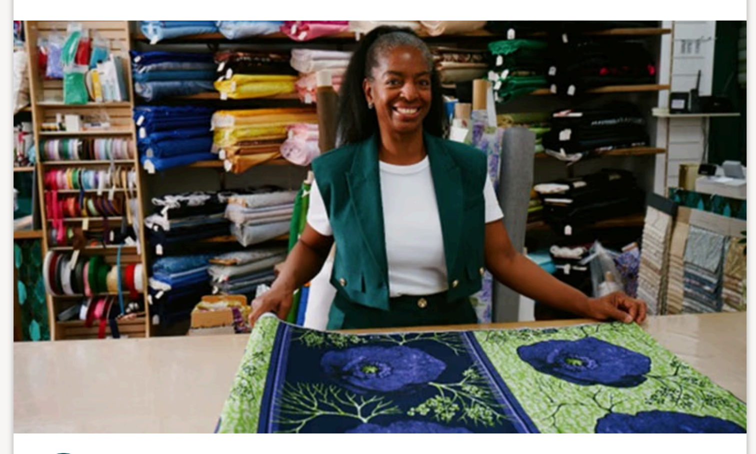
Meet the Black founders thriving in London



Grow London Local

Posted: Fri 3rd Oct 2025

In the month of October, London celebrates its rich Black history and how it's been shaped by its Black communities.

For 2025, the theme of Black History Month UK is "Standing firm in Power and Pride" – an invitation to reflect on the many accomplishments and rights fought for by Black activists, creatives and entrepreneurs over time.

There is both power and pride in starting up your own business in London as a Black founder – so we're bringing you the stories of founders we've supported on their journey and what it's like running a business in London.

Perhaps this could set you off on your own journey to owning a London SME? If you're curious about this, there are plenty of resources to get started and even a free consultation to support you.

Meet the Black founders living their dreams and running businesses that were once just an idea

London is a place of opportunity, and these Black-owned businesses are proof that believing in yourself and working hard can build great things.

Find out more about these SMEs and the stories of their successful founders – and what it took to get them where they are today.

Hagos Guesh, from the Golden Ethiopian Coffee Roasters



If you know your coffee, then you need to visit Hagos' small coffee roaster in Tottenham. Founded by Hagos himself, this speciality coffee (100% Arabica beans) is sourced ethically from Ethiopia and hand roasted in small batches to preserve and retain the natural flavour of the coffee.

The Golden Ethiopian Coffee Roasters is all about community – and a great spot to catch up with a friend over coffee.

What would you say to your younger self?

It's always the right time to turn your dreams into reality, and the responsibility to shape your future lies in your own hands.

Don't let others make decisions for you because this is your dream, not theirs. Don't give up when you fail. Every failure is not the end but practical feedback, a lesson that helps you grow stronger.

If you were starting a business today, what would you do differently?

Since I only started my business this year, I'm still learning and gaining experience every day. But if I were to start again today, I would focus on improving my time management, planning more carefully and working step-by-step with full confidence.

What's driving you this year? What are you most excited about?

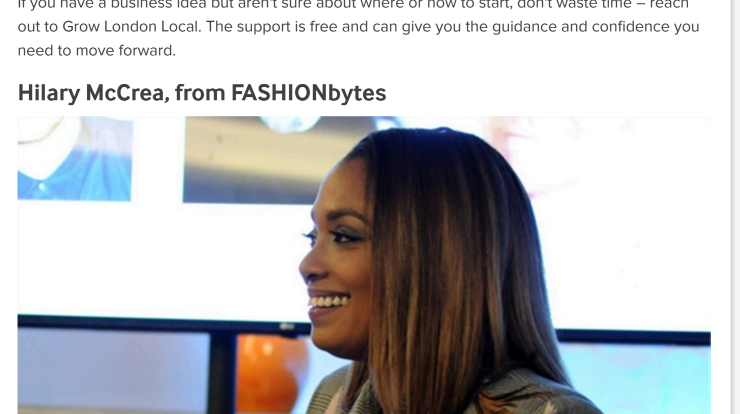
I've been focused on testing my coffees in popup markets and events, while collecting valuable feedback from customers. I'm so happy to see how much people love the taste of Ethiopian coffee.

