



## Supporting small businesses

### An award-winning network of affordable 'work hubs' is helping small businesses in Devon grow



**Councillor Rufus Gilbert (Con)**  
is Devon County Council's  
Cabinet Member for Economy  
and Skills

**A**dvances in technology, rising transport costs and quality of life are all factors that are changing the way people work. With a growing trend towards flexible working, people are enjoying more freedom and greater choice over their working patterns.

Here in Devon, around 20 per cent of workers are now based at home, with some

small businesses being run from spare rooms, kitchen tables and local cafés. The contribution they make to our successful and sustainable local economy in Devon is significant, and we want to help them thrive.

Our network of friendly work hubs can play a key part in that. They offer affordable, flexible-term office spaces for individuals and businesses, whether they're looking for a desk to rent, a meeting room for a day or somewhere to base their new business venture.

Run by local business people, the hubs are equipped with facilities that modern businesses need to grow, network and collaborate alongside like-minded people – perfect for home-based or mobile

workers, business start-ups, freelancers and entrepreneurs. In fact, the people who use our work hubs are at the heart of what makes them so special.

Working in a shared office space not only helps combat feelings of isolation, but the inspiring and collaborative energy that our hubs create also offers users invaluable support through shared aspirations and the exchange of ideas and expertise.

Employees who may have to travel much further to work often use our hubs as a base, reducing the need to travel long distances to do business and meet clients.

The hubs are also built around supporting the local community, whether it's lunch in the nearby café, financial advice from the local accountant or the services of the graphic designer who shares the hub space.

Our work hubs have been so successful that, earlier this year, we made grants of up to £20,000 available to encourage local businesses and entrepreneurs to help us expand the network.

After a record number of applications, five new work hubs will open in 2019, which more than doubles the size of the network and means that small businesses in Devon looking for flexible workspace will have even more choice.

I'm pleased that our efforts to help small businesses across the region flourish were recently recognised at the Federation of Small Businesses Awards, with Devon Work Hubs scooping the 'Best provision of small business offices for upscale and growing businesses' award.

We are committed to supporting small businesses and encouraging them to prosper, and as we continue to develop and grow the Devon work hubs network, local small businesses will develop and grow along with them.

You don't have to take my word for it – businesses that use the work hubs can vouch for the difference it's made to them. Among them is Ewemove Barnstaple, a hybrid estate agency that sells and manages properties across North Devon.

Russell Burrington, Ewemove's Branch Director, says: "Having started the business working from home in our spare bedroom, moving to Barnstaple Work Hub just over 12 months ago has allowed my business to flourish and I am now at the stage where I am looking to expand my workforce and upsize my office space.

"Not only has it given my company a more professional look, but I have also made some excellent connections here and it is a vibrant and busy place in which to work."

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For more information, please visit  
[www.devonworkhubs.co.uk](http://www.devonworkhubs.co.uk)