

A woman with dark hair pulled back, wearing a black athletic singlet and leggings, is in a starting crouch on a red track. She is looking directly at the camera with a determined expression. The background is a solid light blue color.

dti

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICE

**A STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK
FOR WOMEN'S ENTERPRISE**

Sharing the vision:
a collaborative approach
to increasing female
entrepreneurship

SMALL BUSINESS SERVICE

The DTI drives our ambition of 'prosperity for all' by working to create the best environment for business success in the UK.

We help British people and companies become more productive by promoting enterprise, innovation and creativity. We champion UK business at home and abroad.

We invest heavily in world-class science and technology. We protect the rights of working people and consumers. And we stand up for fair and open markets in Britain, Europe and the world.

- Successful Business
- Fair Markets
- Science and Innovation

This Framework has been developed by the Small Business Service in collaboration with Prowess and the following Government Departments and Devolved Administrations.

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment
(Northern Ireland)
Department of Trade and Industry, Innovation Unit
Department of Trade and Industry,
Women and Equality Unit
HM Treasury
Office of the Deputy Prime Minister,
Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
Office of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
SBS Regional Office (South East)
SBS, Social Inclusion Unit
SBS, Start-ups and Business Support Networks Unit
Scottish Executive, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning
Department
Welsh Assembly Government

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Foreword



I am very pleased to be able to introduce this Strategic Framework for Women's Enterprise.

We all know that women already play a significant role in the UK economy, and that more and more women are starting businesses and becoming self-employed. Until now, however, and in contrast with their counterparts in the USA, for example, they have not been able to benefit from the provision of a broad strategic structure for the long-term and sustained development of women's enterprise.

This Strategic Framework represents the first coordinated and collaborative effort by Government in partnership with the Devolved Administrations to tackle the issues which will assist more women to become entrepreneurs and help others to grow existing businesses.

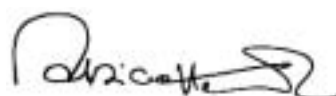
In the short to medium term the Framework calls for truly customer-focused services and the full engagement of business support networks, financial intermediaries and others.

Its longer-term aim, however, is to change fundamentally cultural and social attitudes to women's enterprise. This means challenging existing thinking about 'women in business' in both the public and private sectors and also re-examining how we promote enterprise to women – particularly young women – through the media, schools and higher education, and within local communities.

The underpinning concept of the Framework is the recognition of diversity – the diversity in our needs as customers and business people (whether men or women) and the diversity in approach, engagement and delivery of services which that requires.

I believe this is a critical issue, not just for our economy, but for society as a whole. Women, and all others in under-represented groups (or disadvantaged communities), must have the opportunity to fulfil their potential – our country cannot continue to thrive without the enterprise and creativity they offer.

I am committed to the vision, objective and aims of the Framework and am delighted that the Small Business Service, with Prowess and other key partners, will oversee and influence its implementation in the months and years to come. I look forward to celebrating real success and the positive feedback of those women entrepreneurs the Framework seeks to support.



Patricia Hewitt

Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
and Minister for Women

Executive summary

Vision, objective and aims

This Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework has been developed to provide a collaborative and long-term approach to the development of women's enterprise in the UK.

The long-term vision set out by the Framework is to create an environment and culture that encourages more women to start and grow businesses, and where every woman with the desire to start or grow a business has access to appropriate help and support.

The overall objective is to increase significantly the numbers of women starting and growing businesses in the UK, to proportionately match or exceed the level achieved in the USA. The Framework also seeks to ensure improved support for existing women-owned businesses, especially those seeking to grow.

This document aims to provide the broad context and rationale for that objective, to explain the policy context within which it is to be achieved and to highlight the long-term cultural and social change required to meet it.


The Framework aims to support and encourage the development of strategic partnerships in the English regions to champion the implementation of change in policy and practice.

The Framework also encourages the sharing of good practice between the English regions, between delivery organisations and across borders with the Devolved Administrations. Similar strategies for women's enterprise are under development in each of the Devolved Administrations.

The Framework prepares the ground for change in a number of areas that affect women's enterprise – from education to the financial and business support environment. It proposes ways to encourage that change, and offers guidelines and targets relating to the provision of business support and access to finance. It also challenges existing Government policies in many of these areas, proposing re-examination and development of policies in support of the true needs of women entrepreneurs.

This Framework

The Framework has been written by the Small Business Service's (SBS) Ethnic Minority and Women's Enterprise Unit, with assistance from Prowess (Promoting Women's Enterprise Support), the UK-wide membership body for organisations providing business support to women.



“ I have always been a great believer in self-development, but it’s invaluable having support you can rely on. ”

JACQUI WITHNELL, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
INTERIORS, WORK INC

Its development has been overseen and assisted by the Cross-Government Policy Group for Women's Enterprise. This group includes representatives from the Devolved Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. Members of this group are listed in Appendix A.

The Secretary of State for Trade and Industry has personally endorsed its vision, objective and aims.

Rationale

Research findings and the experience of practitioners such as business support organisations provide the rationale for this Strategic Framework.

It is estimated that women constitute around 27 per cent of self-employed people in the UK. It is also estimated that only 12–14 per cent of businesses are majority owned by women, compared to 28 per cent in the USA. The lack of reliable data on business ownership disaggregated by gender continues to hinder the development of evidence-based policy in this area.

Research has consistently identified specific issues which can make starting and growing a business more challenging for women than men. These include barriers such as a lack of accessible childcare, inappropriate business support services, problems making the

transition from benefits to self-employment and complex issues concerning access to finance.

At a cultural level, there is a failure to recognise and value the contribution – and potential contribution – of women-owned businesses to the UK economy. As a result, Government policies and service delivery have not previously focused on this area of activity. Ingrained attitudes need to be challenged: success in attracting more women into business will encourage other under-represented groups and will provide a fresh dynamic to entrepreneurship in the UK.

Policy context

The SBS policy framework, outlined in *Small Business and Government: The Way Forward*¹, provides the broad context for the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework. One of its seven core strategies is to encourage enterprise in disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups. Women are the most significant under-represented group in the UK. As the *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2001 UK Executive Report*² stated: 'One of the clearest ways for the UK to increase its level of entrepreneurship would be by encouraging and supporting more women into business.'

Although the SBS provides a focal point for small business issues in Government, the

¹ *Small Business and Government: The Way Forward*, SBS, December 2002.

² *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2001 UK Executive Report*, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, February 2002.

*Cross Cutting Review of Government Services for Small Business*³, highlights the need for a joined-up approach to enterprise development across Government.

As the key influencer and strategic body for the development of small business in the UK, the SBS has responsibility for women's enterprise policy development and implementation. Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland are responsible for their own service delivery, but implementation of the Framework will encourage improved sharing of good practice across borders.

Action and targets

The Strategic Framework outlines a number of practical short and medium-term action priorities. However, essential to achieving the Framework's objective will be adherence to a long-term plan ensuring effective collaboration, quality monitoring and evaluation, and dissemination and sharing of good practice.

Publication of the Framework will be followed by detailed implementation and action plans, which will need to be developed in partnership with major delivery organisations. The SBS will take the lead in working with the Business Link Operator (BLO) networks and will work through the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) to engage Regional Development Agencies (RDAs) and others. Delivery of these plans will initially be monitored and evaluated by the SBS, in conjunction with regional partners.

The changes which are needed to achieve results will not happen overnight. However, we should expect tangible improvements to be evident and measurable by the end of 2003/04.

The long-term quantitative targets are:

- By 2006, women will account for 40 per cent of customers using Government-sponsored business support services.
- By 2006, women-owned businesses will account for 18–20 per cent of the UK total.
- By 2006, the number of women from ethnic minority communities receiving business support assistance will be proportionate to their representation in the relevant local/regional population.

These targets are specific to England. The Devolved Administrations may wish to take account of them when setting or reviewing targets for their areas of responsibility. However, responsibility for service delivery is clearly a devolved matter.

Qualitative targets are also important. Part of the overall objective of the Framework is to ensure women-owned businesses are sustainable and successful. One of the SBS's core strategies is to develop policies and practices which support the capability of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) to achieve sustained growth. Tackling the needs of women-owned businesses will be central to work in this area.

³ *Cross Cutting Review of Government Services for Small Business*, September 2002.

Mainstream and targeted support

The Framework emphasises the need for the parallel development and improvement of targeted and mainstream support services.

Support should be customer-focused and if, for example, some women prefer gender-specific assistance (eg women-only business training), this should be provided. This could be through a mainstream provider such as Business Link, or it might be brokered to a relevant local initiative.

All mainstream business support services should be appropriate and accessible to both women and men.

Mainstream providers should, wherever possible, work in partnership with targeted women's enterprise initiatives.

Summary – barriers and actions

Research highlights a number of common factors which present barriers to the successful transition for many women into business, self-employment or a social enterprise.

BARRIERS

- Lack of appropriate business support.
- Access to finance.
- The impact of caring and domestic responsibilities.
- Difficulties experienced in the transition from benefits to self-employment or business ownership.
- Lack of appropriate role models.
- Low levels of confidence and self-esteem.

While some women establish enterprises without experiencing these barriers, it is important to take action to remove such barriers where they are encountered.

ACTIONS

- Development of appropriate, integrated and accessible business support, combining quality mainstream and targeted approaches.
- Access to networking opportunities.
- More innovative and holistic approaches to business finance (eg microcredit group lending).
- Improved liaison and cross-referrals between high-street banks and business support providers.
- Affordable access to childcare provision and recognition of broader caring responsibilities.
- Flexible business support provision, recognising the needs of part-time businesses.
- Improved liaison and cross-referrals between business support agencies and Jobcentre Plus.
- Development of case studies featuring women entrepreneurs in a range of business sectors, and a database of appropriate role models.
- Personal development and confidence-building incorporated into business training and advisory services.

A more detailed summary of actions can be found in Section 6.

Beyond the Framework

The Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework represents the first coordinated and collaborative approach to the development of women's enterprise, supported by the Government, in the UK. It is ambitious in its long-term targets, and the social, cultural and economic changes required to fulfil its vision are challenging. But this is just a beginning. If its action priorities are achieved in the short term, there are many more innovations and ideas to follow which can truly make the UK the best place to do business – for women as well as men.

Those who have contributed to the development of the Strategic Framework therefore call on senior officials across Government, and in delivery and support partner organisations, to work together with the SBS to seize the opportunity to make a real and lasting difference to women's enterprise.

Context

1.1 Objective of the Strategic Framework

The long-term vision of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework is to create an environment and culture that encourages more women to start and grow businesses, and where every woman with the desire to start or grow a business has access to appropriate help and support.

This Framework has been developed in response to the pressing productivity requirement to encourage more women to start and grow businesses, and to address positively the need for coordinated support for women's enterprise. The Framework aims to provide a collaborative and long-term approach to the development of women's enterprise in the UK.

The Framework has been developed within the context of the new SBS policy framework, *Small Business and Government: The Way Forward*⁴.

The overall objective is to increase significantly the numbers of women starting and growing businesses in the UK, to proportionately match or exceed the level achieved in the USA.

The long-term quantitative targets are:

- By 2006, women will account for 40 per cent of customers using Government-sponsored business support services.
- By 2006, women-owned businesses will account for 18–20 per cent of the UK total.
- By 2006, the number of women from ethnic minority communities receiving business support assistance will be proportionate to their representation in the relevant local/regional population.

It will also be important to measure the increased economic contribution made by women-owned businesses and to ensure that growth-oriented businesses are supported appropriately.

Implementation of priority actions is planned to begin in 2003/04. These targets are specific to England. The Devolved Administrations may wish to take account of them when setting or reviewing targets for their respective areas. However, responsibility for service delivery is clearly a devolved matter.