This year, I'm most excited to keep hearing my customers' reactions and to grow Golden Ethiopian Coffee Roasters into a small specialty coffee shop where everyone can enjoy truly fresh Ethiopian coffee.

What's your advice for other Black founders looking for business support in London?

If you have a business idea but aren't sure about where or how to start, don't waste time – reach out to Grow London Local. The support is free and can give you the guidance and confidence you need to move forward.

Hilary McCrea, from FASHIONbytes



Hilary runs this exciting multi-media platform that supports anyone working within the fashion industry, from new and emerging creatives to more experienced professionals.

With more than 30 years of experience across the US and the UK, Hilary is an established presence in the fashion world.

Having worked for Tommy Hilfiger and owned her own business selling high-quality Italian shoes, she's now dedicated to helping newcomers access the support they need and opening the doors for other driven and ambitious creatives.

What would you say to your younger self?

Ask more questions, trust your instincts. Start before you feel ready.

Every mistake is an opportunity to learn, so adapt quickly and keep going. Build relationships but value your time. Celebrate progress and keep believing in your vision even when others doubt you.

Above all, keep moving forward – consistency wins!

If you were starting a business today, what would you do differently?

I would focus on testing ideas quickly, building one clear offer and growing an audience early.

Invest in branding, track my finances frequently and seek mentors sooner.

Back then, I thought I had to do everything alone. But now I know clarity, consistency and building a community matters far more than perfection.

What's driving you this year? What are you most excited about?

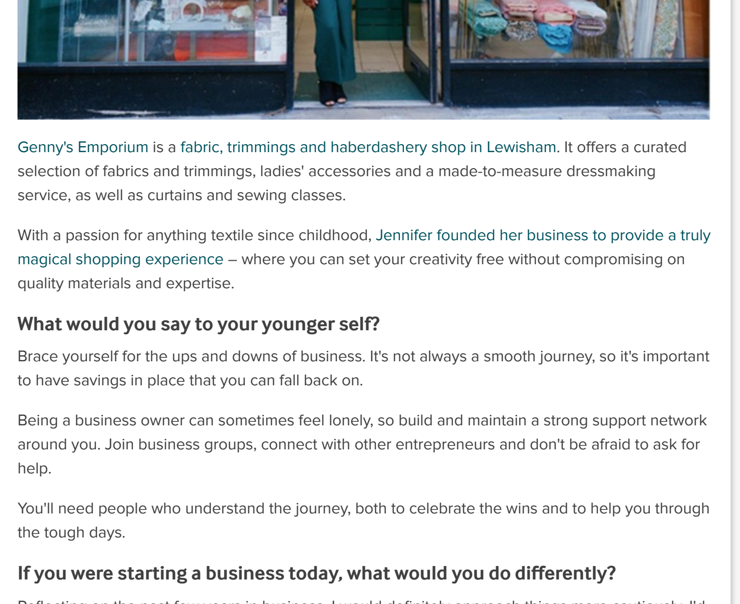
I'm energised by the transformation happening in fashion, where creativity meets technology and sustainability. I'm excited to support entrepreneurs in building purposeful brands that go beyond trends.

What's your advice for other Black founders looking for business support in London?

Seek support that combines funding with mentorship and community. Build networks early, validate ideas quickly and lean on culturally aligned organisations.

Success comes not just from capital but from visibility, clarity and strong connections that can open doors.

Jennifer Allen, from Genny's Emporium



Genny's Emporium is a fabric, trimmings and haberdashery shop in Lewisham. It offers a curated selection of fabrics and trimmings, ladies' accessories and a made-to-measure dressmaking service, as well as curtains and sewing classes.

With a passion for anything textile since childhood, Jennifer founded her business to provide a truly magical shopping experience – where you can set your creativity free without compromising on quality materials and expertise.

