

# Freelance Hairdresser

Business Opportunity Profile

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## Introduction

Freelance hairdressers typically rent a chair in a hairdressing salon and run their business on a self-employed basis with their own clients. Some operate on a mobile basis, visiting clients in their own homes to style and cut hair.

This profile provides information about starting up and trading as a freelance hairdresser. It describes the training available, the current market trends and the key trading and legal issues.

## Training and resources

Freelance hairdressers who start up their own business will generally have previous experience of working in a salon, often gained via an apprenticeship.

The following courses and resources are suitable for hairdressers starting up their own business:

- The Level 2 Award in Preparing to Run a Hair and Beauty Business, which is accredited by the Vocational Training Charitable Trust. The course covers the benefits and risks involved in running a business, and laws and regulations. Go to [www.vtctskills.org.uk/qualification/vtct-skills-level-2-award-in-preparing-to-run-a-hair-and-beauty-business](http://www.vtctskills.org.uk/qualification/vtct-skills-level-2-award-in-preparing-to-run-a-hair-and-beauty-business) for more information.
- Free bite-size business videos provided by Wella Professionals. The videos are designed to support self-employed hairdressers and cover pricing, marketing strategies, communication and the consultation process. Go to [www.wellaeducationuk.com/business-videos](http://www.wellaeducationuk.com/business-videos) for more information.
- Free digital learning resources, also provided by Wella Professionals, which cover new techniques, Wella product updates and Q&A sessions. Go to [www.wellaeducationuk.com/digital-lessons](http://www.wellaeducationuk.com/digital-lessons) for more information.
- Free videos and webinars provided by HM Revenue & Customs (HMRC), covering topics including self-assessment and self-employment. Go to [www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-webinars-email-alerts-and-videos](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/hmrc-webinars-email-alerts-and-videos) for further information.

There are various resources to help hairdressers develop their knowledge and skills, including:

- Training provided by specialist suppliers. For example, Sonelli Hair & Beauty runs a one-day course in hair extensions costing £275 (excluding VAT). Go to [www.sonelli.co.uk](http://www.sonelli.co.uk) for details.

- 'Salonfocus', which is a magazine available exclusively to members of the National Hair & Beauty Federation. It is published every other month and features industry news and trends ([www.nhbf.co.uk/magazine/salonfocus](http://www.nhbf.co.uk/magazine/salonfocus)).
- 'Hairdressers Journal International (HJ)', which is a monthly online and print-based magazine for hairdressing professionals (<https://hairandbeauty.escosubs.co.uk/hairdressers>).
- Professional Hairdresser, which is an online resource and magazine for freelance hairdressers (<https://professionalhairdresser.co.uk>).
- Blog posts published by the British Hairdressing Association, which cover trends in the hairdressing industry ([www.britishhairdressingassoc.co.uk/blog/page/2/](http://www.britishhairdressingassoc.co.uk/blog/page/2/)).
- Salon Geek ([www.salongeek.com](http://www.salongeek.com)), which is an online community for hair and beauty professionals that provides opportunities to share best practice and discuss industry developments.

## Key market issues and trends

Current market issues affecting both start-up and established freelance hairdressers include the following:

- The 'State of the Industry Survey' published in January 2025 by NHBF revealed that 20% of salons planned to switch from employing staff to using more self-employed hairdressers. In addition, 18% planned to run a hybrid model using both employed staff and self-employed hairdressers ([www.nhbf.co.uk/news-and-blogs/news/hair-and-beauty-sector-faces-critical-turning-point-as](http://www.nhbf.co.uk/news-and-blogs/news/hair-and-beauty-sector-faces-critical-turning-point-as)).
- In 2024, around 70% of people working in the hair industry were self-employed ([www.margauxsalon.co.uk/post/the-uberisation-of-the-uk-hair-beauty-industry-disguised-employment-practices-and-unlawful-comp](http://www.margauxsalon.co.uk/post/the-uberisation-of-the-uk-hair-beauty-industry-disguised-employment-practices-and-unlawful-comp)).
- In 2023, the number of hair and beauty businesses increased by 870 year-on-year. The number of businesses with a turnover of less than £50,000 increased, while those with a turnover of between £50,000 and £249,000 fell ([www.nhbf.co.uk/about-the-nhbf/industry-statistics](http://www.nhbf.co.uk/about-the-nhbf/industry-statistics)).
- In 2025, the average amount spent on bridal hair styling was £360. The most popular months for weddings are August, September and October (<https://bridebook.com/uk/article/wedding-prices-beauty>).