⁴ *Small Business and Government: The Way Forward*, SBS, December 2002.



" This business has always been my project, and I'm proud of what I've achieved here. "

FIFI FONTANOT, SCOOTER WORKS UK

1.2 Why a Strategic Framework is needed

Women constitute the largest under-represented group in the UK in terms of business start-up and ownership. Encouraging more women to become involved in enterprise and grow existing businesses has significant potential to impact positively on the UK's economic performance.

The Framework aims to:

- provide background information and context for women's enterprise development;
- promote and enable an effective cross-Government approach to women's enterprise development;
- challenge and influence existing Government policy and practice, and encourage their development in support of the needs of women's enterprise;
- highlight the key issues to be addressed, using the development of strategic partnerships at local, regional and national level;
- provide practical guidelines, examples of good practice and solutions for improved delivery of mainstream business support services;
- provide advice to ensure that services are customer-focused and segmented appropriately (ie ensuring women are not treated as a homogenous group with the same needs);
- encourage effective partnerships with women-targeted enterprise initiatives; and
- enable a genuine cross-cutting approach with other key enterprise themes.

More broadly, the Framework aims to highlight the change in culture and attitude which is needed to ensure that the practice of encouraging women in business is not transitory, but underpins future enterprise development.

1.3 Who the Framework is aimed at

For the purposes of the practical implementation of the Framework's objective and aims, it is primarily aimed at:

- Regional Development Agencies (RDAs);
- Business Link Operators (BLOs);
- Enterprise Agencies;
- Government departments;
- community-based enterprise initiatives;
- Government Offices for the Regions;
- women's enterprise organisations and networks;
- local authorities;
- Learning and Skills Councils;
- Education Business Partnerships;
- local strategic partnerships;
- banks, Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) and other financial institutions; and
- professional advisers (eg accountants).

It will also be of interest to private sector organisations such as Chambers of Commerce and professional/corporate bodies, academic institutions and education initiatives, the EU and European Structural Fund programmes, policy makers concerned with enterprise, business development and social issues, as well as women entrepreneurs and business owners.

The Framework is not intended to prescribe how provision for women's enterprise will develop over the next few years. However, it is intended to reflect the Government's desire for women's enterprise to be taken seriously. It also aims to encourage all those involved in supporting, financing and developing businesses to take note of the needs of women entrepreneurs, and to demonstrate that there are concrete actions that they can take to boost women's enterprise.

1.4 How the Framework will be delivered

The Framework will result in a series of regional action plans with outcomes and targets for specific organisations. The SBS will work closely with its network of BLOs and in partnership with RDAs and others in the development and implementation of these action plans. The Devolved Administrations may wish to take account of the Framework when developing and implementing actions aimed at women's enterprise, although responsibility for service delivery remains with them.

1.5 Development of the Framework

The Framework has been developed by the SBS and Prowess in conjunction with the Cross-Government Policy Group for Women's Enterprise. This policy group was established specifically to take the issue of women's enterprise forward. (See Appendix A for further details.) The Devolved Administrations of Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have made an important contribution to this group, with ideas and current examples of women's enterprise activities from their respective countries and strategies. Continued joined-up working in this manner across Government and with the Devolved Administrations will be vital to future progress.

1.6 Mainstream support

This Framework is about ensuring that current business support services are appropriate, effective and accessible for all potential customers, including women, not about separating women's enterprise from mainstream business support.

By reviewing and improving services from a gender perspective, it is likely that all customers will benefit. Gender issues should

be an inclusive part of every programme or policy development by all enterprise stakeholder groups. This will help achieve the DTI's PSA (Public Service Agreement) equality target to be 'by 2006, working with all departments to bring about measurable improvements in gender equality across a range of indicators, as part of the Government's objectives on equality and social inclusion'.

Although, ultimately, it is better to design appropriate mainstream programmes than to develop support provision specifically for women, changes to culture, attitude and environment, as well as to infrastructure and delivery mechanisms, may take years. It is important therefore to support and develop new and existing targeted initiatives, where needed, to help women in the short to medium term.

Targeted approaches can work well alongside mainstream initiatives. Competition between agencies is rarely a problem – indeed targeted initiatives can be seen to reach new markets of women, not normally attracted by mainstream business support. Targeted initiatives may also work as feeders, preparing women to engage with mainstream support and networks. BLOs are working successfully with targeted initiatives in this way in Shropshire, for example, where support for women in rural areas is provided by a partnership involving Business Link and Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE).

1.7 Targeted initiatives

Many women prefer a targeted approach to business support, particularly in the pre-start and start-up periods. This might include women-only business training, access to peer group support or women's business networks. These types of approach can be developed and delivered by mainstream services or by specific targeted initiatives.

There are a number of initiatives in the UK targeted specifically at women. They offer women business support and assistance in a supportive and encouraging environment. In addition, they can:

- provide choice and flexibility of services;
- complement mainstream activities;
- provide a more holistic support system;
- pilot new initiatives;
- provide networking opportunities;
- positively influence other local enterprise organisations; and
- ensure personal development and confidence-building are integral to advisory and training provision.

Evidence of the potential impact of targeted initiatives can be seen in the USA where there are more than 300 women's business centres. These focus on disadvantage, business training, advice, networking, procurement and access to finance. Tangible evidence of their success can be seen in the areas in which they operate.

Targeted women-only business support is not an alternative to ensuring that mainstream business support is women-friendly. All business support should take into account the particular needs of women (as outlined above). Although the option of women-only provision should be available, many women will prefer to develop their business in a mixed-gender setting. For examples of women's enterprise initiatives, see Appendix B.

1.8 Segmentation

Women do not form a homogenous group. They come from different ethnic groups, different family circumstances and different age groups, with different work experiences and educational backgrounds. They have diverse ambitions and aspirations. Although many women are socially excluded or in some way disadvantaged, many are not. Effectively

segmenting the market is crucial to providing effective support and services.

It is also important to recognise the needs of existing women entrepreneurs running potentially high growth businesses. Although their needs may be similar to those of male entrepreneurs, they may still face particular challenges, for example when seeking equity investment.

Despite the potentially different needs of different groups, it remains true that there are significant numbers of women who face more and different barriers to developing businesses than their male counterparts. They have a right to quality business support in an encouraging and unpatronising environment.

1.9 Access and inclusion

Many women who are socially excluded are deterred from using local business support both physically, for reasons of location and transport, and psychologically. This is particularly true of women who live in disadvantaged areas, are from ethnic minority groups or have disabilities.

Issues directly affecting socially excluded women's access to business support include:

- availability of public transport;
- isolation (particularly in rural areas);
- access to appropriate childcare/caring facilities;
- lack of empathy shown by business advisory staff;
- inappropriate marketing;
- unrealistic criteria required before assistance is made available;
- lack of flexibility; and
- the benefits trap.

Wherever appropriate, outreach activities and partnerships with relevant organisations should be used to reach this customer base. In many cases, a more effective approach will be to broker services to specialist agencies with expertise and experience working with the target groups.

1.10 Growth potential

The Framework is concerned with addressing the needs of women running enterprises with high growth potential, as well as the needs of the majority of women-owned businesses, which are 'micro-businesses' (ie they have fewer than nine employees). Larger enterprises must also receive appropriate support from business support networks, banks and other intermediaries.

The SBS is currently developing the Government's strategy for helping build the capacity for growth in small and medium-sized enterprises and this will highlight the importance of increasing turnover, profitability and employment in these organisations. More emphasis will be placed on knowledge transfer in conjunction with universities, and on improving the local availability of help and advice for management and skills development.

The Framework highlights a number of specific actions to support women growing their businesses, for example:

- providing access to appropriate mentoring/coaching;
- improving business advice on growth issues;
- increasing networking activity;
- training and awareness in financial issues; and
- improving marketing/awareness of investment options (eg venture capital, informal investment).

1.11 Enterprise education

A fundamental cultural change in attitudes to women in business needs to begin with education – both informally at home and in the community, as well as formally in schools, colleges and universities. Despite achieving better qualifications at school and in higher education, self-employment and enterprise tend not to be considered as career options by young women.

Whilst there are more attempts to introduce enterprise and enterprise issues within the curriculum, it is important that gender awareness is built into these initiatives.

Examples of positive features include:

- use of appropriate female role models;
- case studies featuring women-owned businesses;
- promotion of flexible business structures (eg part-time businesses, social enterprise);
- promotion of non-traditional sectors, such as construction and transport, to girls and young women.

1.12 A matter of language

The language of enterprise can be a barrier. For example, this document uses 'entrepreneurship' synonymously with 'enterprise' and 'business', but there are many successful businesswomen who do not perceive themselves as 'entrepreneurs' (or even 'businesswomen').

There needs to be an understanding that 'enterprise' is a broad term which covers self-employment and social enterprise in addition to business ownership. (It is also a term that refers to entrepreneurial capacity to make things happen, for example in community-led development.)

Although many women will start businesses which will contribute significantly to growth and employment creation, others will choose, or by necessity have to develop, self-employment as an employment option which fits with other life choices or forms part of a portfolio of income sources. Appropriate language is therefore an issue and unnecessary jargon has been avoided wherever possible.

Policy context

2.1 Policy objectives

The Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework is underpinned by a clear set of policy objectives, outlined as followed:

2.1.1 Government economic drivers

These focus on driving up UK productivity and competitiveness. This means adopting a strategic approach and taking forward the Enterprise for All agenda.

2.1.2 Cross Cutting Review of Government Services for Small Business

The *Cross Cutting Review* aims to ensure that the services provided by Government to small businesses are delivered to provide maximum benefit to the economy and society.

The following is a summary of the key points from the review's section on female entrepreneurs.

PARTICIPATION

- *Labour Force Survey*⁵ data suggests 27 per cent of self-employed in the UK are women.
- The entrepreneurial contributions that women make to family businesses are masked by co-ownership.
- Current data potentially underestimates the true contribution of women in the business sector.
- Women's business ownership is on a par with other Northern European countries but is far lower than USA levels.
- Women start businesses in a variety of industries in the UK, but 48 per cent of female entrepreneurs own businesses in the service sector, compared with 36 per cent of male entrepreneurs.

⁵*Labour Force Survey*, Office of National Statistics, 2001.

PSI®

A close-up portrait of Sue Hunter, an older woman with short, wavy grey hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark pinstriped blazer over a white top. The background is slightly blurred, showing a wall with the PSI logo.

" The challenge is to remain at the cutting edge and to respond swiftly to the fast-changing requirements of the electronic marketplace. "

SUE HUNTER, MANAGING DIRECTOR OF PSI GLOBAL LTD

BARRIERS

Supply of finance

- Traditional credit-scoring mechanisms discriminate against women, who tend to have a less detailed and more fragmented financial track record.
- Prejudice on the part of lenders.
- Failure of lenders and support agencies to appreciate differing motivations of entrepreneurs.

Demand for finance

- Fear of debt.
- Women own fewer assets and so have less collateral for a loan.
- Perceived prejudice on the part of lenders.

Access to suitable advice and support

- Limited access to informal and formal business networks, mentors or appropriate peer group support.
- Business support is not responsive to specific needs of women (eg opening times, provision of childcare facilities).

2.1.3 DTI's review of business support

Along with the *Cross Cutting Review*, this aims to ensure that the services provided by Government to small businesses are delivered to provide maximum benefit to the economy and society.

2.1.4 The 2002 Spending Review

This reinforces the Government's commitment to encouraging enterprise for under-represented groups and disadvantaged areas.

