

Appendix 6: Libraries Supporting Business

“Manchester offers the best support for start-ups in the world!”

Ricky Leung, global food trader and restaurateur, & Build A Business client

The Business & IP Centre (BIPC), Build A Business programme, and Generator enterprise hubs each play a distinct role in supporting entrepreneurs, working together to guide individuals from their initial idea through to early trading. This ecosystem creates a connected, supportive network of spaces, guidance, and resources that helps entrepreneurs at every stage of their journey - an approach widely admired across the BIPC National Network.

This includes

- **Access to knowledge and expertise:** Entrepreneurs use specialist databases, workshops and expert advice to test ideas and build key skills.
- **Support tailored to every stage:** From early-stage help through *Build A Business* to hands-on guidance at the Generator hubs, support is matched to each entrepreneur’s needs.
- **A thriving peer community:** The hubs bring like-minded entrepreneurs together, encouraging collaboration, inspiration and peer learning.
- **Practical, affordable resources:** Workspace, meeting rooms and ongoing mentorship help businesses tackle real-world operational challenges.

Research & Test Your Idea: Business & IP Centre (BIPC)

**Business &
IP Centre**
Manchester

The BIPC (on the second floor of Central Library) is the starting point for many entrepreneurs, offering expert resources to help shape and validate business ideas. The BIPC gives you direct access to tools and advice to check your idea will work.

- Free access to leading market research information to understand demand and competitors
- Guidance on business basics and intellectual property
- Workshops to build essential skills covering business planning, marketing, and finance.

The current year is reporting high engagement with our target audience.

Year to date (April 2025 – Dec 2020):

- 4,705 attendees including 1,354 1-2-1 appointments
- 161 workshops
- 134 events including inspiring talks and networking

Highlights for the Business & IP Centre (BIPC) this year included:

Start-Up Day 2025: our flagship annual event, and an important day in our calendar. Our keynote speaker was Emma Bowe, the co-founder of **Shocken Foods**, a multi-award-winning founder who went from a working-class upbringing on the Irish coast to building a globally recognised, venture capital-backed food innovation company.

A former national boxing champion and Michelin-trained chef, Emma lost everything during the pandemic and rebuilt from scratch - transforming adversity into opportunity and proving that with resilience, self-belief, and relentless determination, transformation is possible no matter where you start from. She has won many awards including Food Startup of the Year and is passionate about supporting new businesses. The attendees connected with this inspiring entrepreneur and the feedback was excellent:

The day was packed with highlights, including a dynamic panel featuring three local businesses that really resonated with attendees. The social media workshop, finance presentation and speed mentoring were equally popular, sparking lively discussions and enthusiastic engagement. To make the day even more special, the talented local photographer, Breige Cobane offered free professional headshots.



In Conversation with Joanna Jensen, founder of Childs Farm

Thursday 13th November



In November we welcomed Joanna Jensen to the BIPC, discussing her new book “Making Business Childs Play”, a behind-the-scenes guide to building a purpose-led challenger brand. In a fireside chat with Wendy Breakell, Joanna talked about many issues from start up to product development to exit strategy. This was followed by an audience Q&A and a networking lunch.

“A fantastic motivational and inspiring session”.

“Wonderful talk. Fuel for the fire! Excellent event - thank you BIPC!”

“Very inspiring! Joanna covered a lot of interesting points and was very gracious and open in sharing her experience and what she had learned. Very glad I came”.

Intellectual Property support: PatLib

Additionally, the BIPC's focus on protecting intellectual property ensures that innovators safeguard their ideas as they prepare for launch.

Manchester Libraries took over the Chair of Patlib UK at the end of 2025 in December we hosted the annual Patlib UK AGM, welcoming delegates from across the UK.

Patlib (PATent LIBrary) is a national network of local information centres that provide expert guidance and resources on intellectual property (IP), including patents, trademarks, and designs, to help businesses, inventors, and researchers protect and commercialize their innovations.

In the UK the network is based in public libraries, offering free or low-cost services like IP search assistance, IP strategy advice, and referrals to IP professionals, bridging the gap between complex IP systems and local innovators.

Our membership of the Patlib UK network strengthens our ability to reach small business owners looking to safeguard their ideas and innovations.

"The support from the BIPC has been invaluable in turning my business idea into a reality."