## Trading, commercial and legal issues

Start-up and established freelance hairdressers face the following trading, commercial and legal issues:

### Trade associations

Membership of a trade association can provide a wide range of individual benefits. Relevant bodies include:

- The Freelance Hairdressers' Association (<https://thefha.org.uk>), which represents independent hairdressers across the UK. Membership benefits include marketing tools, regular newsletters, public liability insurance and access to Wella products. The membership fee is £19.95 per month, with a joining fee of £40.
- NHBF ([www.nhbf.co.uk/home](http://www.nhbf.co.uk/home)), which is a trade organisation representing the UK's hairdressing and barbering sectors. Membership benefits include treatment risks insurance cover, a subscription to 'Salonfocus', and 'how to' guides on topics such as chair rental, workplace health and safety and marketing a hairdressing business. Individual membership costs £192 per year.

## Chair rental

Some hairdressers rent a chair in a salon and run their business independently on a self-employed basis with their own clients.

The British Hairdressing Association provides a searchable jobs board, which includes salons with chairs available to rent. Go to [www.britishhairdressingassoc.co.uk/jobs/](http://www.britishhairdressingassoc.co.uk/jobs/) to search the directory.

Websites such as Healthy Pages ([www.healthypages.co.uk](http://www.healthypages.co.uk)) and Therapy Rooms to Rent ([www.therapyroomstorent.co.uk](http://www.therapyroomstorent.co.uk)) also provide listings of chairs for rent.

## Tax issues

Under HMRC tax rules, if a hairdresser rents a chair in a salon, they must be able to demonstrate to HMRC that they are genuinely self-employed.

HMRC advises that self-employed hairdressers should retain control over significant aspects of their work to prove their self-employed status. This includes setting their own prices, choosing their working hours and processing their own payments.

HMRC and the NHBF have published tax guidance for freelance hairdressers at [www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/vat-taxable-person/vtaxper69100/](http://www.gov.uk/hmrc-internal-manuals/vat-taxable-person/vtaxper69100/).

Freelance hairdressers are also responsible for declaring any tips they receive from clients through their self-assessment tax return. Go to [www.gov.uk/tips-at-work/tips-and-tax](http://www.gov.uk/tips-at-work/tips-and-tax) for further information about tips and tax.

## Hair products and equipment

Hairdressers who rent a chair in a salon will typically use the salon's equipment and hair products, while hairdressers who operate on a mobile basis will need to source their own. Hairdryers, straighteners, shampoos, hair dyes and towels are available from specialist suppliers including Salon Services ([www.salon-services.com](http://www.salon-services.com)), Aston & Fincher ([www.astonandfincher.co.uk](http://www.astonandfincher.co.uk)) and Hairtrade ([www.hairtrade.com](http://www.hairtrade.com)).

Popular branded hair products used by hairdressers include Wella ([www.wella.com/professional/en-UK/home](http://www.wella.com/professional/en-UK/home)), L'Oréal Paris ([www.loreal-paris.co.uk](http://www.loreal-paris.co.uk)), Paul Mitchell ([www.paul-mitchell.co.uk/en](http://www.paul-mitchell.co.uk/en)) and

Redken ([www.redken.co.uk](http://www.redken.co.uk)). Some brands will only supply products to hairdressers who are a 'brand partner' or approved stockist.

## Specialist software

Most hairdressers use specialist software to manage appointments, keep client records, including styling and colour preferences, and take payments.

Examples of specialist software include:

- SuperSaaS ([www.supersaas.com/info/mobile-hairdressers-booking-system](http://www.supersaas.com/info/mobile-hairdressers-booking-system)).
- Slick ([www.getslick.com](http://www.getslick.com)).
- Square (<https://squareup.com/gb/en/solutions/hair-salon>).

## Health, safety and hygiene

According to the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), the main risks associated with working as a hairdresser are dermatitis, asthma and skin allergies. The HSE provides guidance covering the hairdressing sector at [www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/industry/hairdressing.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/coshh/industry/hairdressing.htm) and [www.hse.gov.uk/skin/faq/hairdressing.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/skin/faq/hairdressing.htm).

Hairdressers who operate on a mobile basis must identify and assess any work-related risks at each location where they work. The HSE publishes a guide to managing risks at [www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm](http://www.hse.gov.uk/simple-health-safety/risk/index.htm).

