

Top 5 Locations In The UK To Run A Successful Business

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Starting or running a successful Business can be one of the most exciting and satisfying experiences in your life. Are you looking to start your own business? Or are you looking to add more businesses to your existing portfolio ?

We list the best 5 places to start a business.

Our findings are based on the following:

- Sales data
- Business activity
- Population
- Affluency
- Infrastructure
- Business Support (Science parks, universities, business centres etc)
- Availability of commercial premises
- Average house prices, crime rates & tourism.
- Government funding

We've left London out of this list, as we would have to be divided into the boroughs as they are vastly different, however we are confident London as a whole would come second in our findings

Without further ado here are the top 5 places in the UK to start a business:

1. Manchester
2. Edinburgh
3. Bristol
4. Cambridge
5. Leeds

5th place – Starting a business in Leeds:



Image Credit: [Albert Pego / Shutterstock.com](#)

Leeds is reported to create 4% of the UK's economic output and 44% of West Yorkshire's economic output according to the [Leeds government website](#).

Leeds By numbers:

- Population; 761,500
- A-Grade Office space: around 120,000 Sq Feet (in 2013) ([PDF from gva.co.uk here](#))
- 5 shopping centres
- 280,000 working age population with qualifications above level 4.

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Q3) Can you name any negatives of starting a business here?

- **Stigma** – despite the government's promotion of the 'Northern Powerhouse', businesses operating outside of London don't always get the credit they deserve. Leeds has developed a real specialism in the digital sector and has some of the most respected digital marketing agencies in the country (and globally)
- **Investment** – whilst Leeds has a big digital community, investment in this business sector has been slow and there's a lack of quality talent from the local education system, that's not the fault of the students...
- **Migration** – becoming a powerhouse for digital marketing also has it's problems, in recent years there has been an influx of tech business to the city taking the talent away from independent firms and a migration of skilled people down south.

Q4) If you were to be given the opportunity to start again at a different location – where would you choose?

Elementary Digital can be run anywhere really as we adopt a location agnostic model (remote working), although we do have a head office in Leeds. If we did need to define a location it would be London (although we do have a London office). The reason being is it's the centre of digital marketing in the UK and to be a successful digital agency you need to be in London.

Q5) Would you recommend Leeds as a great place to start a business?

Without a shadow of a doubt, a great city, brilliant opportunities and not a bad place to be involved in. We very proud of our Leeds roots and we've grown year on year since we started, largely supported and working with the wider Leeds business community.

4h place – Starting a business in Cambridge

Image Credit: Shutterstock | Roberto Lo Savio

Home of the prestigious University Of Cambridge, founded in the 13th Century – A city with masses of talent and great start up support.

The University Of Cambridge is one of the top 2 in the Country, and the top 5 in the world. As you would imagine it dominates startup activity in the city. The University produces extremely high quality graduates and the area has a reputation as a hub of cutting edge technology. For any tech or science start ups who need great facilities, it would be hard to top what Cambridge has to offer.

Cambridge by numbers:

- Population: 129,000 (Estimated based on 2011 [census](#))
- 82,212 working age population educated to NVQ level 4 or above ([Cambridgeshire insight](#))
- £576 average weekly earnings.
- 45 min from London Kings Cross
- 2 Universities
- 32.9 mph High average road speeds & low congestion

Source: www.neighbourhood.statistics.gov.uk

Startups

With the University of Cambridge finding talent for your new startup should certainly be no issue . The quantity of people in Cambridge with an Education above NVQ Level 4 is around 65%, which is extremely high and very few people in Cambridge have no qualifications at all.

There has been [2570 start](#) ups in Cambridge as of 2014. This is on the increase despite the only downfall of

staff costs being higher. But in a city with one of the most prestigious Universities in the world – what would you expect?

Funding

Due to the prestige and influence of Cambridge university, there is great funding for start ups. [Cambridge University have an enterprise arm](#) which has 1000 commercial agreements with businesses providing consultancy, expertise & new technologies.

Investment is readily available too, with Angel investors such as [Cambridge Angels](#) being prominent. There is also an £11m “Grants4Growth” programme, this along with many other schemes in Cambridgeshire gives businesses funding to small and medium size businesses.