2.1.5 DTI's aim of achieving prosperity for all

DTI has recently expressed its aim – to deliver prosperity for all by driving up productivity and competitiveness through world-class science and innovation, successful enterprise and business, and fair, competitive markets. One of its objectives is to help build an enterprise society in which small firms of all kinds thrive and achieve their potential with:

- an increase in the number of people considering going into business;
- an improvement in the overall productivity of small firms; and
- more enterprise in disadvantaged communities.

2.1.6 The SBS framework for the Government's small firms policy

The SBS policy framework encompasses the Government's Enterprise for All economic objective. One of the SBS's seven core national strategies is the development of more enterprise in disadvantaged communities and under-represented groups.

One of its 14 key delivery themes, which will determine the priorities for the Business Link Operator network in England, is to encourage more women into business.

The SBS Phoenix Fund is a good example of an initiative introduced to encourage entrepreneurship among under-represented groups. It is already making a significant impact on women's enterprise support and is currently supporting 15 initiatives in England, including Train 2000 in Liverpool, the Women's Business Development Agency in Coventry and the Women in Business initiative run by Bolton Business Ventures.

2.1.7 Think Small First⁶

Think Small First was published by the SBS to improve the focus across Government on meeting the needs of small business. The document states that the Government 'recognise[s] that ethnic minority and women entrepreneurs may face particular barriers [and] will research those barriers [and] take action to remove them'.

2.1.8 PAT 3 Report (Policy Action Team 3)

In 1997 the Government established a Social Exclusion Unit (SEU) within the Cabinet Office. Following the SEU's recommendations, in September 1998 the Government set up 18 Policy Action Teams to look at various aspects of social exclusion. Policy Action Team 3 (PAT 3) was asked to look at enterprise and social exclusion.

One of the main areas of recommendation of PAT 3 was that social enterprises should be recognised as a group of businesses deserving support. The PAT 3 report stated: 'As part of its wider remit to promote small business, the SBS should encourage enterprise and business growth in disadvantaged communities.'⁷

2.2 Cross-Government policy linkages

Although the SBS provides a focal point for small business issues in Government, the *Cross Cutting Review* highlighted the need for a joined-up approach to enterprise development across Government.

The Cross-Government Policy Group for Women's Enterprise has been formed to provide a forum for the development of a more coordinated approach to policy development on issues related to women's business ownership in the UK.

2.2.1 HM Treasury

HM Treasury is responsible for formulating the Government's economic and financial policy. Its overall aim is to raise the rate of sustainable growth, and achieve rising prosperity, by creating economic and employment opportunities for all.

HM Treasury has an interest in the level of female entrepreneurial activity for two reasons.

- Enterprise is a key driver of productivity growth. New and successful businesses increase competitive pressure and facilitate the introduction of new ideas and technologies. Increasing the level of female entrepreneurship will therefore contribute to the Government's productivity agenda, helping to achieve a sustained increase in the rate of growth.
- HM Treasury also has an objective to expand economic and employment opportunities for all. The low level of female entrepreneurship in comparison with men, and in comparison with levels of female entrepreneurship in other countries, suggests that there may be particular barriers faced by women which affect their opportunity to participate.

2.2.2 Women and Equality Unit

The Women and Equality Unit (WEU) has lead responsibility within Government on policy on women, gender equality, sexual orientation and the coordination of equality. Its aim is to reduce and remove barriers to opportunity for all, and to work with colleagues across Government to bring about measurable improvements in the position of women to benefit society generally. The WEU undertakes a range of projects to identify issues and policies which contribute to the overall DTI goal of 'prosperity for all'.

⁶ *Think Small First*, SBS, January 2001.

⁷ *Enterprise and Social Exclusion*, HM Treasury, November 1999.

2.2.3 Department for Education and Skills (DfES): The Howard Davies Review

The Government is keen to build an enterprise culture among all young people. It wants to see stronger links between business and schools, giving students a better understanding of their future role in the economic community.

In June 2001, Howard Davies was asked to conduct a review of teaching about enterprise and the economy.⁸ The review focused on young people aged between 14 and 19 in schools and further education establishments in England. The review reported in February 2002 and its broad recommendations have been accepted.

The review argues that greater efforts are needed to strengthen the culture of entrepreneurship, and that this process must begin in schools. By 2005/06, every secondary school will be able to offer five days' enterprise activity to pupils. The DfES will make available £5 million in 2003/04, and £10 million in 2004/05 to pilot approaches. In 2005/06, £60 million will be made available.

This investment will be backed by a number of supporting actions, including provision of new guidance for teachers and new teaching materials, and the establishment of a national benchmark of enterprise capability among young people.

2.2.4 Department for Work & Pensions (DWP): Self-employment policy

Self-employment is a key feature of DWP's Welfare to Work agenda. DWP self-employment provision is delivered via the New Deals. There is also support for those whose needs are not met by the New Deals through the Work Based Learning for Adults in England and Wales, and Training for Work in Scotland.

New Deal support is delivered through Jobcentre Plus advisers. Jobcentre Plus advisers are specifically trained to help address customers' barriers to employment, and are required to achieve an NVQ Level 3 in Guidance.

DWP is currently reviewing New Deal provision to make it more flexible, to enable it to respond more rapidly to the needs of participants and employers.

New Deal is just one of many support programmes for would-be entrepreneurs. A range of initiatives exists within programmes focused upon 'deprived areas', such as Action Teams and New Deal for Communities. Advice and support is also provided by the SBS, with funding from the European Social Fund and The Prince's Trust Business Programme (which is partly funded by DWP) underpinning much of this support.

2.2.5 Department for Work & Pensions: SME engagement

DWP is playing a key role in delivering the recommendations from the *Cross Cutting Review of Government Services for Small Business*, and the SBS comprehensive review of business start-ups.

Jobcentre Plus is reviewing its employer engagement strategy across the full range of its services. A new national account manager for SMEs will be appointed shortly.

2.2.6 Department for Work & Pensions: Reviews and surveys

DWP is currently undertaking various reviews and surveys of relevance to the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework. These include a research project, *Self-employment as a route off benefits*, published in November 2002.

⁸The Howard Davies Review of Enterprise and Economy in Education, Howard Davies, February 2002.

2.2.7 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister: Neighbourhood Renewal Unit

The Neighbourhood Renewal Unit (NRU) exists to narrow the gap between deprived neighbourhoods and the rest of the country so that no one should be seriously disadvantaged by where they live. The NRU is responsible for driving progress towards this goal across Government.

Enterprise, and starting a business, can offer a way out of the poverty trap for many in disadvantaged areas – particularly for those who may find it difficult to access, or to obtain, existing jobs. It also creates further jobs and strengthens local economies, thereby stimulating further growth. The NRU works closely with other Government departments and agencies, including the SBS, to ensure the mechanisms are in place to deliver real change on the ground in disadvantaged communities.

At regional level, neighbourhood renewal teams have been set up in the nine Government Offices to provide a direct channel of communication from neighbourhood/ community groups to the NRU. They act as facilitators to support the development of local strategic partnerships to bring together key players from the public, private, community and voluntary sectors, to encourage a more integrated approach to the planning and delivery of services. This includes the economic regeneration of these areas and addressing some of the problems related to worklessness and productivity.

2.3 Devolved perspectives

Although the SBS is only responsible for strategic implementation of the Framework in England, the relevant Administrations in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland have contributed to the policy development process. Responsibility for the delivery of enterprise strategy in Scotland, Wales and

Northern Ireland lies with the respective Administrations.

Specific strategies for women's enterprise are under development in each of the Devolved Administrations. It is envisaged that the dissemination and sharing of good practice, and the cooperation between the SBS and the Devolved Administrations, will continue to be of mutual benefit.

2.3.1 Scotland

In Scotland, the Scottish Executive is committed to increasing the start-up rate for small businesses and is particularly keen to increase the number of women in business. Business advice and support for women is delivered by Scottish Enterprise and Highlands and Islands Enterprise. The Scottish Executive acknowledges that these services should reflect the specific needs of current or potential women entrepreneurs.

Since 1999, Scottish Enterprise (SE) has set targets for women-led start-ups. Its aim is for 40 per cent of start-ups to be by women by 2005. In 2001/02 the SE network achieved a 37 per cent female start-up rate.

Current initiatives to increase the number of start-ups by women include:

- WIN (Women Into The Network) – a networking initiative linking to business support services;
- www.scottishbusinesswoman.com – an online resource for women entrepreneurs;
- Premier Adviser Accreditation Programme – this aims to ensure that business advisers understand the issues and barriers faced by women;
- microcredit programme – a business support and lending scheme;
- Business Investment for Growth (BIG) – a programme to raise awareness of the alternative forms of funding for growth-oriented businesses.

Highlands and Islands Enterprise (HIE) also attaches a great deal of importance to fostering enthusiasm and giving confidence to women who are thinking about either starting or expanding their own business. Currently 42 per cent of HIE-assisted business start-ups are by women.

In 2002, Paisley Enterprise Research Centre (PERC) was commissioned to undertake a study examining the feasibility of a centre to promote and support women's enterprise in Scotland. The study was asked to consider the need for such a centre, what functions it would undertake, and what form it should take. It considered support for women in enterprise within the context of key policy categories including: business start-ups; business growth and development; innovation; access to funding; and social inclusion.

The study concluded that there was a need for a dedicated National Women's Unit, based internally within SE and HIE, and this has been accepted by the Scottish Executive. The Unit will have a strategic role and will not be involved in direct service delivery. Although it will be based within the Enterprise Network, an independent advisory group will be appointed to provide expertise from business and academia. This group will enable the National Unit to undertake and maintain an important advocacy role.

One of the first tasks for the Unit will be to review the existing structure of support for women across Scotland and the key mechanisms and programmes currently employed. This will lead to the creation of a comprehensive strategy for women's enterprise in Scotland for the year 2004/05 and beyond.

2.3.2 Wales

The Entrepreneurship Action Plan for Wales (EAP) has identified specific groups, amongst

them women, who are under-represented in terms of starting up in business and who require special measures for support and encouragement in enterprise development.

An integral project of the EAP is Women's Enterprise Wales (WEW), set up to address the needs of potential women entrepreneurs across Wales. It is managed through Chwarae Teg and is a pre-business start-up programme for women interested in setting up in business but who face barriers that make it difficult to work immediately with existing mainstream service provision.

It aims to increase the number of women moving into self-employment by delivering a range of outreach support services in order to enable them to actively engage with mainstream service provision. Since its inception in April 2001, WEW has provided assistance to over 900 women and has created over 100 new businesses across Wales.

Another significant and popular project in the pre-business start-up arena is Potentia, launched in 2002. This is focused on a number of under-represented groups, including lone parents.

2.3.3 Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland, the evidence from the *Labour Force Survey* for 2001 revealed that:

- Men are almost five times more likely to be self-employed than women in Northern Ireland. The self-employment rate for women is just under 4 per cent, compared to 19 per cent for men. The overall self-employment rate in Northern Ireland is 12.5 per cent.
- In fact, the number of self-employed women in Northern Ireland is the lowest of all the UK regions. The overall self-employment rate for women in the UK is 6.4 per cent.

The establishment of Invest NI provides a key opportunity to achieve a cohesive response to the development of an entrepreneurial culture in Northern Ireland. In taking a business birth rate strategy forward, the role of Invest NI will be to strategically manage the implementation of this strategy. While Invest NI will play a leading role in the delivery of key components of the strategy, future success will depend on achieving a coordinated contribution from a range of stakeholders and partners who engage with entrepreneurs.

A central tenet of Invest NI's strategic framework is to provide a sophisticated, responsive network of support to meet the needs of all new business start-ups, represented by a well defined and integrated enterprise network with clear access points for business start-ups.