World IP Day 2025 Feel the Beat of IP - 26 April 2025

"World IP Day 2025 Feel the Beat of IP" successfully addressed intellectual property protection for creative professionals. Hosted by Martyn Walsh, the expert panel featured Daniel Jones (PRS for Music), Anna Appleby (Norrisette), Tom Clarke (SharpFutures), and Peter Pegasiou (Glaisyers Legal). The diverse panel delivered comprehensive insights which effectively bridged creative innovation with commercial protection, providing attendees with practical knowledge essential for safeguarding intellectual assets in today's digital landscape.



Podcasting

The Business & IP Centre offers free access to a podcast studio, helping charities, entrepreneurs and creatives bring their ideas to life. Introductory sessions guide users through the basics so they can start recording with confidence.

Samantha Harwood, Marketing and Communications Manager at **Manchester Mind**, discovered the studio at Manchester Central Library and saw an opportunity to try something new. She recorded *Mindfulness and Relaxation for Menopause* to mark World Menopause Day in October 2024, highlighting Manchester Mind's pioneering courses. Since then, she has produced a series of wellbeing and mental health episodes, all recorded at the BIPC.

During Local Mind Week, Manchester Mind released two new episodes under the theme "*Chats that matter, for minds that matter.*" The conversations feature **Lucy Mulligan**,

Director of Marketing at Greater Manchester Chamber of Commerce, and **Nino Gioia**, a Manchester Mind fundraiser and content creator. Both guests share honest reflections on workplace wellbeing, personal mental health journeys and the importance of community support—helping to raise awareness and challenge stigma. Samantha said: “As a charity, having access to the equipment for free is invaluable and gave us the chance to do something different.



Our podcast has now been listened to over 1,000 times and has helped raise awareness of key wellbeing and mental health topics—and the work we do at Manchester Mind.”

Developing Your Ideas: Build A Business in GM Libraries

Build A Business in GM Libraries



- Extends Business & IP Centre expertise from Manchester Central Library to all 10 Greater Manchester authorities.
- Delivers a business support programme of market research, IP and marketing workshops across every area.
- Provides one-to-one guidance through a dedicated Enterprise Officer in each authority.

The “Build A Business” project secured funding for another 12 months, delivering support to pre-start and new businesses across Greater Manchester until March 2026.

The service has been a standout initiative within the Business and IP Centre, helping budding entrepreneurs across Greater Manchester to navigate the journey from idea to a successful business. The programme is funded by GMCA, and has been running since 2021. Initially ERDF funded, then UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the current funding ends in March 2026. This year is the third funding stream, and early indications are there will be further funding this year.

The program is designed not only to develop business skills but also to build the confidence of entrepreneurs in their ability to sustain and grow their businesses. Through workshops, one to one support and networking opportunities, Build A Business has empowered participants to make informed decisions and move forward with their goals. As a result, many entrepreneurs have seen growth, obtained funding, created jobs, and contributed to the city’s economy.

- Makes complex topics—like Intellectual Property—clear and accessible, helping small businesses understand and protect their assets.

- Brings support directly into neighbourhood libraries through locally delivered activities.
- Offers additional sessions on podcasting, branding and more, enabling many clients to access over 30 hours of fully funded support.

Between April-March 2026, over 1300 people have attended at workshops & events

The projects outputs include supporting

- 500 Potential Entrepreneurs (target 285)
- 200+ Enterprises (target 100)

“I learnt so much! I came in knowing nothing, I left with confidence and knowledge”

“I found the workshop incredibly valuable—especially the discussions around IP protection and AI.”

“I truly appreciate the work you and your team are doing to empower local entrepreneurs with knowledge, resources, and one-to-one guidance—all completely free and funded by the government. This is an outstanding initiative that deserves wider recognition.”

Build A Business Case Study:

Charlie Boy’s Barkery

Karen is from Blackley and the founder of **Charlie Boy’s Dog Barkery**.

After attending her first workshop - Business Basics, she went away and registered with HMRC as a sole trader that afternoon. Her dog bakery business has gone from strength to strength becoming a fully formed concern. Charlie Boy’s Dog Barkery is now a registered trademark. As well as making products to order she sells regularly at various Makers Markets and had not one but two stalls at 2025 Manchester Christmas Markets.



“My experience of Build a Business has been brilliant. Starting out in business on your own can be overwhelming...you have a million things buzzing round your brain. The free courses provided me with much needed, invaluable knowledge that gave me the confidence to bring my idea of Charlie Boy’s Barkery, a bakery for dogs, to life. The guys that are involved in Build a Business are fantastic, I found them so approachable which enabled me to ask questions without feeling stupid, they have a genuine interest in you and your business. They gave me endless sources of research & insights into the important things like Intellectual Property, Marketing, Market research & more. It’s great to know I have the support of Build a Business when I need it.”



