

Social Enterprise and Business Creation

What is Equal?

The Equal Programme is a European Social Fund (ESF) initiative which operates across all of the European Union. The Programme aims to develop and test new ways of challenging discrimination and inequalities in the labour market, both for those in work and for those seeking work.

Equal has acted as a learning platform, developing innovative ways of tackling existing labour market problems. It has presented evidence based outcomes which could be adopted by policy makers and delivery agents at local, regional, national and European levels.

The partnership approach in Equal is based around a model of Development Partnerships (DPs), consisting of organisations with common interests and different expertise, working collaboratively to deliver shared aims and objectives.

www.equal.ecotec.co.uk

www.equal-works.com

www.esf.gov.uk



There are at least 55,000 social enterprises in the UK – including well known success stories like ‘The Big Issue’ or Jamie Oliver’s ‘Fifteen’. The Government’s Social Enterprise Action Plan – ‘Scaling new heights’, aims to open the door to thousands more, raising awareness of what they can achieve and encouraging more people to make a difference, either by involvement or investment.

The action plan will drive change in four areas:

- fostering a culture of social enterprise, embedding the change that is already underway, especially through inspiring the next generation to start thinking about the social impact of business
- improving business advice, information and support available to social enterprises
- tackling the barriers to access finance that restricts the growth of social enterprises
- enabling social enterprises to work effectively with government to develop policy in the areas of expertise

The Office of the Third Sector has responsibility for policy affecting social enterprise. It helps promote and champion social enterprise, take action needed to address barriers to the growth of social enterprises and identify and spread good practice for the sector.

The Entrepreneurship Action Plan gives an overview of Equal’s contribution to developing policy implementation.

The programme has engaged organisations throughout Europe to genuinely test innovative approaches ‘away’ from their traditional service delivery or core business.

Equal has been able to stimulate debate amongst policymakers, businesses, representative organisations and field experts and has given the

opportunity to inform future developments of the Government's Social Enterprise Action Plan and the Entrepreneurship Action Plan.

Key Messages

- Ongoing influence of key ministers and participation in the Chancellor's third sector advisory group, related sub-groups and roundtable meetings
- Advising on implementation of the government's action plans on social enterprise and the involvement of the third sector in public services
- Furthering policy implementation on business support, public services and tax incentives for investment
- Focusing on individual's capacity building, an integral part of business support and making people more confident about their abilities

Case Studies

Organisations

- **Visage Development Partnership** – developed a new supportive employment model of business start-up that can be used with any disadvantaged groups
<http://www.visage-equal.org.uk>
- **Association of Community Based Business Advice – ACBBA**
30 BME groups achieved Small Firm Enterprise Development Initiative accreditation for business advisors. It increased the status of organisations to work with other organisations and gave people membership of a professional body to help with involvement in professional networks. It represents the largest number of BME qualified advisors in London. Please visit <http://www.acbba.org.uk/News>

Individuals

- **Cyfenter Development Partnership**
Jeffrey Whelton – highlights the importance of test trading for people to move off benefits to self-employment. It also highlights the need for a constant point of contact. Both these issues were identified in the Cyfenter Development Partnership research.
A report on moving from benefits to self-employment is available at:
<http://www.equal-works.com/ProductHome>
- **Jean Woodman** – highlights the process to developing business growth.
A report is available at: <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/departments>
- **Pamela Jones** – highlights the importance for premises to have additional services available such as the opportunity to network informally. Cyfenter Development Partnership has a report on the range of services premises providers may wish to consider that is available on request.
- **Helen Hicks** – shows the value of appropriate pro-active marketing in helping to encourage people to start up in business. A number of reports are available on request or at, <http://new.wales.gov.uk/about/departments>