The Investing in Women framework has been developed to inform developments for the future and includes the following set of strategic objectives:

- To create a stakeholder forum to provide sustained commitment and strategic leadership to the whole system of support aimed at enabling women seeking to start and grow their business. The stakeholder forum provides a focal point across several Government departments for work relating to the women's enterprise agenda.
- To increase the interconnectedness and collaboration between agencies and groups involved directly or indirectly in assisting women to 'step-in' to enterprise or to 'step up' their business's growth. The framework recognises that women are a diverse group needing access to diverse support mechanisms. At a local level, it will be important to enable access and progression routes within the whole system.
- To hothouse innovation and targeted support to remove the barriers and constraints affecting women at start-up or

growth stages of business. This will include significant work on raising the capability of the enterprise support network.

- To promote the concept of women in enterprise as an option for women at all ages, with particular focus on influencing career guidance and choices for young women, and to increase the social and cultural acceptability of women-led business.
- To create a knowledge base about women in enterprise through research and targeted enquiry into particular issues, as well as information gathering across Northern Ireland to profile the numbers and types of women-led enterprises as a way of measuring need, creating communication channels, assessing the impact of initiatives and benchmarking progress.
- To evaluate the impact of initiatives and the quality of provision using best practice guidelines and to disseminate the results of good practice throughout the business support system to increase its overall capacity and capability.

Background – data and research

3.1 Background

Women have always played a key role in enterprise in the UK, often in invisible support roles. However, interest in women as business owners began in earnest in the 1980s. Although a number of local and regional initiatives providing specific support to women were launched through the 1980s and 1990s, there has never been a national coordinated strategy aimed at encouraging women into business.

Despite considerable social and cultural change within the UK, the proportionate increase in the number of women starting their own business in the last two decades has been half that of other countries such as the USA – and we have little cumulative information about the experience of women business owners in this country.

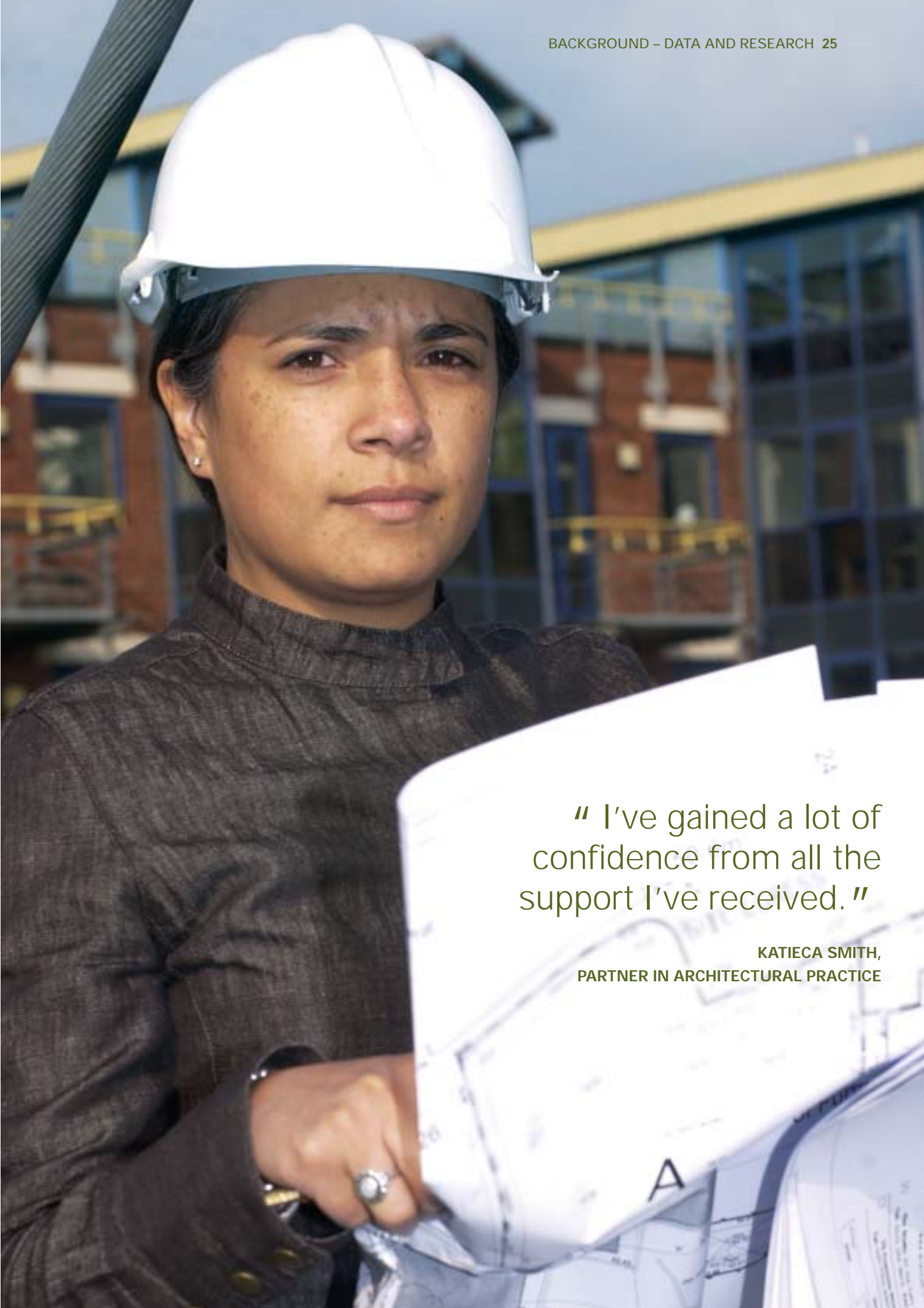
Although the relationship between entrepreneurial activity and economic growth is complex, recent international economic reports, such as the Global Entrepreneurship Monitor (GEM), clearly highlight the correlation between economic growth and rates of female entrepreneurship. The *GEM 2001 UK*

*Executive Report*⁹ noted that men were currently around two and a half times more likely to be entrepreneurs than women, and concluded that ‘one of the clearest ways for the UK to increase its levels of entrepreneurship would be by encouraging and supporting more women into business’. It also highlighted the importance of recognising the ‘differences between male and female entrepreneurs... when designing responsive and appropriate future initiatives’.

The latest GEM report, published in December 2002, shows a slightly smaller gap between male and female entrepreneurship in the UK, but highlights a continuing low level of female entrepreneurial activity in comparison with many other countries taking part in GEM, including Canada, the USA, Australia, Norway and most countries in the Far East and South America.

Examination of the UK labour market demonstrates why we still have relatively low levels of female entrepreneurship. Women’s employment is concentrated in the service and retail sectors, in particular in non-manual occupations such as middle management and administration. Women are under-represented

⁹ *Global Entrepreneurship Monitor 2001 UK Executive Report*, Global Entrepreneurship Monitor, February 2002.



“ I’ve gained a lot of confidence from all the support I’ve received. ”

KATIECA SMITH,
PARTNER IN ARCHITECTURAL PRACTICE

in senior management and in the boardroom. The recent Female FTSE research by Cranfield University shows that women make up 7.2 per cent of the board directors of all firms in the FTSE 100 – however, 39 of the 100 do not have any women directors. Women still lag behind men in terms of pay, training, qualifications and promotion, so the average female entrepreneur will have less managerial experience and less access to business networks and finance.

In addition, although women who are becoming self-employed are a diverse group, research has shown that there are some differences between men and women in their motivation for starting a business. The Office for National Statistics' *Labour Force Survey* for 2000 showed that although the most popular reason for becoming self-employed for both women and men was to be independent, the widest difference between the two groups concerned family commitments. Two per cent of men cited this as a reason compared to 21 per cent of women. The research also showed that work-life balance is one of the most important issues for women in Britain today.

It is generally accepted that many women encounter more and often different barriers in comparison to their male colleagues when starting an enterprise. This is reflected in the findings of several studies carried out in recent years.¹⁰

The gender differences that affect the start-up process and growth prospects of women-led businesses are complex, but key factors include:

- level and quality of advice/training/support required – particularly where women have been out of the labour market or lack experience;
- length of time required from pre- to post-start-up (in many cases this can exceed 12–18 months);
- segmentation in both the labour market and enterprise sector;
- impact of caring and domestic responsibilities which still affect women more than men;
- acquiring appropriate finance;
- difficulties experienced in the transition from benefits to self-employment; and
- low levels of confidence and self-esteem.

If these issues are taken into account by business support services, banks and other intermediaries, an environment can be created where women-led businesses are valued and assisted in a way which is appropriate to their needs. This is as relevant to growing businesses as it is to business start-ups.

The key to effective support for women's enterprise will be to:

- positively influence the quality of mainstream business support services; and
- ensure that, where appropriate, women can access a more targeted approach.

3.2 Data

3.2.1 Gaps/data collection issues

There is a lack of baseline information with regard to women in business in the UK. None of the key sources of business statistics (eg Customs & Excise, Inland Revenue, Companies House, clearing banks, etc) disaggregate the gender ownership of the businesses registered with them. So with no formal means of gathering gender data, the current statistics are unsatisfactory and often contradictory.

¹⁰*Women's Business Ownership: Literature Review*, Carter, Anderson and Shaw, SBS, August 2001.

The lack of reliable data has been a major problem in understanding women-owned businesses and has hindered the development of evidence-based policy in the area. This situation contrasts with the USA, where there has been a concerted effort to collect gender-disaggregated data on women entrepreneurs. This data has been instrumental in both understanding the challenges facing women entrepreneurs and developing policies to improve their numbers and situation. It is essential, therefore, that efforts are made to ensure that all relevant data is gender disaggregated.

This is being addressed as a strategic priority by the SBS. Business support organisations will be obliged to record and monitor all customers by gender and ethnicity. There is a particular issue relating to data on part-time businesses (of which more than 70 per cent are run by women). In many areas they do not qualify for business support or start-up finance and may therefore be missed from current data sources.

3.2.2 Key sources

The *Labour Force Survey* is currently the only consistent source of statistics on self-employment. Despite a significant increase in female self-employment over the last two decades, as a percentage of the total self-employed in the UK, the proportion of women has only risen by around 3 per cent since 1990 – from 24 per cent to 27 per cent in 2000.

However, statistics covering self-employment do not directly correlate with business start-up and ownership. We have to look to other sources for this information.

The 2002 Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) report, *Lifting the Barriers to Growth in*

*UK Small Businesses*¹¹ highlighted the following:

- 9–12 per cent of businesses are wholly owned by women, compared with 44 per cent owned by men and 42 per cent owned by a mix of men and women;
- women who wholly own businesses are more likely to be aged between 22 and 34; and
- the highest proportion of businesses owned by women are new – up to three years old.

In addition, we know (from the *Labour Force Survey* and the *SBS Household Survey*) that:

- more than 50 per cent of self-employed women work part-time – less than 30 hours per week;
- 35 per cent of self-employed women compared with 12 per cent of men use their home as their business base; and
- the sectors in which women start businesses reflect those in which most are employed – education, health, finance and business services.

The *GEM 2002 UK Executive Report* found that:

- men are at least twice as likely to be an entrepreneur than women;
- the peak age group at which people start businesses is 35–44 for both men and women – although the difference between male and female entrepreneurial activity is also at its highest in this age category;
- male and female entrepreneurial activity rates are lowest in the 18–24 age group; and
- women are more likely to let fear of failure prevent them from setting up an entrepreneurial business than men.

All these facts indicate some clear differences in the attitudes and motivations of women to entrepreneurship, strongly implying a need for different types of support and funding to enable women to get started.

¹¹ *Lifting the Barriers to Growth in UK Small Businesses*, Federation of Small Businesses, 2002.

3.2.3 The US perspective

In the USA, the availability of consistent data relating to women's business ownership has enabled quality research which has helped to underpin the development of a sustained strategic approach.