What would you say to your younger self?

Brace yourself for the ups and downs of business. It's not always a smooth journey, so it's important to have savings in place that you can fall back on.

Being a business owner can sometimes feel lonely, so build and maintain a strong support network around you. Join business groups, connect with other entrepreneurs and don't be afraid to ask for help.

You'll need people who understand the journey, both to celebrate the wins and to help you through the tough days.

If you were starting a business today, what would you do differently?

Reflecting on the past few years in business, I would definitely approach things more cautiously. I'd avoid overspending, minimise the use of credit and stay away from loans, unless absolutely necessary.

Start small and let the business grow organically. One key piece of advice is to always know your numbers. Understanding what's coming in and going out of your business is essential to long-term survival and growth. Managing cash flow and being realistic with costs can prevent a lot of stress down the line.

What's driving you this year? What are you most excited about?

This year, I'm excited about taking my business in a brand-new direction with the launch of a dedicated Sewing School.

It's been a long time coming and something that's been requested time and time again by customers and the local community. In fact, I've lost count of how many people have asked about sewing classes over the years!

I'm now focused on turning this vision into a reality and I feel a renewed sense of purpose and excitement for this new chapter.

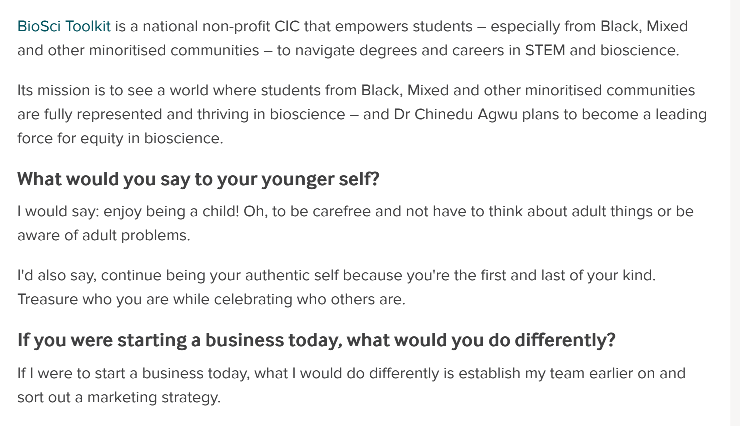
What's your advice for other Black founders looking for business support in London?

Reach out to your local council's business team. They're often a hidden gem when it comes to finding practical, free support. You'll discover grants, mentoring programmes, funding opportunities and events to connect with others in your industry.

There are more resources available than people realise and once you start tapping into them, even more opportunities will open up.

Don't hesitate to ask questions and follow up. Being proactive makes all the difference.

Dr Chinedu Agwu, from BioSci Toolkit CIC



BioSci Toolkit is a national non-profit CIC that empowers students – especially from Black, Mixed and other minoritised communities – to navigate degrees and careers in STEM and bioscience.

Its mission is to see a world where students from Black, Mixed and other minoritised communities are fully represented and thriving in bioscience – and Dr Chinedu Agwu plans to become a leading force for equity in bioscience.

What would you say to your younger self?

I would say: enjoy being a child! Oh, to be carefree and not have to think about adult things or be aware of adult problems.

I'd also say, continue being your authentic self because you're the first and last of your kind. Treasure who you are while celebrating who others are.

If you were starting a business today, what would you do differently?

If I were to start a business today, what I would do differently is establish my team earlier on and sort out a marketing strategy.

I'd also map out my theory of change, so I was very clear on how what I was doing was going to achieve its intended outcome and have an impact. Although I think I've done a good job so far!

What's driving you this year? What are you most excited about?

I'm driven by that the fact that the problem still exists! And there are still certain groups of students who are not getting fair access to opportunities in science education, therefore there's still a lot of work to be done. I'm excited about forming new STEM partnerships.

