

# CASE STUDY

## SUPPORTING SMALL BUSINESSES IN BRADFORD AND COVENTRY

The NatWest Group has been actively working with and supporting Business in the Community to develop a range of free support services to help businesses and communities in the UK to thrive – starting with business owners in Bradford and Coventry.



### About NatWest

NatWest Group is a relationship bank for a digital world. It aims to break down barriers and build financial confidence so the 19 million people, families and businesses it serves in communities throughout the UK and Ireland can rebuild and thrive.

### The issue

Many SMEs across the UK are in need of additional support to help their businesses grow in a responsible manner.

Businesses that have female, Black, Asian and/or Minority Ethnic business owners were identified as being organisations that could particularly benefit from advice, guidance and support from larger organisations.

In addition to this NatWest's own research, a pilot identified Bradford and Coventry as two areas that needed strategic help to build back post-pandemic.

### What NatWest and BITC did

The NatWest Group partnered with BITC to create a Small Business Support Programme in Bradford and Coventry, with a focus on reaching Female and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic business owners.

The programme was centred around the delivery of targeted, high-quality help to meet SME needs.

The project had the following aims:

1. Connect and build trust with SMEs locally
2. Understand SME priorities through needs analysis surveys
3. Meet these main needs through masterclasses, focus groups and signposting to NatWest and partner SME support resources
4. Provide bespoke support through the wider BITC network
5. Help SMEs build back better post-pandemic and improve their local connections



The Prince's  
Responsible  
Business Network

## WORKING WITH BUSINESS IN THE COMMUNITY

The ambition of this project was to better connect the small business ecosystem and simplify the learning journey for small businesses while helping NatWest gain insights into how SMEs can be better supported.

By working with small businesses in Coventry and Bradford, the project achieved the outlined ambition which included the importance of building networks, creating mutual benefits, and providing opportunities for small business owners to add commercial value.

BITC's advice has helped identify future opportunities to lead initiatives among Black, Asian, minority ethnic and female entrepreneurs in other key regions across in the UK.

Across Bradford and Coventry, Business in the Community engaged with 270+ businesses, conducted diagnostic surveys and signposted support to 202 small businesses which included 127 women entrepreneurs and 140 business owners from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic community. We delivered six masterclasses, sixteen focus group discussions, including two BITC convened events - Prince's Seeing is Believing in Bradford and Responsible Business event in Coventry with an overall attendance of 119 SMEs. Further, 49 SMEs received one to one bespoke support.

*"The Masterclass was short and sharp to the point and a friendly environment, I felt welcome to come to the group, its all about networking and how to be better at networking – so for us its been really good"*

**Gareth, Masterclass event attendee**

*"The programme has been amazing and very supportive to our business by keeping us informed about the support and networking opportunities, to calling to see how we are doing and ensuring we are getting help"* Humad, 1-1 support and profile

*"Really informative, especially around supply chain and CSR. Met HR staff that I will be working with so that's a bonus. Thanks for the invite. It was nice meeting new and interesting people in person".*

**Jounita, focus group attendee**

BITC and the programme worked locally to identify gaps in support and what was needed most by businesses. It went out of its way to reach business owners that don't tend to access any support – in particular Black, Asian, minority ethnic and female business owners. Strengthening marketing strategies through growing understanding of Responsible business really struck a chord with business owners – passionate about their local community. BITC uniquely bridged the gap between large corporates and local business, intermediaries and local agencies – encouraging collaboration and shared insight to support businesses facing current challenges.

*"This was the most diverse event I've been to – with women and Ethnic minority led businesses very well represented. The event gave everyone the opportunity to learn, it was an education. It gave excellent access to a buyer and hear about their procurement policy, and it gave the buyer opportunity to hear from small businesses and learn from them if they are really committed to supporting local small businesses – I'd like to see more events like this"* Ian, RB event attendee

## IMPACTS AND OUTCOMES

- 9,000+ SMEs reached through local networks and contacts
- 22 events and focus groups for upskilling and group support with expert HR, legal, marketing and financial advice
- 202 SMEs signposted to suitable support services offered through NatWest Group, BITC and other programme partners such as NatWest Swoop Grant Finder, NatWest Everywoman Self Made Hub, [Digital Boost](#), NatWest Accelerator Program, NatWest Business Builder Program, [LEP Business Support Service](#) and [Be The Business Mentorship Program](#)
- 119 SMEs attending events and 49 SMEs matched with bespoke support
- >90% satisfaction rate for events



Yvonne Aboagye-Hobsonis is an Event Planner by profession and works part time on her business three days a week.

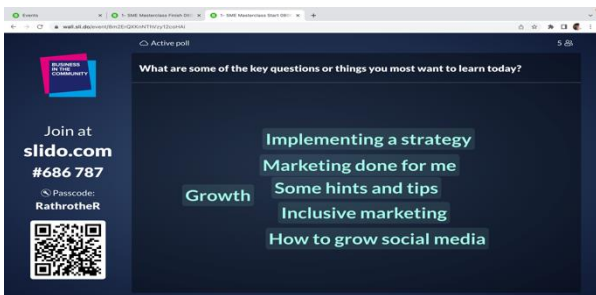
Our Bradford lead Farida introduced Yvonne to Errol at Black Business Expo, she has now successfully reserved her spot for next year's event. As Yvonne was interested in creating an online marketplace for customers to book her sessions online, we matched her to support at Excelledia and Dojo, a business developer and digital payment solution provider respectively to assist her with it. Further, we invited Yvonne for a speaker opportunity to talk about SMEs digital learning challenges at a roundtable conference with larger businesses hosted by Business in the Community.

Post the event, we introduced Yvonne to a contact at NatWest as she was interested in the NatWest Accelerator Program. Yvonne has signed up for the program and looks forward to growing her venture.

Huma Hummad are a brother and sister duo who run an Asian Bridal Couture outlet in Bradford. Their bridal outlet was selected as the location to host BITC's Seeing is Believing event to give them an excellent profile opportunity with a wider audience.

During the event, Hummad spoke about the challenges they faced to acquire funding from banks being a new designer in the fashion business. The event gave him a personal introduction to Alison Rose, CEO of NatWest and her team Andrew Harrison and Tony Wales. Post the event, they helped Hummad review their business strategy. NatWest have recently approved a recovery loan of £150k as a result of the intervention. More recently, Hummad was connected to an advisor at Excelledia to develop a fashion app for bridal couture.





**Looking forward** Having built a system of support in Coventry and Bradford BITC is looking to lead diverse Responsible Business Networks to support thriving local economies through a multi-location approach as set out in the NatWest Time to Change report. **If you would like to know more about Business in the Community's work to support small businesses contact Clare Rudall, Head of Delivery - Small Business [clare.rudall@BITC.org.uk](mailto:clare.rudall@BITC.org.uk)**

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