Key facts about women-owned businesses in the USA, from the Center for Women's Business Research, include the following:

- There are 6.2 million women-owned businesses in the USA, accounting for 28 per cent of all privately-owned firms.
- From 1997 to 2002, the number of women-owned firms in the USA grew at twice the rate of all firms in the USA.
- The growth of firms owned by women from ethnic minorities is even stronger – twice the rate of all women-owned firms and four times the rate of all firms in the USA.
- Although services and retail still make up the largest sectoral share, construction, agricultural services and transportation have seen the largest recent increases in the number of women-owned firms.
- There has been significant improvement in access to capital for women business owners in the USA – but a survey in 1999 showed that less than 9 per cent of venture capital/equity went to women.
- Women and men business owners are equally likely to be using the Internet for business.

3.2.4 Europe

In a European context, women's business ownership in the UK is on a par with most other Northern European countries. For example, women start around 30 per cent of new businesses in Sweden and Germany, with lower levels in France and Italy. One of the fastest growth rates in female entrepreneurship occurs in Spain, where self-employment provides women with flexibility

and opportunities not available in a traditional, male-dominated economy.

Like the UK, however, accurate data on women's business ownership for most European countries is not easily available.

One of the priority issues of the Greek presidency of the European Union (January to June 2003) is the development of enterprise for under-represented groups, such as women and young people.

The systematic collection of data relating to gender is key to establishing a reliable baseline against which the progress of female enterprise can be charted.

RECOMMENDATION

The SBS takes the lead in encouraging Government departments, delivery organisations and others to collect, systematically and thoroughly, gender-disaggregated data relating to female enterprise. The SBS has recently taken a strong lead in this area by reinforcing the efforts of its Business Link network to collect and analyse such data.

3.3 Current research¹²

Research literature on female entrepreneurship in the UK began to be produced in the mid-1980s, although earlier studies were carried out in the USA.

Most studies have concentrated on descriptive accounts of the characteristics and motivations of women in business, and their experiences of business ownership, particularly at start-up. Further specialist themes have developed, such as gender

¹² Information for this section has been adapted from *Women's Business Ownership: Literature Review*, Carter, Anderson and Shaw, SBS, August 2001.

differences regarding management of the business, particularly with regard to finance, business networks and performance.

However, despite the number of studies which have been carried out (the *Literature Review* revealed over 400 academic articles on the issue of women and business ownership), most have been descriptive and there has been a lack of cumulative research.

3.3.1 Key findings – characteristics of women entrepreneurs

Academic studies have highlighted the broad similarities between women and men in their characteristics when starting a business. But differences can be seen in:

- the relative youth of women business owners;
- the concentration of women's businesses in retailing and service industries;
- women's lack of prior work experience, training and business experience; and
- the effects of the 'glass ceiling' in women's motivation to start businesses.

Research has shown few differences in psychological characteristics between female and male entrepreneurs – but studies have revealed many social background and business differences between women and men. Although conflicting evidence exists, differences are discernible in educational levels, family backgrounds and ethnicity.

3.3.2 Key findings – start-up: patterns, resources and constraints

Most studies have concluded that:

- the motivations for start-up are similar between women and men;
- the processes used by women tend to be slower; and
- the start-up period for women's new businesses is longer.

Analysis of the acquisition of resources at start-up has shown the greatest differences between women and men. Overall, the majority of studies show that women find it more difficult to access resources, including finance, human capital and social capital.

Difficulties in acquiring start-up resources lead many women to start businesses that are under-resourced – and evidence suggests that this has a long-term effect on business performance. The smaller size of women's businesses and the lack of high growth performance are often seen as a direct result of constraints experienced at start-up.

There has been little evaluation of policies and programmes to encourage women into business, but the lesson from existing studies is that the length of time needed between intervention and effect tends to be longer for women. Consequently, there is a need to focus on long-term policies rather than short-term initiatives.

3.3.3 Key findings – management of women-owned firms

Although the issue of whether women manage their businesses differently from men has been a recurrent question, this area has not been comprehensively researched.

There has been increased interest in the 'entrepreneurial family', focusing on the largely hidden contribution of women in running family-owned firms. This research theme has also emphasised the importance of 'co-preneurial' marital partners who own and run businesses together. Although around 42 per cent of small businesses are estimated to be co-owned, little is known about the role played by female co-owners.

The effect of gender on both the experience of self-employment and the performance of the

business has been the subject of more considered investigation. Analysis has suggested that gender is an important – but not the sole – explanatory factor in differences between women and men-owned firms.

3.3.4 Key findings – gender and business networks

Gender differences in the way networks are formed and used have been cited as influencing certain aspects of the management process, for example, access to finance and relationships with financial backers.

Some studies have suggested that distinct gender differences occur in both the establishment and management of networks, and in the make-up of social networks.

This area has been seriously under-researched and only one issue has drawn consensus: women are more likely to have networks composed entirely of other women, and men are more likely to have networks composed entirely of other men.

3.3.5 Research gaps

Research gaps on business start-up include:

- the comparative conversion of men and women who have an interest and desire to start a business, and those who actually succeed in doing so;
- regional variations in female start-ups;
- the reasons for the longer start-up period for female-owned businesses;
- the effect of initial size and resources on long-term business performance;
- the effect of an individual's previous labour market position on relative business performance – for example, do women simply exchange low pay for low profits?;
- comparative experience of men and women making the transition from welfare benefits into self-employment;
- role of supply and demand factors as constraints in start-up finance;

- impact of targeted women's enterprise support programmes;
- whether banks unwittingly discriminate against women starting in business; and
- international entrepreneurship/best practice – for example, why are women more entrepreneurial in certain countries?

Research gaps on growth and ongoing enterprise management include:

- links between prior work experience and relative business performance;
- the differences in management style and approach between women and men;
- the performance differences of women-owned and men-owned businesses;
- regional and sectoral variations in performance;
- variations in the use of ongoing and growth capital;
- contribution of women in co-preneurial or family-owned ventures, with a particular focus on ethnic minority businesses.

The gaps in research outlined above are significant (though not exhaustive); filling these gaps is important to the long-term aims of this Framework.

RECOMMENDATION

The SBS coordinates a programme of research in these areas to address the shortfall in current knowledge and understanding. This will include the research needed to measure the outcomes and outputs of regional action plans. The research should also establish strong links with key stakeholders such as Regional Development Agencies, the Bank of England, high-street banks and others, encouraging them to participate in the programme.

“ Some people still have negative perceptions of women in business. I’ve never let them hold me back. ”

DEBRA McGARRY
CONFERENCE ORGANISER



SBS key delivery themes

The SBS has identified a number of key delivery themes and activities within its core strategies. The Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework cuts across all of these themes to a greater or lesser extent. A measure of future success will be the extent to which women's enterprise issues are integrated effectively into the delivery of these themes.

Themes of particular significance are described in more detail below.

4.1 Encouraging business start-ups

One of the most effective ways to increase business start-ups will be to encourage more women into business. The start-up strategy will reflect this and will have strong synergy with the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework.

4.2 Promoting social enterprise

Women already play a vital role in the development, management and governance of social enterprises – but more can be done to recognise and promote social enterprise as a viable business development option for women.

4.3 Supporting business incubation

Good quality business incubation is important for growing enterprises as well as start-ups. Increasing the number of women starting in business will act as a catalyst for the SBS to explore with the incubation community ways in which incubation can help businesses survive and grow, particularly through UK Business Incubation (UKBI).

4.4 Encouraging international trade

More can be done to ensure that women-owned businesses benefit from export programmes and international trade initiatives. Women-targeted trade missions are an effective way of engaging women from a variety of sectors.

4.5 Promoting innovation and knowledge transfer

Women are under-represented in the technology and manufacturing sectors. However, their ability to innovate and develop new ideas should be recognised and encouraged, for example through DTI initiatives such as Smart. (Smart assists small businesses with research and development and with increasing and improving the use of technology.) In addition, initiatives such as the British Female Inventors Awards should be supported and developed.

4.6 Getting the UK online for business

There is evidence that women already use Information Communication Technologies (ICTs) less in their business than their male counterparts.¹³ Targeted ICT training and support should be integral to business support provision. In addition, online women's business support should be integral to DTI/SBS website developments.

4.7 Succeeding in the family business

Women often play a crucial, though sometimes invisible, role in family businesses. Their needs should be taken into account within business support delivery. Particular attention needs to be paid to the role of women in ethnic minority businesses where often the woman's role in the enterprise is crucial to success but unacknowledged or under-supported.

4.8 Developing the workforce

Research has shown that segregation in the labour market and by business sector are key factors in the under-representation of women in business. Developing the skills and confidence of women in the workforce are therefore critical issues for the development of women's enterprise.

4.9 Reaching out to ethnic minority business

The recent 2002 report from GEM highlighted the entrepreneurial drive of women from ethnic minority backgrounds in the UK. However, they face the same barriers and constraints as other women, which are often exacerbated by cultural constraints, language or discrimination. Research on ethnic minority businesses should disaggregate and analyse data and findings by gender.

4.10 Developing the rural economy

Women in rural areas face specific issues when trying to develop an enterprise. Remoteness from business support, transport issues and a lack of care facilities all provide additional challenges, and recognition of these issues needs to be built into business support services.

¹³ *Restricted Access: Women-Owned Businesses in Profile*, Carter, Tagg and Brierton, FSB/Prowess, 2002.

Key issues – summary

Below is a summary of the key issues which need to be addressed in order to achieve the overall objective of increasing the number of women-owned businesses. Sections 6 and 7 provide detailed breakdowns of activity, outputs and measures for each issue.

5.1 Business support provision

The aim is to ensure that business support provision is effective, appropriate and accessible for anyone who wants to either start or grow a business – it must therefore be designed to meet the needs of women as well as men. Although this is primarily an issue for key business support providers such as the Business Link Operator network, it requires active partnership with many other bodies (see section 1.3: Who the Framework is aimed at, p12) to ensure that the quality and range of support is improved across the regions. This includes partnership with potential and current business owners as the target recipients of such support.

Examples of the types of activity required include outreach initiatives, improved access to networking, mentoring and coaching initiatives, women-targeted incubation and effective online provision.

5.2 Access to finance

Access to finance is one of the issues which is consistently identified as a barrier to business start-up and growth – and research shows that this is a particular issue for women. Strategic partnerships with banks, Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs), business angel networks and other financial providers will improve women's access to capital for both start-up and business growth.

Examples of suggested activity include improved information and marketing of business finance options, development of more innovative schemes such as microcredit group lending and proactive venture capital and angel investment initiatives targeted at women.

5.3 Childcare and caring responsibilities

Women in the UK are still responsible for 80 per cent of caring and domestic responsibilities. The implications of this for women starting and growing businesses need to be recognised and appropriate assistance offered – including assistance for part-time as well as full-time businesses. In addition, improved and specialised assistance should be



available to those running childcare businesses. Implementation priorities include provision of childcare allowances for women receiving pre-start-up advice or training and improved access to caring facilities.

5.4 Transition from benefits to self-employment

The issue of benefits, and how women can be assisted in making the transition from welfare into enterprise, is consistently highlighted as one of the deterrents to self-employment for women in disadvantaged areas.


Take-up by women of the self-employment options in New Deal programmes is relatively low in comparison to men.¹⁴ Action has to be taken to address this, for example by changing the ways these programmes are marketed to women.

“ Targeted ICT training should be integral to business support provision. ”

¹⁴ *Income Bridge Evaluation and Research*, SBS, June 2002.

Action priorities – customer perspective

One of the aims of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework is to recommend activities and outputs relevant to the achievement of the objective. Reflecting the four key issues identified in Section 5, suggested below are priorities for implementation in the short to medium term. These priorities are aimed at a number of diverse agencies and providers and will directly affect the experiences of women seeking to start up or grow businesses.