Build A Business: Summer Highlights Across Greater Manchester Libraries

This summer, the Build a Business team hit the road, popping up at libraries all over Greater Manchester to support local residents on their entrepreneurial journeys. In Manchester we set up info stands at Abraham Moss Library, North City Library (featuring their shiny new business pod!), and Avenue Library, chatting with aspiring business owners and sharing resources to help them get started.

We also took our popular Intellectual Property workshop to Chorlton Library, making great use of their newly refurbished meeting rooms, which are fantastic! The turnout was brilliant, and we met some exciting new businesses that are definitely ones to watch.

One of the big highlights was piloting a brand-new workshop on business strategy, aimed at helping entrepreneurs and small business owners build strong foundations for long-term success. Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with one attendee saying:

"Wonderful session – incredibly informative. Keith is a real asset with invaluable knowledge! More events/workshops with him please."

To wrap up the summer, we took part in the Bolton Food and Drink Festival, setting up a stall to spread the word about Build a Business across Greater Manchester. The sun was shining, the crowds were buzzing, and we had lots of great conversations with people eager to kickstart their business ideas.

Chorlton Build a Business Pop-Up

To celebrate the reopening of Chorlton Library, the Build a Business Team hosted a pop-up business support stall, engaging with entrepreneurs and start-ups across South Manchester. Set against the backdrop of the library's splendid Carnegie architecture, the event marked our most successful pop-up of the year. We connected with numerous new businesses and aspiring entrepreneurs, many of whom expressed strong interest in our upcoming programme of business workshops.

Bringing Your Business to Life: Generator Enterprise Hubs



When you're ready to trade, the Generator hubs provide the space and support to get going.

- Affordable workspace and meeting rooms
- Access to support from the in-house Enterprise Officers
- A community of entrepreneurs to share ideas and challenges with

Our two enterprise hubs in the city centre continue to be successful, providing accessible spaces where entrepreneurs collaborate, network, and access essential resources.

Equipped with state-of-the-art facilities, the hubs offer everything from co-working and meeting space to expert-led workshops and one-to-one support.

The Generators—located in the Town Hall Extension and Royal Mills, Ancoats—provide the physical space and community infrastructure entrepreneurs need to thrive. Participants attend workshops, connect with peers, and gain practical, actionable advice.

The hubs remain particularly valuable for those in early trading, delivering ongoing support that helps businesses establish themselves, grow their networks, and build a strong local presence.

The Generators actively nurture their community, bringing entrepreneurs and business together through events and activities, including monthly networking. Many are existing businesses that were unaware of the support available:

Generator Case Study

“Generator Manchester has played a vital role in the growth and development of my **company Parti Events Ltd**. As a startup in the events sector, having access to a structured, professional environment has been invaluable — not just for daily operations, but also for scaling our team and business strategy.

In short, Generator Manchester has been more than just an office space — it’s been a launchpad. The infrastructure, support, and environment have all contributed significantly to the early success and sustainability of Parti Events Ltd. We’re proud to be growing our business in such a dynamic and supportive space.”

Inclusive Entrepreneurship

Together, the BIPC, Build A Business program, and Generator enterprise hubs create a cohesive ecosystem, providing everything entrepreneurs need to move from an initial idea to running a thriving business. We aim to empower individuals with the tools, resources, and support they need to take their first steps into entrepreneurship. The services have been highly effective in reaching traditionally underserved groups in business support:

- 64% of customers are women
- 41% BAME
- 12% disabled

The BIPC delivered events tailored to underrepresented groups, including "Women in Business" events for International Women’s Day, the launching of a new network aimed at neurodiverse people, and ongoing “Olderpreneurs” events for the over 50s. Activity this year included:

International Women’s Day 2025



Inspire. Uplift. Empower. Celebrating National Women's Enterprise Week 19 June 2025

Out event for NWEW at Manchester Central Library created a dynamic networking environment where women could access mentorship and peer support. The centrepiece speed mentoring session, featuring seven accomplished mentors, generated overwhelmingly positive feedback from participants who gained practical business insights and established valuable connections. The event effectively embodied NWEW's mission to inspire female entrepreneurship, with participants expressing appreciation for the networking opportunities and quality mentorship received throughout the programme.



