



GOVERNMENT OFFICE  
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

Local Authority Leaders and  
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## **SOLUTIONS FOR BUSINESS COMPLETES ITS ROLLOUT**

Peter Mandelson and Hazel Blears, the Secretaries of State for Business and Communities and Local Government, wrote to you on 23 October 2008 setting out how Solutions for Business, the government's simplified portfolio of business support products, would make it easier for business customers to get help and bring value-for-money for providers.

We are now writing to let you know that Solutions for Business products are now in place and that we stand ready to help make this support package work for you. AWM have already worked with your economic development staff to make sure that businesses in your locality can easily access the full range of support that is available. The agency will continue to work with you to ensure that the availability of the portfolio of products and the service delivered by Business Link meet your needs.

We are ensuring that the West Midlands Taskforce is ensuring that support for business in this region is sensitive to the rapidly changing position in the region, and that we are well placed to make the most of the upturn when it comes by investment in skills and in infrastructure in the current period."

Businesses wanted a simpler support system that helped them with common issues such as accessing finance, training and exporting. Now, for the first time, all government business support is in one place, easily recognisable and can be accessed via Business Link. Details of the Solutions for Business product portfolio together with the assistance being provided under Real Help are set out in the attached leaflet.

Solutions for Business is the Government's long term offer of support products, giving real help to companies now, when times are challenging, and in the future when the upturn brings new opportunities. The Solutions for Business portfolio is also flexible and able to respond to business need. For example, Real Help Now initiatives, such as the Enterprise Finance Guarantee announced in January have been integrated into the portfolio.



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Local authorities are now able to jointly commission and invest in the Solutions for Business product portfolio. The portfolio provides ready made products which you can offer to companies to support local regeneration, growth and economic inclusion. By co-investing in these products with regional partners, effective support can be deployed to target local needs. This can also potentially save resource in the design and administration of business support – meaning more to spend on driving-up start-ups, skills and innovation.

To make sure Solutions for Business can deliver effectively at the local level a number of local authorities have been piloting the practical implementation of the portfolio prior to rollout. For example, testing has taken place on how the portfolio works to support activity with the creative sector and how local authorities can procure the portfolio or the fit with European funding. The findings of this demonstrator programme will be published shortly.

An Information Note on Solutions for Business and the Comprehensive Area Assessment will also be issued soon. This will set out how benefits such as greater economic impact and improved value for money will be recognised in the CAA process. It complements 'Business Support at the Local Level' published last year.

High quality business support, directed to where it will have most impact to help businesses start, grow and succeed, is an essential weapon in our fight back to economic health. If you have not done so already, we urge you to contact Dr Richard Hutchins Corporate Director Economic Development at Advantage West Midlands to discuss how Solutions for Business can support your role in economic delivery.

We look forward to your continued involvement as we move into the final stage of the simplification process.

Yours sincerely

**IAN AUSTIN**  
**REGIONAL MINISTER**

**NICK PAUL**  
**RDA CHAIR**