They also run “IdeaSpace” which is run by the University Of Cambridge. It’s a community of people and graduates in Cambridge which are starting high impact ventures. Ideaspace creates new business models & technology which are intended to affect millions of people in a positive way. The Ideaspace community have access to many resources thanks to the University Of Cambridge having a heavy influence.

[Cambridge Council](#) have a list of organisations that can help with a start up.

- [Cambridgeshire Chamber of Commerce](#)
- [Cambridge Network](#)
- [Start Up Donut](#)
- [Open to Export](#)
- [Health and Safety Executive](#)
- [Federation of Small Businesses](#)
- [Confederation of British Industry](#)

In addition Cambridge University also offer:

- [Business Networking](#)
- [Business Conferences](#)
- [Executive Education](#)
- [Entrepreneur Club](#)
- [Philanthropy](#)
- [Business Consultancy](#)
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In addition to all of this, Cambridge are part of a tech cluster called “Silicon Fen” – this is where a large number of super high tech firms are focusing on cutting edge software, electronics & biotechnology. They have full support of the University and thus new startups should have no problems looking for funding in these industries.

With such a large array of positive influencers on business, you can see why Cambridge has made our top 5.

Quality Of Life

- **£540,519** average semi detached house price. ([June 2015](#))
- **22mbps**: Average broadband speed ([October 2015 – Cable.co.uk](#))
- **60 Crimes** per 1,000 people. ([March 2014](#))
- Large student population
- Amazing attractions and beautiful scenery

Local Cambridge Business: Genie Ventures – Q & A with Ciaron Dunne CEO

About Genie Ventures

Ciaron Dunne is the co-founder and CEO of Genie Ventures. Genie businesses include the search agency [Genie Goals](#), the popular broadband comparison website [Broadband Genie](#) and the office search engine [Office Genie](#).

Q1) Why did you start your business in Cambridge?

We actually started off flitting between Cambridge and London. I settled on Cambridge partly because I lived here, and partly because the rent (at the time, at least!) were much cheaper and I didn’t want all our early revenues vanishing to our landlord.

Q2) What are three positive things about starting a business in Cambridge in your experience?

1. Customers love coming to Cambridge. Most of our customers are based in or around London, and it’s very easy to sell the idea of a day in Cambridge – old pubs, punting, the beer festival, colleges and so on! Cambridge has a lot to offer, and we’ve had great success playing on that.
2. Cambridge has a hugely strong, positive brand in its own right. Cambridge is associated with smart people (for obvious reasons), world-class technology companies, growth and success. Whether those are all true or not is another matter, but – as a marketing technology business based in Cambridge – customers and partners make the positive association. We trade on it as much as we can.
3. Cambridge is just full of crazy, fascinating people from all over the country and the world. I struggle to think of a more multicultural and multinational city. It’s quite incredible and inspirational. Our own team is a great example – a real mixture of people from anywhere and everywhere. It’s a privilege to live, work and recruit in such an amazing place.

Q3) Could you name a negative of starting a business here?

Commercial rents are wages are high (compared to the rest of the UK, rather than just London), and there's a shortage of internet / e-commerce companies for us to hang around with. The train station is too small for a city of this size, and of course there's never enough parking. Plus of course it's a relatively well-off area so you don't get any subsidies or grants for starting a business here. The traffic is appalling. Apart from all that, I can't think of anything!

Q4) If you were to be given the opportunity to start again at a different location – where would you choose?

I would still choose Cambridge. But my second choice would be Birmingham – partly because I'm from near there and like it, and partly because I think it has massively untapped human potential for tech companies.

Q5) Would you recommend Cambridge as a great place to start a business?

Yes of course. It's an amazing city, full of incredibly motivated people and very close to London.

3rd place – Bristol



Image Credit: Shutterstock | Jacek Wojnarowski

Is the European Green Capital the place to start your business?

Bristol, [the Green Capital](#) according to the European Commission is one of our personal favourite places for a startup. It's an amazing city with real character. Only 90 minutes from London with great public transport links internally.

Bristol By Numbers

- Population **442,500** ([Estimated, Bristol.gov](#))
- **£270,604** average semi detached house price. ([June 2015](#))
- **21Mbps**: Average broadband speed ([October 2015 – Cable.co.uk](#))
- **63 Crimes** per 1,000 people. ([March 2014](#))
- **120** miles from London
- **1766** is the year the country's oldest theatre the [Bristol Old Vic](#)

Startups

Bristol has a well established Tech cluster making it the perfect place for Microelectronics & aerospace engineering related start ups. There is also a great turnover of graduates coming out of Bristol & the nearby Bath (12 miles away.)

