HM Treasury

Bank Referral Scheme: Official Statistics

13 July 2026

Data from 1 November 2016 to 31 March 2026

Headlines:

- **Since November 2016, over 130,000 small businesses who were rejected for finance from one of the designated banks have been referred under the Scheme.**
- **Nearly 7000 businesses have secured more than £161.7m of funding through the Scheme, with an average deal size of just under £24,000.**
- **Northern Ireland recorded the largest average deal sizes by region under the scheme, at over £36,000. In England, the East Midlands recorded the highest average deal sizes at over £29,000.**
- **The year ending Q4 2025 matched the previous record for funding secured through the BRS, last reached in 2022, at £21.98 million.**

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Introduction

The Government's Bank Referral Scheme is designed to help improve SME access to finance and competition in the SME lending market.

Launched in November 2016, the Scheme requires 9 of the UK's biggest banks to pass on the details of small businesses they have turned down for finance to three Government designated finance platforms: Alternative Business Funding, Funding Options and Funding Xchange. These platforms are, in turn, required to share their details, in anonymous form, with alternative finance providers, helping to facilitate a conversation between the business and any provider who expresses an interest in supplying finance to them. SME customer data is only shared with the consent of that customer.

The Scheme was introduced in response to evidence that SMEs often approach their main bank when seeking finance and, if rejected, may not shop around for alternatives. By requiring designated banks to refer rejected SME applicants, with their permission, to designated finance platforms that may be able to match them with alternative finance providers, the Scheme helps address barriers to shopping around for finance and supports greater SME access to finance.

This statistical release provides data on the Bank Referral Scheme, from across all designated finance platforms[1], since the Scheme went live on 1 November 2016[2], including:

- value of quarterly funding;
- quarterly referral rates;
- quarterly conversion rates;
- deals made by location;
- funding value distribution; and
- average deal size by location.

Data is collected on an anonymised basis from all current finance platforms.

In October 2025, the Government published a consultation and call for evidence on the Bank Referral Scheme, inviting views on a range of proposals and evidence questions aimed at enhancing the Scheme. This included seeking views on the ongoing collection and publication of Scheme performance data, alongside wider questions about how the Scheme could better support SME access to finance. Following the conclusion of the consultation and call for evidence, the Government published its response in May 2026. Both the consultation and the Government's response can be found at the link below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/commercial-credit-data-sharing-and-bank-referral-scheme-consultation-and-call-for-evidence--2

In this response, the Government has called on the private sector to come together and develop a single set of industry-led proposals to improve referrals and support better outcomes for SMEs, to be submitted to HM Treasury by 18 December 2026. In particular, the Government has asked the sector to consider how to improve the volume and quality of referrals, improve SME awareness and the information provided at the point of application, and increase transparency on Scheme performance, including through usable and publishable data on credit applications, referrals and outcomes.

Following this, the Government will examine submitted proposals carefully and consider what further action is needed by Government (if any), before proceeding with further changes pertaining to bank referrals policy.

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[1] At their request, the Government de-designated Business Finance Technology in March 2018.

[2] Q4 2016 covers only 2 months, November and December, due to the scheme going live in November 2016. In addition, it is important to note that the data does not take into account any SME inquiries that remain open, so the data may be revised in future statistical releases.

Decisions regarding the future collection and publication of official Scheme statistics also remain subject to the outcome of that work.

You can find more information on the timing and standards for HM Treasury's statistics release via the link below:

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/standards-and-policies-for-hm-treasury-statistics

Quarterly funding

Table 1 shows the value of quarterly funding provided under the Scheme, broken down by the number of deals, the total value, the average value of the deal, and the cumulative number of deals through the lifetime of the Scheme. As of Q1 2026, there have been 6,905 deals completed since the Scheme began in November 2016, with an average value of £23,430. Since the last statistics release, which covered Scheme performance data up to Q3 2024, the Scheme has supported a further 1,510 deals, providing around £32.9 million in funding to SMEs. Quarterly funding peaked at around £7.3 million in Q4 2025. The total value of finance provided under the Scheme is over £161.7m.

Table 1: Total quarterly funding, including number of deals, total value and the average value of the deal