“ I’m a serial networker – it’s a wonderful way to find strong business partners who share the same values. ”

SHARON CAIN, MANAGING DIRECTOR,
QUEST PUBLIC RELATIONS

6.1 Business support provision

Activity	Objectives
Networks and networking	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to networking opportunities for women at all stages of business development. • Link network events to business support provision such as advisory, training and/or mentoring programmes.
Pre-start-up counselling/advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate pre-start advice and counselling services. • Increase range of options available. • Ensure part-time businesses are not excluded.
Information and sign-posting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure customers are directed to most appropriate agency and/or information source. • Ensure information is current and up to date.
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate business training opportunities. • Develop women-only training options. • Develop distance training materials and electronic delivery.
Business advisory services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide quality, accessible business advisory services. • Provide services on outreach basis where appropriate. • Use electronic delivery where appropriate.

Outputs	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of local and regional businesswomen’s groups. • Partnerships with existing networks (eg Chambers of Commerce) resulting in joint events and reciprocal membership where appropriate. • Establishment of new women’s networks where needed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of networks (where needed). • Increased number of women joining networks or participating in events. • Development of regional network of ‘umbrella’ initiatives (eg WIN in North East and WBN in North West). • Increased take-up of business support services. • Increased ‘business to business’ activity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Access to pre-start-up counselling available in every area and for all. • ‘Joined-up’ approach with inter-agency collaborations and partnerships. • Access to women-only provision where required. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women seeking assistance. • Increased number of business start-ups. • Alternative positive outcomes, ie training, education, employment, etc. • Increased customer diversity, including women from disadvantaged areas.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of appropriate marketing and communication channels. • Effective use of online resources. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness of self-employment options. • Increased number of inter-agency referrals. • Increased number of enquiries from women. • Increased customer diversity.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Development of women-friendly business training courses. • Innovative delivery methods. • Appropriate accreditation, including ICT modules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women undertaking business training. • Increased number of business start-ups. • Increased employability and general skill levels.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-friendly advisory services. • Outreach services linked to need (eg ethnic communities and rural-based women). • Electronic and web-based delivery of services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women receiving business advice. • Increased number of women-owned business start-ups. • Increased number of women-owned businesses receiving growth advice. • Increased ICT skills.

Activity	Objectives
Mentoring/coaching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop mentoring/coaching provision appropriate to women's needs.
Business incubation facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop business incubation provision providing quality support services.
ICTs and online provision	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure women have access to appropriate ICT training and support. • Develop online women's business support linked to the DTI\SBS websites.
Franchising	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve awareness of franchising as potential business route.

6.2 Access to finance

Activity	Objectives
Access to finance (general)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure women are not disadvantaged in terms of access to finance.
Start-up grants and loan schemes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop greater awareness and take-up of start-up grants and loans by women. • Ensure sectors such as retail, catering and service are not excluded. • Where appropriate, establish loan funds targeted at women (eg in Bolton the Business Ventures fund supported by Barclays). • Ensure part-time businesses are eligible for finance schemes.

Outputs	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-friendly mentoring/coaching initiatives. • Good gender balance in existing mentoring schemes. • Development of peer group mentoring initiatives (may be linked to microcredit provision). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women using mentoring/coaching in the development of their businesses. • Increased number of women becoming mentors.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Women-friendly business incubator facilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women-friendly incubator spaces for new and growing businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of ICT training/support integral to business support delivery. • Active and interlinked online information and support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased use of ICTs in women-owned businesses. • Increased number of women using online Government services.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Events/seminars in partnership with BFA and others. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of female-owned franchise businesses (currently seven per cent of total).

Outputs	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information and promotional literature on business finance and sources. • Effective cross-referral arrangements between business support providers and banks. • Development of innovative loan schemes such as microcredit group lending. • Gender impact assessment (eg of finance schemes, marketing campaigns, etc). 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in satisfaction levels with banks and finance providers. • Increased levels of start-up finance accessed by women-owned businesses where there is a business case for doing so. • Access to and awareness of alternative sources of finance (eg microcredit loans) extended to additional regions where there is unmet demand.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate marketing and promotional literature. • Finance training and awareness within pre-start-up programmes. • Development of regional loan funds targeted at women, in partnership with banks. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proportionate increase in number and level of grants/loans to women-owned enterprises in response to business needs.

Activity	Objectives
Microcredit group lending	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Extend peer group microcredit lending schemes for women to additional regions (eg Full Circle Fund in Norfolk).
Bank finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase awareness and take-up of debt finance options (overdrafts and term loans) by women where appropriate.
Venture capital	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase awareness and use of venture capital funds by women.
Business angel and informal investment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Increase awareness and use of business angel and informal investment by women.

Outputs	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishment of peer group lending initiatives – in partnership with community-based initiatives or Community Development Finance Institutions (CDFIs) where appropriate. • Integration with networking, advisory and training services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Peer group lending scheme(s) accessible in additional regions. • Increased numbers of women-owned start-ups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information and promotional literature on bank finance options. • Effective links between banks and business support providers. • Encouragement for banks to research current credit scoring mechanisms in terms of gender impact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of business bank accounts opened by women-owned businesses. • Increased levels of debt finance used by women for start-up and growth.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information and promotional literature on venture capital options. • Integration with business growth advisory services. • Provision of investment-ready advice and training for women-owned growth businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased levels of venture capital investment in women-owned businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved information and literature on business angel finance options. • Provision of investment-ready advice and training for women-owned growth businesses. • Pilot of new women-only business angel network. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased levels of business angel and informal investment in women-owned businesses.

6.3 Childcare and caring responsibilities

Activity	Objectives
Childcare and caring allowances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide assistance with affordable childcare/caring provision for pre-start and start-up customers.
Access to holistic childcare facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide access to appropriate childcare facilities for business support customers.
Childcare as a business	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide appropriate support to new and growing childcare businesses.

6.4 Transition from benefits to self-employment


Activity	Objectives
Self-employment provision within the New Deals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve information and guidance available within the business support network on self-employment provision with New Deals.
New Deal for Lone Parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As above. Ensure appropriate promotion and marketing of scheme within the business support network. • Encourage more women to investigate the opportunities for self-employment within New Deal for Lone Parents.

Outputs	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Caring allowances built into business training/advisory provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of allowances. • Data on take-up available.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where appropriate, in-house care facilities. • Development of partnerships with local care facilities for use by customers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Availability of facilities in every area/region.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of specialist business advice and training for individuals and social enterprises setting up childcare businesses. • Development of new approaches to business support for new and growing childcare businesses. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased numbers of childcare businesses. • Increased viability of new and existing childcare businesses.

Outputs	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate marketing and promotion of the programmes within the business support network in liaison with Jobcentre Plus. • Improved liaison between business support providers and Jobcentre Plus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women taking up self-employed options within New Deals. • Increased number of New Deal self-employed customers receiving assistance from Business Link Operator networks.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate marketing and promotion of the programme by the business support network in liaison with Jobcentre Plus. • Improved liaison between business support providers and Jobcentre Plus. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women taking up self-employed options within New Deal for Lone Parents.

Action priorities – business support perspective

To successfully achieve the objective of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework, the right tools and skills will be required within the business support network.

A close-up portrait of Yvonne Andrews, a Black woman with short dark hair, smiling warmly. She is wearing a dark brown ribbed cardigan over a light purple top. She has small gold hoop earrings and a silver necklace with a large, oval, light green stone pendant. The background is a blurred display of various pieces of jewellery hanging on a dark board.

“ Bringing up my kids is my first priority. My own business lets me work around my other commitments. ”

YVONNE ANDREWS,
INDEPENDENT JEWELLERY RETAILER

Activity	Objectives
Training and capacity-building for business advisers and customer-facing staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure business advisers and customer-facing staff are fully trained and aware of gender and diversity issues. • Develop the capacity of local business support staff to support women's enterprise activity.
Capacity-building at Regional Development Agency strategic level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the targets and principles of the Strategic Framework in relevant regional and local strategies, action plans, forums and organisations.
Regional network of women's enterprise centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide a regional network of women's enterprise centres, integrating advice, training, information, networking and, where appropriate, incubation.
Local/regional enterprise shows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure shows effectively target women. • Stage women-only enterprise events where appropriate. • Provide aftercare/follow-up service for customers attending shows.
Training for female business advisers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase number of female business advisers. • Develop positive action training programme for female advisers.
Provision of toolkits on key themes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide practical tools/guidelines for implementation at local and regional level.
Small Firms Loan Guarantee (SFLG) scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase promotion and awareness of SFLG, in particular newly included sectors, among professional advisers.
Case studies and role models	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build library of relevant case studies featuring women in business. • Promote case study examples as role models at local, regional and national level.
Quality standards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop quality standards, incorporating good practice guidelines for business support organisations.

Outputs	Measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training and awareness workshops/seminars targeted at business advisers. • In the longer term: national accreditation for training modules. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women customers. • Increased satisfaction levels with quality of business support.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regional strategies and implementation plans. • Training and awareness workshops targeted at regional strategic and policy development staff. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved regional performance in terms of business start-up and growth levels of women-owned businesses.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Network of women's enterprise centres at regional level. • Integrated information and referral system. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of women seeking assistance. • Increased number of women's business start-ups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of enterprise shows at local, regional and national level which target women and other under-represented groups. • Women-targeted enterprise events. • Aftercare system linked to advisory services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of initial enquiries from women. • Increased number of women-owned start-ups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training courses targeted at women in business advisory skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased number of female business advisers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Toolkit (Effective Business Support for Women) to be launched in November 2003. • Further series of practical toolkits covering issues such as microcredit group lending, networks and networking, business training, etc. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integration of toolkits into business support network.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate information on SFLG into business support services. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased awareness and benefits of SFLG.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Series of appropriate and regularly updated case studies featuring regional and national women-owned businesses. • Database of female role models willing to be involved in promoting self-employment and business ownership for women. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inclusion of case studies in training materials, information packs, web-sites, media coverage, etc. • Increased number of female role models.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review Small Firms Enterprise Development Initiative (SFEDI) standards from gender perspective. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Quality assessment framework will be needed.

Implications for the SBS

The effective implementation of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework has a number of implications for the policy and strategy of the SBS.

Policy/strategy implication	Action
Role and resourcing of the SBS women's enterprise unit	<p>Provide adequate funding and personnel to oversee the development, implementation and monitoring of the Strategic Framework and future policy developments.</p> <p>Develop key liaison role with other Government departments, Devolved Administrations and external stakeholders in relation to implementation and ongoing policy development.</p>
Research gaps	<p>Agree a research schedule with the SBS research team, to incorporate cross-cutting issues such as ethnic minority business, incubation, rural and social enterprise, etc.</p>
Monitoring and evaluation	<p>Coordinate monitoring systems with outputs for other key SBS delivery themes. Implement cross-cutting evaluation.</p>
Data recording and collection	<p>Establish a baseline and introduce standardised recording and collection of gender-disaggregated data, tied into monitoring systems.</p>
Cross-Government policy development and evaluation	<p>Continue development of Cross-Government Policy Group for Women's Enterprise.</p>
Continued development of women's enterprise activity through Phoenix Fund	<p>Target extension of SBS Phoenix Development funding to women's enterprise, research and cross-cutting activity.</p>

Monitoring and evaluation

9.1 Monitoring

Effective monitoring of the implementation of the Strategic Framework's objective, and its future development, is essential.

There is a clear role for the SBS in monitoring performance against the Framework's objectives at a national level, with Regional Development Agencies playing a key role at regional level.

