

A GUIDE TO SUPPORT FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

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Introduction

Recent figures have shown that the number of women going into business is increasing, with more women graduates starting businesses than men, and more unemployed females taking the journey into self-employment.

The Government has recognised that women's contribution to the world of business is important to the success of the UK's economy. Accordingly, policy makers increasingly want to encourage more women to become entrepreneurial, and to give them the confidence and support they need to start up and run their own businesses.

This factsheet summarises the main sources of support, advice and finance for women business owners in the UK. It includes Government-funded business support schemes, as well as independent and online organisations offering support to women in business.

Sources of help and support schemes for women in business

Effort has been made to ensure that equal opportunities are adopted within business and enterprise support provision so as not to exclude women from these services. This has included creating more open and accessible support for women, increasing incentives for them to move towards self-employment, and removing cultural and social barriers.

- Government-funded business support

There are various Government-funded organisations committed to encouraging and supporting women in business across England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

These organisations are a source of information for pre-start, start up and growing businesses, covering access to finance and support networks, local business advice, and signposting to development programmes and training courses specifically designed for women.

Area	Organisation	Website
England	Business Link	www.businesslink.gov.uk
Wales	Business Eye	www.busesseye.org.uk
Scotland	Business Gateway	www.bgateway.com
	Scottish Enterprise	www.scottish-enterprise.com
	Highlands and Islands Enterprise	www.hie.co.uk
Northern Ireland	Enterprise Northern Ireland	www.enterpriseni.com
	Invest Northern Ireland	www.investni.com

- Other sources of business advice and support for women

There is also a wide range of other help for women business owners from many groups and organisations throughout the UK offering support and advice to women wanting to start or develop their own businesses.

Area	Organisation	Services offered
UK	Prowess Ltd	Association of UK organisations providing support for women to start and grow their businesses. Provides a map to help women find a comprehensive range of support and services available across the UK and at local levels. Tel: (01603) 762355 Website: www.prowess.org.uk
	British Association of Women Entrepreneurs (BAWE)	Not-for-profit organisation for UK-based women business owners providing training, networking, mentoring and conferences. Tel: (01786) 446044 Website: www.bawe-uk.org
	The Women's Company	Networking group for women offering workshops, lunches and seminars. Tel: (020) 8650 8015 Website: www.thewomenscompany.co.uk
	Women in Rural Enterprise (WiRE)	Supports women in rural areas who want to start their own business. Also runs networking events, workshops, conferences and a business support network for rural businesswomen. Tel: (01952) 815338 Website: www.wireuk.org
England	Women into the Network (WIN)	Networking initiative helping to develop women's businesses in the north east through training, counselling, mentoring, networking, awards and workshops. Tel: (0191) 334 5502 Website: www.womenintonetnetwork.co.uk
	Women in Business	Networking group for women in the south east offering support, training and contacts. Website: www.wib.org.uk

Area	Organisation	Services offered
England	Women's Employment, Enterprise and Training Unit (WEETU)	Helps women in Norfolk and Suffolk to develop enterprise skills and provides advice on setting up in business. Offers loans for new starts and developing existing ventures. Tel: (01603) 767367 Website: www.weetu.org
	Women's Business Development Agency (WBDA)	Helps women in Coventry and Warwickshire overcome business barriers. Provides business start up courses and advice, business planning, market research, finance and legal advice. Tel: (024) 7623 6111 Website: www.wbda.co.uk
	Rural Women's Network	Provides business support and skills training to women based in Cumbria. Services include workshops, networking opportunities, one-to-one advice, and start up and ICT training. Tel: (01768) 869510 Website: www.ruralwomen.org.uk
	Quaker Social Action	Helps women in east London who are on benefits or low income to start up small businesses through the Street Cred micro credit project. Tel: (020) 7729 9267 Website: www.quakersocialaction.com/streetcred.htm
Wales	Chwarae Teg	Supports and promotes the role of women in the Welsh economy, offering skills development and training through the Ready SET Go project, and overseeing the provision of enterprise support to women in Wales. Tel: (029) 2047 8900 Website: www.chwaraeteg.com
Scotland	Association of Scottish Businesswomen (ASB)	Umbrella organisation for business and professional women's clubs in Scotland. Promotes women in business, and offers networking, an education programme, discussion forums and an awards dinner. Website: www.businesswomenscotland.org/asbw
	Enterprising Women	Provides training, support and guidance for women in the Glasgow area who are considering self-employment. Tel: (0141) 429 6314 Website: www.enterprising-women.org.uk

Area	Organisation	Services offered
Northern Ireland	Women in Enterprise (WIE)	Non-profit-making company encouraging, supporting and empowering women into business and helping existing women entrepreneurs. Offers training, mentoring, advice and support. Tel: (028) 7136 6967 Website: www.womeninenterprise.com
	Women in Business Network	Networking organisation run by female business owners, offering information, training and discussion forums. Tel: 0845 607 6041 Website: www.womeninbusinessnetwork.org.uk
	Women into the Network (WIN) Ireland	Networking initiative based on the north east of England model, providing training, research, information and access to business support, and helping women return to work through self-employment. Website: www.winireland.com
	Aspire Micro Finance	Delivers micro loans and support services for women in disadvantaged rural areas who are interested in self-employment. Tel: (028) 9024 6245 Website: www.aspire-loans.com

Online communities

There are also a number of web-based online communities which can provide useful information, support and advice for women in business.

