

Women into business

“UK start-ups would rise by fifty percent if the start-up rate amongst women matched that of men... we must act to encourage more women to start and grow their own business....”, Gordon Brown, Chancellor of the Exchequer, 2001.

Helping women start their own business is good for the economy. The UK government promotes an effective work-life balance to encourage more women set up their own businesses. The ‘Equal Opportunities Law’ makes sure women have the same opportunities as men.

Today, the number of women starting a business in the UK is twice as many as in 1980:

- Women start one third of all new businesses in the UK and own 13% of all businesses.
- 27% of the 3.5 million self-employed in the UK are women AND this does not include women who co-own a business or work in a family business.

Overcoming barriers

Starting your own business is exciting, but sometimes difficult and there may be some barriers. Here are practical tips from successful women entrepreneurs:

Potential issues	You could:
Confidence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Ask for support and advice from other women entrepreneurs → Attend confidence-building workshops for women who want to take the first steps towards self employment → Get business mentoring support
Female advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Attend business training for women → Ask for a female business adviser → Network with women entrepreneurs
Knowledge of the business world	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Get business training → Volunteer to work for a similar business → Talk to your business adviser about your ideas, thoughts and any problems you might have
Language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Read English newspapers, magazines, etc. → Network with people who speak English as well as with people who speak your language → Watch films, and TV programmes in English
Computer knowledge	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Take a computer course → Ask someone who knows about computers to help you
Risk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Consider going into partnership with someone who has a similar business idea → Think about buying a franchise
Information & access to start-up finance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> → Discuss your business idea with other female entrepreneurs → Ask other women entrepreneurs how they got their loan → Contact start-up organisations that specialise in support for women

How to find women's networks and support

- Look out for women's networking events in your area
- Form a group with women from your own community who want to set up a business,
- Join a group of established women entrepreneurs
- A small number of organisations have specialised in start-up support for women. You need to think about your personal circumstances and availability and decide if you want general or specialised start-up support. Compare the different start-up packages and the availability of one-to-one advice and support.

Childcare

For information on childcare and local nurseries go to Preparing for start-up Step 7.

Where to find out more

- Start-up Guide 12 Sources of Help provides a list of start-up support agencies

Thinking about starting up

- Women: Investing in Skills for Entrepreneurship (W:ISE) from the University of Salford offers training and aims to develop skills to help overcome the barriers faced when running a business www.wise4women.co.uk
- Women Business Development Agency offers support for women looking to start their own business. It is a free and confidential one-to-one service (not necessarily face-to-face) www.wbda.co.uk
- Aurora is a network for women-owned businesses www.network.auroravoice.com
- Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE) is a dynamic networking and business club which aims to help women who live in rural areas to start and maintain their own rural business www.wireuk.org

Useful information

- The Women and Equality Unit of the Department for Trade and Industry provides useful information on women and equality www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk
- Statistics about women in business in the UK are available on the website of the Department for Trade and Industry www.dti.gov.uk

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