroup.org.uk/our-services/sig-penrose-community-based-recovery-services-cbrs

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