

How to become a social enterprise.

➤ Tips from Community Shop, the UK's first social supermarket, for setting off on your social enterprise journey.

What's the first thing you need to do to become a social enterprise?

Have a clear mission and purpose – what is the unique contribution that you are going to make? This purpose needs to remain at the core of your model throughout your journey.

What contributes to a successful social enterprise?

You need a business head and a social value heart. It's important to gather capabilities needed to run an efficient business.

Key is recruiting great people who are competent and efficient at running businesses but believe in the social mission. A board that is credible, well-networked and brings complimentary skills are also essential.

What criteria do you have to meet to become certified by Social Enterprise UK?

To become a certified member of Social Enterprise UK, an organisation must:

- Earn the majority of its income through trading goods or services.
- Have a clear social or environmental mission set out in its governing documents.
- Reinvest the majority of profits back into that mission.
- Be transparent and accountable, with the ability to demonstrate the social impact it creates.
- Operate as an independent business, not under the control of a public sector body.

This certification is a mark of credibility, helping buyers, partners, and the public recognise genuine social enterprises.

What legal documents do you need to call yourself a social enterprise?

Social enterprise is more of a mindset than a legal status; it is the last thing you should consider as you start the journey. First thing is to think about the social value you want to create, then how to do this sustainably (such as selling a product or service, and reinvesting the profits).

Finally you would look at legal status. Social Enterprise UK can support with advice on specific legal structures and documentation.

What are the benefits of being a Social Enterprise UK member?

This certification is a mark of credibility, helping buyers, partners, and the public recognise genuine social enterprises.



Benefits include:

- Social enterprise certification
- Business opportunities
- Lobbying for social enterprise
- Strong evidence base
- Online community, free business resources and advice
- In-person events
- Additional benefits for fee paying members

socialenterprise.org.uk

If there was one piece of advice for businesses on their social enterprise journey, what would it be?

Prepare to evolve and change - fail fast and move on, don't invest too much time if it's not working. Always be in love with the mission and not with the organisation - the mission is what is important, not necessarily the awards or recognition.

Community Shop

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Written by Community Shop and Social Enterprise UK

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