Brighton is featuring "TedxBristol 2015" on the 11th of November. If you haven't heard of [Ted Talks](#), [look them up!](#) – [They are awesome.](#)



Brand new business survival rates are pretty high too. It was reported on 2012 that over 60% of startups managed to get through their first year with a positive ROI. The Bristol Post did a feature entitled "Dragons Den on Steroids" – Bristol Tech Start Ups Buzzing After Seedcamp Talks" in 2014.

There has been 2055 [start ups](#) in Bristol in 2014.

Funding

Funding for startups in Bristol is very positive. The [Bristol.gov](#) website is a really good source of information, they detail government finance support schemes such as:

- *"The Small Loans for Business Scheme provides loans of up to £50,000 to small and medium sized businesses that have viable business plans but have been refused bank finance.*
- *The Enterprise Finance Guarantee provides lenders with a government guarantee to loan money to businesses.*
- *Finance for Business offers flexible finance solutions such as loans and equity finance for businesses that have viable business plans but have been unable to get support from commercial banks and investors.*
- *The Grant for Business Investment (GBI) Scheme provides capital to support business investment or job creation projects. Grants begin at £10,000.*
- *West of England Growth Fund. The Fund can support a range of projects and activities, such as investment in capital assets, research and development projects and training programmes"*

There are also non government run schemes and organizations such as Inets South West Microelectronics.

Quality Of Life

Bristol is a great place to live. Picturesque, clean, great public transport with a further £400m being invested in transport infrastructure to reduce energy usage

- **£329,667** average semi detached house price. ([September 2015](#))
- **20Mbps**: Average broadband speed
- **60 Crimes** per 1,000 people. ([March 2014](#))
- Large student population
- Amazing attractions and beautiful scenery

Local Bristol Business Q&A with Giles, CEO at [Office Pantry](#)

First of all, Giles, tell us a bit about Office Pantry

Office Pantry deliver food to companies nationwide, from snacks and meeting packs to fruit boxes, so I get to eat food for a living and share the good stuff with our customers.

Q1) Why did you start your business in Bristol?

We actually started our business in Bath, before moving to the bright lights of London. After 12 months there, we moved to Bristol in May and haven't looked back since. Moving to Bristol has been our best business decision to date.

Q2) What are three positive things about starting a business in Bristol in your experience?

Far more than 3 but:

- 1) It is a tech hub with JustEat, Oracle and HP all having a large presence here.
- 2) The startup scene is thriving with loads of events for every industry. There is even an Entrepreneurial Spark hub which is a free startup accelerator.
- 3) You see people again! A strange thing to say but having been in London it is amazing to see people at

events again. Either bumping into them in the street or at other events. It leads to actual follow-ups which is fantastic.

Q3) Could you name a negative of starting a business here?

It feels a bit like being in the film Hot Fuzz – everyone is super positive about the city, and I feel if I say something negative the Bristol cult will come out and get me. So nothing negative to see here everyone. nothing "at all".

Q4) If you were to be given the opportunity to start again at a different location – where would you choose?

Probably Manchester if in the UK as I haven't been here before. Otherwise the world is your oyster right so how about Vietnam? I hear great things from my friend [Josh](#) who runs [Echoes](#) His team are split between Bristol and Vietnam. Another friend of mine [Louise](#) has even moved out there full-time.

Q5) Would you recommend Bristol as a great place to start a business?

Undoubtedly, but don't all come at once please – let's keep it a hidden startup gem for as long as possible.

2nd place – Edinburgh



Image Credit: Shutterstock | Shaiith

A city rich with culture and buzzing with tourism, and a real science and technology hotspot. Is the heart of Scotland a good place to start your business?

Edinburgh is home to some of the country's leading science parks and research centres. It has a large airport with over 40 airlines in operation. It is also just one hour from Glasgow – which is another major place for startups and has 3 great universities of its own, not including any around Glasgow or surrounding areas. It has fantastic access to talent with over 300,000 of the working population with NVQ level 4 or above.