The key monitoring priorities are:

1. Implementation of action plans
2. Quality standards
3. Reporting and targets
4. Cross-cutting indicators
5. Action research (evaluation programme)
6. Dissemination.

Further work on performance indicators is needed, in partnership with business support agencies and women themselves.

The Devolved Administrations have responsibility for the monitoring and future development of a strategic approach to women's enterprise in their respective areas; a contribution to the future development of this Framework would be very welcome.

There is also a need to review current parameters and criteria by which success is measured. Outcomes and impacts in enterprise are rarely measured from a gender perspective and performance indicators tend to stress size and growth prospects, putting part-time businesses at a disadvantage.

9.2 Evaluation

Implementation and outputs/outcomes of the Framework will be evaluated through an action and research programme, incorporating gender impact analysis. Social auditing techniques may offer an appropriate methodology for the measurement of women's enterprise activities.



“ Self-employment allows me to manage my time in my own way. ”

MAGGIE FEAR, FINANCIAL ADVISOR

Acknowledgements and contact details

The SBS and Prowess would like to thank all those who have contributed to the development of the Women's Enterprise Strategic Framework. Feedback from women in business and female enterprise support organisations during its composition tells us that expectation of real change is now high. We are encouraged to take forward the aims of the Framework with confidence and energy.

Clearly, the key to achieving the aims of the Framework is through continued close partnership and collaboration across Government, with Devolved Administrations and, in particular, through the formation of effective and committed strategic partnerships in the regions.

The SBS and Prowess have been hugely encouraged by early invitations from a number of regions to begin the kind of strategic dialogue we are seeking. We look forward to invitations from all regions, and to assisting in the facilitation of action plans to meet the true needs of all women entrepreneurs, those both starting and growing successful businesses.

Contact the SBS at:
Small Business Service
Kingsgate House
66–74 Victoria Street
London
SW1E 6SW

Tel: 020 7215 8543
Fax: 020 7215 8111
Email: womensenterprise@sbs.gsi.gov.uk
www.sbs.gov.uk

Contact Prowess at:
Prowess
Lion House
20–28 Muspole Street
Norwich
NR3 1DJ

Tel: 01603 762355
Fax: 01603 227090
Email: admin@prowess.org.uk
www.prowess.org.uk

“ I have had to work hard to convince financial support organisations of my commitment and determination. ”

JULIE SHAW, NURSERY SCHOOL OWNER



Appendix A

Cross-Government Policy Group for Women's Enterprise and respondees to the review of the draft Strategic Framework

Cross-Government Policy Group for Women's Enterprise

The SBS Ethnic Minority and Women's Enterprise Unit and Prowess have worked with the Cross-Government Policy Group for Women's Enterprise during the development of this Framework. We are grateful for its advice and assistance. The Group is currently constituted from the following departments, offices and Devolved Administrations:

Department for Education and Skills (DfES)
 Department for Work and Pensions (DWP)
 Department of Enterprise, Trade and Investment (Northern Ireland)
 Department of Trade and Industry, Innovation Unit
 Department of Trade and Industry, Women and Equality Unit
 HM Treasury
 Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, Neighbourhood Renewal Unit
 Office of the Secretary of State for Trade and Industry
 SBS Regional Office (South East)
 SBS, Social Inclusion Unit
 SBS, Start-ups and Business Support Networks Unit
 Scottish Executive, Enterprise and Lifelong Learning Department
 Welsh Assembly Government

Respondees to the review of the draft Strategic Framework

The Framework's authors are grateful for the constructive feedback and comments they received from a number of individuals and organisations during the drafting of the Framework, including:

Action Acton
 Association of Chartered Certified Accountants (ACCA)
 Association of Scottish Businesswomen (ASB)
 Aurora Gender Capital Management
 Bank of Scotland
 Barclays Bank
 British Franchise Association
 Business Link County Durham
 Business Link Devon and Cornwall
 Business Link for Cambridgeshire
 Business Link for Leicestershire
 Business Link for London
 Business Link for Northumberland
 Business Link for West Yorkshire
 Business Link Hertfordshire
 Business Link Lincolnshire & Rutland
 Business Link South Yorkshire
 Carry Forward Project, London Metropolitan University
 Dr Sara Carter, University of Strathclyde
 Professor Elizabeth Chell, University of Manchester
 Pauline Christie, Corporact Limited
 Community Development Finance Association (CDFA)
 Community Economic Regeneration Team (CERT)
 Community Links
 The Countryside Agency

Darlington Business Venture
 Department for Culture, Media and Sport
 Department of Trade and Industry,
 Change Management Team
 Department of Trade and Industry,
 Equality Impact Team
 Department of Trade and Industry,
 Office of Science and Technology
 Department of Trade and Industry,
 Social Enterprise Unit
 English RDAs
 Enterprise Direct
 European Federation of Black Women
 Business Owners
 Everywoman
 Government Office for London
 Government Office for the East of England
 Government Office for the Regions
 Government Office for Yorkshire
 and the Humber
 Dr Rebecca Harding, London Business School
 and The Work Foundation
 Inland Revenue
 Kids Club Network
 London Chamber of Commerce and Industry
 Dr Susan Marlow, De Montfort University
 David McMeekin, Company Guides Limited
 Merton Chamber of Commerce
 New Economics Foundation
 North Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce
 and Industry
 Paisley Enterprise Research Centre,
 University of Paisley
 PRIME

The Prince's Trust
 Dr Pat Richardson
 Rural Women's Network
 (Voluntary Action Cumbria)
 SBS Regional Office (London)
 SBS, Business Incubation and Science
 Parks Unit
 SBS, Investment and SME Finance
 SBS, Research Unit
 Scottish Enterprise
 Sheffield Community Enterprise Development
 Unit (SCEDU)
 Small Business Counselling Service,
 Milton Keynes Chamber
 Small Business Shows
 (Vitesse Business Events)
 South Ayrshire Council
 South East England Development Agency
 (SEEDA)
 Dr Inge Struder, London School of Economics
 Train 2000
 Joey Walters, Dancehammer
 Julie Weeks, National Women's Business
 Council (USA)
 Whitehall Group
 Women in Enterprise, London
 Women in Enterprise, Londonderry
 (Northern Ireland)
 Women's Education in Building
 Women's Business Network (North West)
 Women's Employment, Enterprise and
 Training Unit (WEETU)
 York St. John College
 Yorkshire Forward

Appendix B

Women's enterprise initiatives and support organisations in the UK

This appendix gives details of local, regional and national initiatives and online resources which offer either specific services to women in enterprise, or are committed to improving business support for women. Although not exhaustive, it highlights the type of support available and includes examples of good practice.

SBS and Prowess welcome information on initiatives or organisations providing support for women's enterprise, which are not already listed, for inclusion in future publications.

England

North East

Darlington Business Venture (DBV)

DBV provides a range of women-friendly business support services including pre-enterprise training, business counselling and mentoring. It helps to promote local women-owned businesses through business awards and events. Since establishing its women's support service in 2001, DBV has seen a substantial increase in the number of women using its services in the Darlington and Stockton area of the Tees Valley.

www.dbv.org.uk/business

Women Into The Network (WIN)

WIN is a networking initiative which facilitates the development of women's businesses in

the North East by integrating women into existing and new business networks and by bridging the gap between providers of business and professional support. WIN's key activities include research, networking activities, identifying role models and organising local business awards. Collectively, these four areas create an integrated forum for raising awareness, promoting business development, sharing best practice and encouraging and inspiring women entrepreneurs in the region.

www.networkingwomen.co.uk

North West

Bolton Business Ventures (BBV)

BBV's Women in Business initiative provides advice, support and networking opportunities for women entrepreneurs in Bolton, Bury, Oldham, Rochdale and Wigan. A loans fund, supported by Phoenix funding and in collaboration with Barclays Bank, provides loans of between £1,000 and £10,000 for start-ups and up to £20,000 for growing businesses.

www.bbvonline.net

Business Link Cheshire and Warrington

Business Link Cheshire and Warrington provides advice and support to new and existing businesses in the region and is developing its services for women. It facilitates 'Web Works for Women', www.ww4w, an online networking and information resource.

www.blinkcw.co.uk

Rural Women's Network (Voluntary Action Cumbria)

The Rural Women's Network provides support for rural-based women in Cumbria with business advice, training, development and networking.

www.ruralwomen.org.uk

Train 2000

Train 2000 provides a wide range of support to women-owned businesses in Merseyside. It has a diverse client base including disabled women and black and minority communities. In addition to pre-start-up counselling and personal development, its services include business training courses, one-to-one business advice and a loans scheme targeted at women. Through partnership with a number of other agencies (including the Women's Business Network), it provides additional services such as networking and welfare rights advice.

www.train-2000.co.uk

Women's Business Network (WBN)

WBN facilitates the development and creation of women's business networks throughout the North West. It helps to link existing networks to provide peer support and to generate new business opportunities.

www.wbn.org.uk

Yorkshire and Humber

Business Solutions-Bedale Ltd

In partnership with Business Link, Business Solutions-Bedale provides women-friendly training and counselling to start-ups and businesses less than three years old in the Richmondshire and Hambleton areas.

Email: business_solutions@talk21.com

East

Women's Employment and Enterprise Training Unit (WEETU)

WEETU works in partnership with other organisations to provide women with enterprise support services in Norfolk and Waveney. It offers a range of practical initiatives including business advice, networking and IT training. It runs a microcredit programme based on peer group lending called Full Circle. As well as business loans, Full Circle offers training and business start-up support.

www.weetu.org.uk

West Midlands

Women's Business Development Agency (WBDA)

WBDA provides free, women-only support, advice and training in the Coventry and Warwickshire region. WBDA particularly focuses on those who are disadvantaged by the effects of unemployment, low pay and racial discrimination. Activities include outreach, training, business counselling and advice.

www.wbda.co.uk

Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE)

WiRE is a network organisation within the Rural Business School at Harper Adams University College. It has been set up to help women-owned rural businesses. WiRE operates a business membership scheme with a range of benefits including networking meetings, a regular newsletter, access to nationwide business support, local training workshops and courses, as well as access to online business learning courses. In addition, members have access to preferential HSBC loans.

www.womeninruralenterprise.co.uk

South East

Enterprise Direct

Enterprise Direct, based in Kent, is a business support and regeneration company delivering programmes of personal development, business skills and ICT training. It aims to foster an entrepreneurial culture through social enterprises as well as small businesses.

Enterprise Direct is a partner in the Swale Women Entrepreneurs programme and Hampshire Enterprise for Lone Parents (HELP), which receives support from the SBS Phoenix Development Fund.

www.ent-direct.co.uk

South West

Cornwall Self Employment Programme Ltd

The Cornwall Self Employment Programme delivers a self-employment training programme which specifically addresses the issues of social inclusion and gender imbalance in new business start-ups. Its target market is currently women.

www.ronaldson.co.uk

Co-Active Ltd

Co-Active offers a comprehensive business support service to established social enterprises and people thinking of setting up as a social enterprise in the Devon, Cornwall and Plymouth areas. It provides business advice and consultancy, and specialist development work including advice on company registration.

www.co-active.org.uk

London

Account 3

Account 3 helps women in Bethnal Green in East London with information, support and advice on employment and enterprise issues. It runs a women's enterprise project in addition to mentoring, microcredit and networking.

www.account3.org.uk

London Chamber of Commerce and Industry

London Chamber runs a 'Women in Business' group which provides networking opportunities through a programme of regular events and training seminars.

www.londonchamber.co.uk

Quaker Social Action

Quaker Social Action provides support for small, women-owned business start-ups in the London boroughs of Newham, Tower Hamlets, Hackney and Waltham Forest. Through the 'Street Cred' project, it operates a microcredit group-lending programme which offers peer support and networking in addition to small loans.

www.quakersocialaction.com

Women's Education in Building – Building Etc

Building Etc is a new community enterprise and training centre in East London. It provides pre-vocational and enterprise training, managed workspaces, ICT facilities and access to micro-loans for women and ethnic minority businesses. Women's Education in Building (WEB) also runs two women's training centres in South East and West London where women can train in the construction trades and ICT.