	Number of deals	Value (£)	Average (£)	Cumulative deals
Q4 2016*	26	399,000	£15,346	26
Q1 2017	112	1,850,912	£16,526	138
Q2 2017	81	1,232,350	£15,214	219
Q3 2017	127	1,362,890	£10,731	346
Q4 2017	162	2,223,194	£13,723	508
Q1 2018	224	4,608,310	£20,573	732
Q2 2018	167	4,380,003	£26,228	899
Q3 2018	169	4,625,997	£27,373	1,068
Q4 2018	211	4,210,887	£19,957	1,279
Q1 2019	220	3,847,205	£17,487	1,499
Q2 2019	196	4,140,207	£21,124	1,695
Q3 2019	280	5,102,098	£18,222	1,975
Q4 2019	260	6,369,742	£24,499	2,235
Q1 2020	234	4,216,990	£18,021	2,469
Q2 2020	43	2,341,665	£54,457	2,512
Q3 2020	72	5,397,957	£74,972	2,584
Q4 2020	88	3,491,483	£39,676	2,672
Q1 2021	76	3,093,342	£40,702	2,748
Q2 2021	113	3,956,458	£35,013	2,861
Q3 2021	146	3,748,406	£25,674	3,007
Q4 2021	154	3,429,735	£22,271	3,161
Q1 2022	159	6,714,075	£42,227	3,320
Q2 2022	165	4,238,267	£25,686	3,485
Q3 2022	187	6,225,650	£33,292	3,672
Q4 2022	173	4,661,135	£26,943	3,845
Q1 2023	260	5,464,126	£21,016	4,105
Q2 2023	208	4,221,584	£20,296	4,313
Q3 2023	232	4,414,060	£19,026	4,545
Q4 2023	196	4,517,544	£23,049	4,741
Q1 2024	235	5,405,036	£23,000	4,976
Q2 2024	188	4,148,286	£22,065	5,164
Q3 2024	231	4,867,658	£21,072	5,395
Q4 2024	256	5,630,606	£21,995	5,651
Q1 2025	265	4,523,052	£17,068	5,916
Q2 2025	259	5,168,912	£19,957	6,175
Q3 2025	226	5,025,415	£22,236	6,401
Q4 2025	273	7,266,740	£26,618	6,674
Q1 2026	231	5,265,197	£22,793	6,905
Total	6,905	161,786,173	£23,430	

Quarterly referrals

Table 2 shows the number of SMEs referred under the Scheme. As of Q1 2026, there have been 132,636 referrals made by designated banks to the designated finance platforms.

Quarterly referrals increased to a peak of 4,935 in Q1 2023, before easing in subsequent quarters. While referrals declined from this peak, they remained elevated relative to earlier years, with quarterly volumes in 2025 and Q1 2026 generally below the 2023 peak but comparable to recent historical levels.

Table 2: Quarterly number of referrals, including a breakdown of overall referrals made through the lifetime of the Scheme.

	Quarterly referrals	Cumulative referrals
Q4 2016*	1753	1753
Q1 2017	3390	5143
Q2 2017	2447	7590
Q3 2017	2508	10098
Q4 2017	2735	12833
Q1 2018	3221	16054
Q2 2018	2827	18881
Q3 2018	2663	21544
Q4 2018	2730	24274
Q1 2019	3043	27317
Q2 2019	2647	29964
Q3 2019	2702	32666
Q4 2019	2587	35253
Q1 2020	3853	39106
Q2 2020	3741	42847
Q3 2020	2660	45507
Q4 2020	2754	48261
Q1 2021	2741	51002
Q2 2021	4608	55610
Q3 2021	3760	59370
Q4 2021	3510	62880
Q1 2022	4771	67651
Q2 2022	4553	72204
Q3 2022	3630	75834
Q4 2022	4119	79953
Q1 2023	4935	84888
Q2 2023	4682	89570
Q3 2023	4568	94138
Q4 2023	4192	98330
Q1 2024	4170	102500
Q2 2024	4153	106653
Q3 2024	3926	110579
Q4 2024	3857	114436
Q1 2025	4147	118583
Q2 2025	3677	122260
Q3 2025	3506	125766
Q4 2025	3373	129139
Q1 2026	3497	132636
Total	132,636	

Quarterly conversion rates

Table 3 shows the quarterly and cumulative conversion rates for referrals with the platforms.
The quarterly conversion rate shows the proportion of SMEs contacted by a platform that then went on to secure finance via the platform. The quarterly conversion rate was on an increasing upward trend from the inception of the Scheme up until the pandemic, reaching a high of 10.4% in Q3 2019. As of Q1 2026, the cumulative conversion rate for referrals was 5.2%. Therefore, over the lifetime of the Scheme, around 1 in 20 SMEs that had been referred to a platform have received finance after being referred onto the Scheme.

Table 3: Quarterly and cumulative conversion rate for referrals[3]

	Quarterly conversion rate – referrals (%)	Cumulative conversion rate – referrals (%)
Q4 2016*	1.5	1.5
Q1 2017	3.3	2.7
Q2 2017	3.3	2.9
Q3 2017	5.1	3.4
Q4 2017	5.9	4.0
Q1 2018	7.0	4.6
Q2 2018	5.9	4.8
Q3 2018	6.3	5.0
Q4 2018	7.7	5.3
Q1 2019	7.2	5.5
Q2 2019	7.4	5.7
Q3 2019	10.4	6.0
Q4 2019	10.1	6.3
Q1 2020	6.1	6.3
Q2 2020	1.1	5.9
Q3 2020	2.7	5.7
Q4 2020	3.2	5.5
Q1 2021	2.8	5.4
Q2 2021	2.5	5.1
Q3 2021	3.9	5.1
Q4 2021	4.4	5.0
Q1 2022	3.3	4.9
Q2 2022	3.6	4.8
Q3 2022	5.2	4.8
Q4 2022	4.2	4.8
Q1 2023	5.3	4.8
Q2 2023	4.4	4.8
Q3 2023	5.1	4.8
Q4 2023	4.7	4.8
Q1 2024	5.6	4.9
Q2 2024	4.5	4.8
Q3 2024	5.9	4.9
Q4 2024	6.6	4.9
Q1 2025	6.4	5.0
Q2 2025	7.0	5.1
Q3 2025	6.4	5.1
Q4 2025	8.1	5.2
Q1 2026	6.6	5.2

[3] Data is collected on an anonymised basis from all current finance platforms. Due to recent changes in the way data is collected, it is no longer possible to show a contact conversion rate.