## Finding clients

Opportunities for freelance hairdressers to promote themselves and find clients include:

Entering local or national hairdressing competitions to gain exposure. Go to <https://hji.co.uk/awards-events> for details of hairdressing competitions in the UK.

- Registering with specialist agencies which find hairdressers session work, such as styling models' or actors' hair for fashion shows and photoshoots. Examples of agencies include The Hair and Makeup Agency (<https://thehairandmakeupagency.co.uk>), Lovehair ([www.lovehair.co.uk/lovehair-careers](http://www.lovehair.co.uk/lovehair-careers)) and Sandra Reynolds ([www.sandrareynolds.co.uk/categories/hair-stylist](http://www.sandrareynolds.co.uk/categories/hair-stylist)).
- Registering with the Hair Council, which can indicate that hairdressers have appropriate qualifications and meet recognised standards of conduct. To register, hairdressers must provide details of their qualifications and experience and pay an annual registration fee. Go to <https://haircouncil.org.uk> for more information.
- Creating a Facebook business page to encourage customer referrals. Go to [www.facebook.com/clairmobhair](http://www.facebook.com/clairmobhair) and [www.facebook.com/nicolesfreelancehairdressing](http://www.facebook.com/nicolesfreelancehairdressing) for examples of freelance hairdressers with Facebook business pages. Go to

[www.facebook.com/business](http://www.facebook.com/business) for further information about how to use Facebook for business promotion.

- Using Google's Business Profile (<https://business.google.com/uk/business-profile>) to edit and update the information about their business that appears in Google search results and Google Maps.
- Using Apple Business Connect, which enables hairdressers to manage information about their business that is used within Apple Maps, Apple Wallet and Siri. Go to <https://businessconnect.apple.com> for more information.

## Insurance

A freelance hairdresser requires several types of insurance cover, including:

- Public and product liability insurance, which covers the hairdresser against claims for compensation from anyone injured or adversely affected as a result of their activities.
- Treatment risk liability insurance, which covers a hairdresser against compensation claims relating to negligence, malpractice or accidental injury to a client.
- Legal expenses insurance, which provides cover for defending disputes with salons, HMRC, clients or suppliers.
- Loss of business money insurance, which provides cover for cash that is lost or stolen.
- Equipment cover, which will be needed to cover the hairdresser's equipment and products against accidental loss, damage, theft and any business interruption arising as a result.
- Commercial vehicle insurance to cover 'carriage of own goods', which includes personal possessions, along with any equipment kept in the vehicle
- Income protection insurance, which will pay an income, usually for a set period of time, if a hairdresser is unable to work as a result of sickness or injury.

Specialist insurance for freelance hairdressers is also available from insurers and brokers such as Salon Gold ([www.salongold.co.uk/hair-and-beauty-insurance/freelance-mobile-hairdresser](http://www.salongold.co.uk/hair-and-beauty-insurance/freelance-mobile-hairdresser)) and Salon Secure ([www.salonsecure.co.uk](http://www.salonsecure.co.uk)).

## Legislation

This section provides an at-a-glance list of the key legislation that freelance hairdressers must comply with.

- The Health and Safety at Work etc Act 1974 and the Health and Safety at Work (Northern Ireland) Order 1978 place a general duty of care on hairdressers to protect the health and safety of anyone that may be affected by their business activities.

- The Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations 1999 require employers and self-employed people to identify and assess any workplace risks and to provide adequate health and safety training for employees. In Northern Ireland, the Management of Health and Safety at Work Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2000 apply.
- The Personal Protective Equipment at Work Regulations 1992 (PPE) (as amended in 2022) and equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland set out requirements regarding the use of protective clothing and equipment.
- Under the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) and equivalent legislation in Northern Ireland, all equipment used in the workplace must be properly maintained.

## Related factsheets

SEC003 Hair and Beauty - Sector Update

SYN002 Hair and Beauty - Industry Snapshot

BOP032 Hair Salon

BOP189 Barber Shop

MBP126 Hair Extension Technician

MBP463 African Caribbean Hairdresser

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**Cobweb Information Ltd**, YBN, 7 & 8 Delta Bank Road, Metro Riverside Park, Gateshead, NE11 9DJ.  
Tel: 0191 461 8000 Website: [www.cobwebinfo.com](http://www.cobwebinfo.com)