Meet the Ukrainian Business Community

We were delighted to host our first meetup in September! The team introduced attendees to Business & IP Centre Manchester's impressive £5 million collection of business databases. These resources are designed to support both budding entrepreneurs and established businesses looking to grow. The event also featured dedicated networking time, giving Ukrainian entrepreneurs the opportunity to connect and share experiences. We were especially pleased to welcome the United Hong Kong Business Association, who delivered an insightful presentation about their business activities in Manchester and beyond.

Manchester Mega Mela

The Build A Business team was thrilled to join the South Asian community at Platt Fields Park for the Manchester Mega Mela this month. Despite facing a weekend of wind and

heavy rain, our pop-up stall sparked many engaging conversations about starting a business, and we made some fantastic new connections.

Supporting the United Hong Kong Business Association

We are proud to be working alongside driven professionals from the Hong Kong community as they establish new businesses in Greater Manchester, and continue to offer tailored support through future networking events and workshops for Cantonese speaking entrepreneurs.

We were honoured to attend the United Hong Kong Business Association's (UHBA) inaugural ceremony on 4 April 2025, having supported the group's formation over the past year as part of phase 2 of the project. The Lord Mayor of Manchester, Councillor Paul Andrews, and Build A Business Team Head Jonathan Ebbs were invited as guest speakers.

Since partnering with Hong Kong Cultural Community CIC in April 2025, we have delivered over 20 events for more than 400 participants, offering practical workshops on grant writing, governance, social enterprise, and creative skills. This collaboration has created a welcoming, professional environment where start-ups and community leaders feel confident to test ideas and develop their business skills.



Build A Business client **Ricky Leung**—global food trader and restaurateur at **Malay Malay Home** in Salford—shared his experience at the **Libraries 175** event on 9 October, expressing his appreciation for Manchester's support for new businesses: **“Manchester offers the best support for start-ups in the world. I mean it—I’ve never experienced anything like this elsewhere.”**

Build A Business also served as a guest speaker on 8 December at **Taste Hong Kong**, a major food and beverage sector conference hosted by UHBA. We presented resources to help start-ups and small businesses achieve sustainable growth to nearly 70 industry professionals. The event strengthened the Hong Kong food and beverage community in Manchester and fostered valuable connections ahead of the busy festive trading period.

Jeff Lui, Chairman of the United Hong Kong Business Association:

“On behalf of the United Hong Kong Business Association, I would like to extend our heartfelt gratitude to the Build A Business team for the unwavering support and guidance. Your support has not only helped establish UHBA but has also empowered our members with the confidence to start anew in Manchester, many of whom have bravely transitioned from Hong Kong. A special thanks to Jonathan Ebbs for his leadership and commitment, which have made this partnership truly impactful. We deeply value the workshops, networking events, and practical advice provided, and we look forward to continuing this meaningful journey together to create even greater opportunities for the community.”

NeuroNetwork MCR

Launched in 2024, NeuroNetwork MCR celebrated its first year in October 2025. Founded by Rebecca Moley, a business consultant and coach whose lived experience as an AuDHD entrepreneur inspired her to create a safe, inclusive space for Neurodivergent business owners. Through her coaching business, [Calm Horizon Coaching](#), and her collaboration with the Business & IP Centre Manchester, Rebecca has helped build a vibrant community where Neurodivergent entrepreneurs can connect, share, and thrive.

This in-person networking event is exclusively for ND entrepreneurs, business owners and sole traders. It is a safe space where attendees can talk about the wins as well as the struggles of running a business while managing their Neurodivergent challenges. “It has had such a fantastic response, the people that attend absolutely make it, they are so supportive of each other, there is a lot of validation and sharing of tips and tools”.

Build A Business & GMCA Tackling Inequalities Pilot

Greater Manchester Combined Authority (GMCA) launched the Tackling Inequalities pilot to test new ways of reaching a diverse range of business owners and addressing barriers to growth. The pilot provides up to £5,000 per business for enterprises that have been trading for at least three months, with payments processed by the Growth Hub.

The fund is by invitation only as it is a test model to see how particular types of businesses may benefit from extra support.

BAB has been central to delivery: successful applicants must have completed a minimum of 6 hours support from Build A Business.

The fund is already helping businesses tackle practical barriers to growth. Applications for the funding include buying equipment or technology to improve or support their business in practical ways including in one case a photographer taking driving lessons to be able to reach more customers.

So far approximately £230,000 in direct grants funding has been unlocked.