Deals by location

Table 4 shows the distribution of deals – in other words, where a referral was made and finance successfully secured – by location, compared to the distribution of the SME population over the lifetime of the Scheme.

Table 4: Percentage of deals made by location[4]

Region	SME distribution (%)[5]	Deals distribution	Deal distribution (% exc. Not Recorded	Deal distribution (% inc. Not Recorded)
Greater London	18.3%	1,839	27.1	26.6
South East	15.4%	919	13.6	13.3
East of England	10.2%	672	9.9	9.7
South West	9.9%	594	8.8	8.6
North West	8.9%	600	8.8	8.7
West Midlands	7.9%	597	8.8	8.6
Yorkshire and the Humber	7.2%	412	6.1	6.0
East Midlands	7.1%	377	5.6	5.5
North East	2.9%	197	2.9	2.9
England	87.8%	6,207	91.5	89.9
Scotland	6.3%	315	4.6	4.6
Wales	3.4%	211	3.1	3.1
Northern Ireland	2.4%	47	0.7	0.7
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	12.1%	573	8.5	8.3
Location not recorded		125	N/A	1.8

[4] Some postcodes cross borders, which could impact results. Due to an issue during the changeover of reporting methods in 2022, a large number of referrals were recorded with the applicable region not assigned. This accounts for the rise in 'Location not recorded' figures.
[5] Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to 100%.

Funding by location

Table 5 shows the regional distribution of funding for businesses referred to the Scheme, by value, compared to the distribution of the SME population. In total, businesses referred to the Scheme secured more than £161.7m of funding through the Scheme across its lifetime.

Table 5: Funding value distribution[6]

Region	SME distribution (%)[7]	Value of funding (£) by region	Value of funding by region (% exc. Not Recorded)	Value of funding by region (% inc. not recorded)
Greater London	18.3%	37,777,105	23.9	23.4
South East	15.4%	21,726,983	13.7	13.4
East of England	10.2%	18,409,652	11.6	11.4
South West	9.9%	12,137,047	7.7	7.5
North West	8.9%	14,610,250	9.2	9.0
West Midlands	7.9%	12,767,696	8.1	7.9
Yorkshire and the Humber	7.2%	10,752,552	6.8	6.6
East Midlands	7.1%	10,985,684	6.9	6.8
North East	2.9%	4,837,986	3.1	3.0
England	87.8%	144,004,955	91.0	89.0
Scotland	6.3%	8,553,422	5.4	5.3
Wales	3.4%	3,922,913	2.5	2.4
Northern Ireland	2.4%	1,693,001	1.1	1.0
Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland	12.1%	14,169,336	9.0	8.8
Location not recorded		3,611,882	N/A	2.2

[6] Some postcodes cross borders, which could impact results. Due to an issue during the changeover of reporting methods in 2022, a large number of referrals were recorded with the applicable region not assigned. This accounts for the rise in 'Location not recorded' figures.

[7] Due to rounding, numbers may not add up to 100%

Average deal size by location

Table 6 shows the average deal size split by location. The average deal size equates to just under £24,000. Northern Ireland recorded the largest average deal sizes under the Scheme, at over £36,000. In England, the East Midlands recorded the highest average deal sizes at over £29,000.

Table 6: Average deal size by location[8]

Region	Average deal size (£)
Greater London	20,542
South East	23,642
East of England	27,395
South West	20,433
North West	24,350
West Midlands	21,386
Yorkshire and the Humber	26,098
East Midlands	29,140
North East	24,558
England	23,200
Scotland	27,154
Wales	18,592
Northern Ireland	36,021
No location recorded	28,895
Total	23,430

[8] Some postcodes cross borders, which could impact results. Due to an issue during the changeover of reporting methods in 2022, a large number of referrals were recorded with the applicable region not assigned. This accounts for the rise in 'location not recorded' figures.

Background notes

Data collection

The British Business Bank (BBB), working on behalf of HM Treasury, collect data from designated finance platforms in accordance with monitoring and reporting requirements set by HM Treasury.

Data sources

The SME population data is based on Department for Business and Trade (DBT) population estimates, 2025.

https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2025

Further information

Further information about the Bank Referral Scheme can be found at:

http://british-business-bank.co.uk/bank-referrals/

Enquiries

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