Organisation	Services offered
Aurora Women's Network	Provides networking events and services for entrepreneurial women. Tel: 0845 260 7777 Website: www.network.auroravoice.com
Everywoman	Online source of training, resources and support services for women in business. Tel: 0870 746 1800 Website: www.everywoman.co.uk
FunAfterBaby (FAB)	Online community for business mums to share ideas and expertise, including information on a number of business ideas, a discussion forum and tips on running a business. Website: www.funafterbaby.co.uk

Organisation	Services offered
Scottishbusinesswomen.com	Online community for advice on business start up, networking, mentoring and information on women in business. Website: www.bgateway.com/scottishbusinesswomen
Women at Work	Online directory of services and products provided by women in the UK. Includes networking opportunities and events. Tel: (01223) 873349 Website: www.womenatwork.co.uk
Women Returner's Network	Online help and advice for women wanting to return to work or venture into self-employment. Website: www.women-returns.co.uk
Visible Women	E-business training and support for women aged over 50 who want to make the most of online business opportunities. Tel: (020) 8305 2222 Website: www.visiblewomen.co.uk

Funding

There are numerous funding schemes across the UK targeted specifically at women. There is no one single access point for these funding schemes but for information on available Government-funded loans and grants, contact the organisations listed above under 'Government-funded business support'.

Local enterprise agencies can also be contacted for information on funding available in a particular area:

Area	Organisation	Website
England	National Federation of Enterprise Agencies (NFEA)	www.nfea.com (also includes a directory of enterprise agencies in Wales)
Scotland	Business Enterprise Scotland (BES)	www.bes.org.uk
	Highlands and Islands Enterprise	www.hie.co.uk
Northern Ireland	Enterprise Northern Ireland	www.enterpriseni.com

Hints and tips

- Many women who start businesses often already possess useful knowledge and contacts. However, they can be thwarted by a lack of basic business skills in areas such as marketing or IT. Consult the Learndirect website at www.learndirect-business.co.uk to browse a directory of courses and find training opportunities which can be accessed online.
- Find a local women's networking group to attend to make useful contacts, gain confidence and learn from the experience of others.

Further information

For practical start up and small business tips, ideas, know-how and news, go to:
Website: www.enterprisequest.com

To access hundreds of practical factsheets, market reports and small business guides, go to:
Website: www.scavenger.net

- BIF 40 An Introduction to Raising Finance to Start a New Business
- BIF 98 Could You Run Your Own Business?
- BIF 154 A Guide to Finding a Business Start Up Adviser
- BIF 369 A Guide to Applying for Grants
- BIF 419 Grants for Developing New Products
- BIF 420 A Guide to Central Government Financial Support for Businesses in the UK
- BIF 428 An Introduction to Business Support for Ethnic Minorities
- BIF 430 A Guide to Business Support for the Under 30s
- BIF 433 A Guide to Business Support for the Over 50s
- BIF 440 A Guide to Support for Rural Enterprises
- BIF 442 A Guide to Support for Social Enterprises
- BIF 451 A Guide to Business Support for People with Disabilities

Government Equalities Office
2nd Floor
Ashdown House
123 Victoria Street
London
SW1E6DE
Website: www.womenandequalityunit.gov.uk

Business Link
Tel: 0845 600 9006
Website: www.businesslink.gov.uk

Business Eye
Tel: 0845 796 9798
Website: www.busesseye.org.uk

Business Gateway
Tel: 0845 609 6611
Website: www.bgateway.com

Scottish Enterprise
150 Broomielaw
Atlantic Quay
Glasgow
G2 8LU
Tel: 0845 607 8787
Website: www.scottish-enterprise.com

Highlands and Islands Enterprise
Cowan House
Inverness Retail and Business Park
Inverness
IV2 7GF
Tel: (01463) 234171
Website: www.hie.co.uk

Invest Northern Ireland
Bedford House
Bedford Street
Belfast
BT2 7ES
Tel: (028) 9023 9090
Website: www.investni.com

National Federation of Enterprise Agencies (NFEA)
12 Stephenson Court
Fraser Road
Priory Business Park
Bedford
MK44 3WH
Tel: (01234) 831623
Website: www.nfea.com

Business Enterprise Scotland (BES)
42/2 Hardengreen Business Park
Dalhousie Road
Dalkeith
EH22 3NU
Tel: (0131) 561 6293
Website: www.bes.org.uk

Enterprise Northern Ireland
Aghanloo Industrial Estate
Aghanloo Road
Limavady
BT49 0HE
Tel: (028) 7776 3555
Website: www.enterpriseni.com

CONTACT-

for further information.

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