Email: info@webuilding1.org.uk

Women in Enterprise London

Women in Enterprise London provides monthly networking opportunities, online resources and a mentoring scheme aimed at owner managers, entrepreneurs and professional women in a range of sectors. It is the sister chapter of Women in Enterprise in Milton Keynes.

www.womeninenterprise.co.uk

Scotland

Association of Scottish Businesswomen (ASB)

ASB is the umbrella organisation for a number of businesswomen's clubs and networks throughout Scotland, including the East of Scotland Businesswomen's Club (ESBC) and the Perthshire Businesswomen's Network (PBN). Contact Christine Cook for further details.

Email: christine.cook@waterfront-ed.com

Women Into The Network (WIN)

WIN, operated by the Scottish Enterprise Network, provides monthly networking seminars in each region of Scotland. It links members to business support providers and a microcredit group-lending programme.

www.scottishbusinesswomen.com

Wales

Chwarae Teg

Chwarae Teg manages Women's Enterprise Wales, a project that provides targeted pre-start-up support for women. It also runs an enterprise project targeted at lone parents as part of Potentia, a project which promotes enterprise to under-represented groups in Wales including those from ethnic minorities and people with disabilities.

www.chwaraeteg.com

Northern Ireland

Invest Northern Ireland

Invest NI is the main economic development agency for the province. It has supported the development of the women's enterprise strategy for Northern Ireland.

www.investni.com

Women in Enterprise (WIE)

Based in Londonderry, WIE encourages and supports women into business and assists

established women business owners by gathering and sharing knowledge and information. Its services include pre-enterprise awareness, networking, training workshops, mentoring and a loans fund.

WIE is also involved with a consortium of enterprise partners from throughout the North West of Ireland in delivering a regional action plan for SMEs. The GROW (Growing Real Opportunities for Women) programme involves a range of management tools training specifically for women-owned businesses. These cover basic computing knowledge with progression routes to full software applications for business, developing an IT strategy or embracing e-commerce. The programme also includes export analysis and time management.

www.womeninenterprise.com

National initiatives

Accelerating Women's Enterprise (AWE)

AWE is a partnership of women's enterprise development organisations across England. Supported by EQUAL, it coordinates research, facilitates collaborative initiatives and builds the capacity for women's enterprise support, particularly for women who find it difficult to access mainstream support. Its partners include: Bolton Business Ventures, the Prince's Trust, Prowess, Quaker Social Action, Train 2000, University of Durham (WIN), Voluntary Action Cumbria, WEETU, and Women's Business Network (NW).

www.awe-uk.org.uk

PRIME

PRIME is the national organisation promoting self-employment and enterprise for both women and men aged 50 or over. It works with and through partner organisations nationwide to reach out to the 50+ population to promote self-employment as an option and to support those individuals who wish to set up in business.

www.primeinitiative.org.uk

Prowess (Promoting Women's Enterprise Support)

Prowess is a UK-wide trade association and campaigning body working towards equal numbers of women and men starting and growing businesses. Prowess does not work directly with women entrepreneurs but supports member organisations – which work directly with businesses – to develop and improve their services for women. It does this by providing opportunities for sharing and disseminating good practice and by helping to build the capacity of organisations to deliver quality services. It also aims to influence Government policy on women's enterprise and has worked in partnership with the SBS to develop this Strategic Framework.

www.prowess.org.uk

Shell LiveWIRE

Shell LiveWIRE helps 16–30-year-olds to start and develop their own businesses and hosts a national competition for new business start-ups. It attracts a high number of entries from women-owned enterprises.

www.shell-livewire.org

UK-based networks and associations

Aurora

Aurora (formerly the Busygirl Network) is a London-based network for corporate and entrepreneurial women. Activities include business development services for women, a monthly newsletter and networking forums.

www.auroravoice.com

British Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAWE)

BAWE is a non-profit professional organisation for UK-based women business owners affiliated to the world association of women business owners 'Les Femmes Chefs d'Entreprises Mondiales' (FCEM).

www.bawe-uk.org

European Federation of Black Women Business Owners (EFBWBO)

Affiliated to the National Federation of Black Women Business Owners, the EFBWBO holds an annual conference and awards dinner. Its members come from Holland, Belgium and France as well as from the UK.

www.efbwbo.net

Everywoman Limited

Everywoman Limited is an online resource and community website for women who are starting or growing a business. The company provides a range of products and services including a programme of one-day conferences called 'Business Women on the Move'.

www.everywoman.co.uk

Global Women Inventors and Innovators Network (GWIIN)

GWIIN organises the annual 'Female Invent Conference and Awards' which provide a platform for capacity building and business opportunities for inventive and innovative women. A UK-based initiative, it aims to increase the representation of women in the design and application of new products and services, focusing on the importance of intellectual property rights and international trade.

www.gwiin.com

Online resources

The Bag Lady

The Bag Lady is an online business information portal which incorporates a global directory of women in business and an online forum. It is operated in association with the British Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAWE).

www.the-bag-lady.co.uk

Scottishbusinesswomen.com

This online resource for women in business provides information, contacts, a discussion forum and a database of women-owned

businesses in Scotland. It gives details of current Scottish Enterprise programmes for women such as Women Into The Network (WIN), microcredit and access to investment.
www.scottishbusinesswomen.com

Additional support organisations

The following organisations and companies are also committed to improving support for women's enterprise:

Action Acton, London
www.actionacton.com

Bank of Scotland
www.bankofscotland.co.uk

Barclays Bank
www.barclays.com

Black Enterprise
www.blackenterprise.co.uk

Business Connect Heart of Wales,
Powys, Wales
www.businessconnect.org.uk

Business Enterprise Centre, London
www.bectek.co.uk

Business in Prisons
Email: bpris@aol.com

Business Link Berkshire and Wiltshire
www.businesslinkberksandwilts.co.uk

Business Link Cambridgeshire
www.cambs.businesslink.co.uk

Business Link Humber
www.blhumber.co.uk

Business Link Kent
www.businesslinkkent.com

Business Link Norfolk
www.businesslinknorfolk.co.uk
Business Link Northumberland
www.n-bs.co.uk

Business Link Solutions (Milton Keynes,
Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire)
www.businesslinksolutions.co.uk

Business Link Staffordshire
www.staffs-businesslink.co.uk

Business Link Surrey
www.businesslinksurrey.co.uk

Business Link Wessex
www.businesslinkwessex.co.uk

Business Women's Link, Leicestershire
www.leicestershire.businesslink.co.uk

Community Economic Regeneration Team
(CERT), East Lincolnshire
www.cert.demon.co.uk

Community Development Finance Association
(CDFA)
www.cdfa.org.uk

Community Links, London
www.communitylinks.co.uk
Encouraging Rural Entrepreneurs, County
Durham
www.ruralentrepreneur.co.uk

Enterprising Belfast
www.eastbelfast.org

Enterprising Communities, Hertfordshire
www.stevenage.gov.uk

Enterprise Connection, Dorset
www.econnection.org.uk

Enterprise in Food, Nottinghamshire
www.enterpriseinfood.co.uk

Halliwell Landau
www.halliwell.co.uk

HighTech Women
www.hightech-women.com

Innovations Factory, Merseyside
www.innovations-factory.co.uk

Kids Club Network
www.kidsclubs.co.uk

Kingston Innovation Centre, London
www.kingstoninnovation.org

Manor and Castle Development Trust
www.manorandcastle.org.uk

Merseyside ACME
www.merseysideacme.com

Mid Cornwall Enterprise Trust
Email: enterprise@mcet.demon.co.uk

New Economics Foundation
www.neweconomics.org

North Derbyshire Chamber of Commerce
www.derbyshire.org

Perthshire Businesswomen's Network,
Scotland
www.perthshirebusinesswomen.co.uk

Royal Bank of Scotland Group
www.rbs.co.uk

Scottish Enterprise Network
www.scotent.co.uk

Sheffield Community Enterprise Development
Unit (SCEDU), Sheffield
www.scedu.org.uk

SMART Business Centre Ltd, Liverpool
www.smart.org.uk

Sussex Enterprise Services
www.sussexenterprise.co.uk

Time for Childcare
www.timeforchildcare.org.uk

UK Business Incubation (UKBI)
www.ukbi.co.uk

Winning Ways for Women, Fife, Scotland
www.fifedirect.org.uk

Women's Electronic Village Hall, Manchester
www.wevh.org.uk

Women's Enterprise Centre, Milton Keynes
www.mk-chamber.co.uk

Women in Business, Wirral, Merseyside
www.womeninbusiness.co.uk

Women Returners Network
www.women-returners.co.uk



“ Access to pre-start-up counselling is important for business success. ”

Appendix C

Good practice guidelines: Improving support for women's enterprise

These guidelines are not definitive but provide a basic framework for business support practitioners and service providers.

1. It is important to analyse customer statistics by gender, ethnicity and disability.

- Knowing who customers are enables more effective planning and product development.
- More disaggregated information at local level will better inform policy development at regional and national level.
- Baseline statistical information is essential for effective monitoring and evaluation of strategic programmes.
- Consider staff training needs when establishing data collection systems.

2. Use research knowledge on gender issues to give focus to programmes and initiatives.

- Using relevant information from research – local, regional or national – can make women's enterprise programmes more effective.
- Establish simple client tracking systems to improve knowledge of women's business patterns and experiences.
- Collaborate with other providers locally and regionally to pool useful information.

3. Always set and monitor customer targets by gender.

- Set locally relevant targets, using national targets as guides.
- Set client targets for a range of activities such as pre-start-up counselling, business

training, mentoring programmes, etc, not just start-ups.

- Review targets and performance regularly.

4. Ensure that all activities are customer-focused, recognising and valuing the diversity and specific requirements of women.

- Identify specific needs of customers and, as far as possible, design business support accordingly. For example, many women will start their business on a part-time basis and may require more flexible levels of support.
- Recognise the pre-start-up needs of women who have been out of the employment market – additional counselling or personal development may be needed to develop confidence and self-belief.
- Some women will prefer women-only training and networking, so provide gender-specific options where possible.
- Do not assume this will suit all women – many will prefer mainstream support.

5. Ensure that all activities are relevant and accessible.

- Check that marketing and communication channels are appropriate to female customer groups.
- Use appropriate media and promote services in different environments, eg sports clubs, community centres, supermarkets, schools.
- Develop outreach programmes and recognise the needs of women with access issues such as lack of transport, caring responsibilities or language problems.
- Use female case studies and appropriate role models.

6. Evaluate the effectiveness of programmes and services.

- Provide customers with regular opportunities to comment and feedback on services, for example by using women-only focus groups.
- Use feedback to improve future programmes and be prepared to make changes where necessary.
- Value all positive outcomes, for example a return to employment, education or training.

7. Collaborate with initiatives providing targeted assistance to women.

- Work in partnership with local targeted women's enterprise initiatives.
- Share ideas and learning, and disseminate good practice.
- Collaborate on delivery of support to provide a more diverse and comprehensive range of options to customers.

8. Develop the capacity of staff to deal effectively with the needs of a diverse customer base.

- Provide training opportunities in gender and diversity awareness for customer-facing staff.
- Ensure there is an appropriate gender balance in the staff team: where possible, give customers a choice of a male or female adviser or trainer.
- Ensure business advisers are open-minded, non-judgmental and have good interpersonal skills.