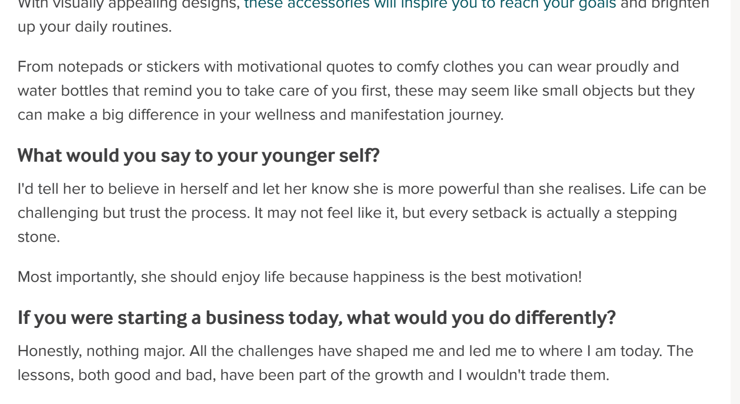
What's your advice for other Black founders looking for business support in London?

My advice is to start! Sometimes, we can wait for perfect conditions before launching.

I'd also say to surround yourself with community and wise counsel, as the journey of a founder can be lonely and convoluted sometimes.

Finally, always remember your why, as that's what you'll need to refer back to when you feel like giving up or question why you started in the first place. There's a you-shaped hole waiting to be filled!

Lea-Anne Vienna, from Show Up As Her



Show Up As Her is a lifestyle and gift business that's built to inspire women. It's intended to help you transform your life and visualise your future self, by showing up as her!

With visually appealing designs, these accessories will inspire you to reach your goals and brighten up your daily routines.

From notepads or stickers with motivational quotes to comfy clothes you can wear proudly and water bottles that remind you to take care of you first, these may seem like small objects but they can make a big difference in your wellness and manifestation journey.

What would you say to your younger self?

I'd tell her to believe in herself and let her know she is more powerful than she realises. Life can be challenging but trust the process. It may not feel like it, but every setback is actually a stepping stone.

Most importantly, she should enjoy life because happiness is the best motivation!

If you were starting a business today, what would you do differently?

Honestly, nothing major. All the challenges have shaped me and led me to where I am today. The lessons, both good and bad, have been part of the growth and I wouldn't trade them.

The only thing I'd do differently is be more consistent from the start, because consistency is what builds momentum and keeps the vision alive.

What's driving you this year? What are you most excited about?

This year, I'm driven by alignment. Building Show Up As Her into a brand that not only sells products but creates experiences for women to feel seen and inspired.

My motivation is seeing women light up when they recognise themselves in my artwork. That moment of connection reminds me why I started.

I'm excited about expanding into new designs and collections and continuing to put Black women at the centre of my designs. That joy fuels everything I do.

What's your advice for other Black founders looking for business support in London?

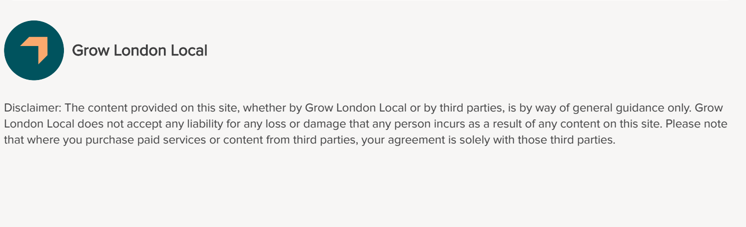
My advice is to tap into community. There are networks, markets and collectives that exist to uplift us. Don't be afraid to ask for help. Collaboration is powerful, and you don't need to do it all alone.

Conclusion

We're proud to support Black founders in London. If you're looking for support yourself, we have plenty of useful resources on our website.

More support for Black founders in London

- Black entrepreneurs in London: Where to go if you need support with your business
- How to navigate the world of start-up accelerators as a Black founder
- Pioneering paths: Success stories of Black female founders in London's tech sector



Grow London Local: Support for London's small businesses

No matter where you're based in London, you'll find relevant support and guidance on business planning, sales and marketing and much more, as well as opportunities to connect with like-minded business owners. Visit Grow London Local now

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