Edinburgh By Numbers

- **£225,000** average semi detached house price. ([September 2015](#))
- **18mbps**: Average broadband speed ([October 2015 – Cable.co.uk](#))
- **55 Crimes** per 1,000 people. ([March 2014](#))
- Large student population
- Lots of Tourists
- Amazing attractions and beautiful scenery

Startups

For startups Edinburgh has absolutely loads to offer. They have industry leading start up support such as [Techcu](#), providing affordable office space & services. Edinburgh also home to [edinburgh.entrepreneurial-spark.com](#) accelerator. Great for businesses in the early stages needing to get off the ground quickly.

There is also lots of advice and resources available for funding for new business, including access to Angel Investors and government backed initiatives. We have found [bgateway](#) offer great advice and can definitely point you in the right direction.

Quality Of Life

- **£329,667** average semi detached house price. ([September 2015](#))
- **19mbps**: Average broadband speed ([October 2015 – Cable.co.uk](#))
- **62 Crimes** per 1,000 people. ([March 2014](#))

- Large student population
- Lots of Tourists
- Amazing attractions and beautiful scenery

Q&A With Sarah Connelly, director of [Odyssey Boutique](#)

About Odyssey Boutique

Odyssey Boutique – is a destination store for ‘real’ lingerie, year-round swimwear and highest quality waxing for the fashionable girl-about-town. Odyssey Boutique sell exclusive lingerie from designers such as Stella McCartney, Lascivious, Simone Perele and Heidi Klein

Q1) Why did you start your business in Edinburgh?

Edinburgh is my home town, and much as I'd love a place in the sun, I know the in's and out's of the city which make launching a business much easier than starting somewhere completely fresh.

Q2) What are three positive things about starting a business in Edinburgh in your experience?

I've lived and worked in Edinburgh my whole adult life so I understand the seasons, the trends, the people. I also have the back-up of family & friends when I need extra hands on deck. Plus Edinburgh is so easily connected I can jump on a train to London or on a flight to Paris for trade shows and be back in a flash. Never missing a beat is core to managing a successful business.

Q3) Can you name any negatives of starting a business here?

The climate is not my friend, a wet summer or snowy winter can cause havoc on clients reaching me. So I'm looking into alternative plans to ensure I can always be in touch with clients when they need me.

Q4) If you were to be given the opportunity to start again at a different location, where would you choose?

I wouldn't do things differently. It's a cliché, but so true: you learn from your mistakes. In the future I'll work more remotely thanks to online and telecoms facilities, connecting with my team and keeping an eye on things from somewhere sunnier.

Q5) Would you recommend Edinburgh as a great place to start a business?

Edinburgh is packed with independent businesses from all sectors, and with the cities stunning scenery it's a perfect location to have a meeting walking around Princes Street Gardens.

1st Place – Manchester



Image Credit: Shutterstock | Shahid Khan

Welcome to Manchester, the winner of our guide for best places to start a business in 2015. Manchester is a fast evolving digital hub with rich historical culture. With superb transport links to other major UK cities such as Leeds, Liverpool, Birmingham and London, this ensures Manchester hits the ground running as a place to start doing business.

There are many factors why we chose Manchester as the best place for startups in the UK in 2015. It has one of the biggest university campuses in Europe. It has great transport links, a large international airport and 5 universities hosting a massive wealth of talent. Manchester also has the [largest economy outside London](#).

Manchester is a hub of entrepreneurship, with over [13,000 startups in 2014](#). You can really see the effect on Manchester too, it is changing so rapidly, with the northern quarter almost doubling in footfall over the last 2 years alone.

Manchester is also home to [Media City "The Landing"](#) – which is amazing. It offers up to 6 months office space (serviced, with super fast broadband included, and administrative services) for absolutely free to tech start ups. On top of this being a great deal, it's an absolutely stunning location for an office, only 10 minutes from the centre of Manchester by tram and in the same place as the BBC centres. You will frequently see celebrities in this area, and with the beautiful open gardens and coffee shops which grace the office complex area – who can blame them?

Leeds, number five on our list, also shares great road links with Manchester, and being only 50 minutes away via the trans-pennine M62 (the highest motorway in England), ensures that these two great cities combine to form an integral part of the Northern Powerhouse.

Quality Of Life

- **188,477** average semi detached house price. ([September 2015](#))
- **23mbps**: Average broadband speed
- **106 Crimes** per 1,000 people. ([March 2014](#)) (down to 64 in Salford)
- Massive student population
- Lots of Tourists
- Amazing attractions and beautiful scenery
- Close to Derbyshire

The quality of living in Manchester is great with rural surrounds only a stone's throw away. House prices are very low compared to the South and having a strong public transport infrastructure offering reasonably priced tickets making our London friends green with envy

Startups

If you are thinking of starting a business in Manchester you have to aim high. Manchester was the first industrial city and the birthplace of the computer – pretty ironic now it's a digital hotspot. It is not surprising according to the [MEN News](#) that Manchester is the the sixth most popular place for migrants to start a business.

Fundraising

There are extensive fundraising opportunities and schemes for new businesses in Manchester. [Manchester.gov.uk](#) provides some great information. But on top of fundraising there is genuine support in Manchester for new businesses. With Media City offering completely free offices for 6 months for new tech start ups and located in a beautiful location adjacent to the old Coronation street set with fantastic views of Salford Quays it's certainly opportunity to create something special

The North West Business Fund also provide a ton of fundraising opportunities, such as

[Micro Loans](#) – £25k – £50k

[Energy and Environmental Grants](#) – £50k -£2m

[Biomedical](#) £50k-£1.5m

[Northwest Digital & Creative](#) £50k-£1.5m

[Northwest Fund For Mezzanine](#) £750k-£2m

[Venture Capital](#) – £50k-£2m

There are also various Angel Investors available, such as [North West Business Angels](#)

Q&A with Manchester based company, Recruit my Buddy

[RecruitMyBuddy](#) are an innovative new recruitment website who encourage people to recommend their peers for jobs roles that are posted on their website. Reacting to the desire to do away with recruiters, it is looking to bring the personal touch back to the jobs market with candidates being put forward for jobs they would suit by the people that know them best.

Q1) Why did you start your business in Greater Manchester?

With the North West undergoing what some would see as an economic revival as part of the 'Northern Powerhouse' concept, it was a no-brainer for us to begin Recruit My Buddy in Manchester. Businesses are growing quickly across the country – but particularly in Greater Manchester and surround regions and that fits our business model perfectly; we're able to offer start-ups and SMEs an affordable-yet-reliable recruitment solution, supplying talent without the usual high fees associated with recruitment.

Q2) What are three positive things about starting a business in Greater Manchester in your experience?

To choose three is quite difficult – as is to avoid clichés!

It's safe to say that certain industries are thriving at present – we've found that one of these is digital marketing. Greater Manchester is now home to some of the leading agencies (and marketing departments) in the country and has become a real hub for this skillset. We've been able to piggyback on the growth of this industry a little; building some strong, lasting relationships through providing quality referrals to a range of companies.

Greater Manchester is also home to some fantastic talent across a range of industries so filling jobs hasn't necessarily been difficult for our network of referrers, which has led to some great repeat business for us.

Finally, the culture, atmosphere and general feel of business around Greater Manchester is fantastic. We love working in positive environments and pride ourselves on being friendly and approachable. Our ethos is matched time and time again whenever we go out and meet current and potential clients.

Q3) Could you name a negative of starting a business here?

Nothing springs to mind as a negative – we don't tend to highlight negatives as something that would hold us (as a business) back. Anything we've been challenged by we have used as an opportunity to learn and

develop in such a fast-paced industry. Starting a business anywhere will have its challenges; but we firmly believe we've selected the right area to begin Recruit My Buddy's growth.

Q4) If you were to be given the opportunity to start again at a different location – where would you choose?

We're both from Preston, so for simplicity we'd probably say there. That being said, though, travelling just 30 miles or so has opened our eyes to the amount of opportunities there are for businesses out there. So even if we started again, we know our 'base' wouldn't be where we do most of our business.

Q5) Would you recommend Greater Manchester as a great place to start a business?

Without a shadow of a doubt, Greater Manchester offers a mass of support networks for start-ups, but businesses have got to spread their wings and push their own boundaries if they want to develop in today's age. We knew we needed to start local, as word of mouth is so important in this industry. From here, a natural ripple effect is taking our business to the next level – pushed by us travelling a little further afield to support growth.

Conclusion

The UK is an amazing place to start a business right now. While the financial climate of our country overall is not all sunshine and rainbows, there is definitely scope to start your own business.

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