

*CROSS PARTY GROUP ON
WOMEN IN ENTERPRISE*

Annual Report 2016 – 2017

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Convenor’s comments – Gillian Martin MSP



The Cross Party Group on Women in Enterprise is, for me, a model of what every Cross Party Group should be. For one, it gets things done. I fully believe that setting up this CPG and the fanfare with which we created it (we like a fanfare) was instrumental in drawing government attention to the need to address the issues that still need resolved when women set up in business. Projects and initiatives to assist women set up in business have been funded or re-funded. We also get noticed outwith the Holyrood bubble - what we do in our CPG often makes the press. But most importantly it’s inclusive; those women who we feel need their experiences shared to a wider and influential audience get that network opportunity. We appreciate our sponsors, the Royal Bank of Scotland, supporting us to make that happen.

For me as Convenor the best thing about the group is the people we have round the table and the peer support that comes out of the sharing of experiences and expertise. My MSP colleagues often tell me that coming to one of our meetings has inspired them to ask questions around women in the economy in their work and engage in their constituencies with female led businesses. We’ve certainly raised the profile around the “enterprise gap” amongst politicians and that can only be a good thing.

I defy any businesswoman or parliamentarian, new or established, to come away from one of our meetings feeling less that inspired and I look forward to doubling the number of those who do in the coming year.

Gillian

Introduction

Further developing women's enterprise is critically important for overall business prosperity, and economic growth in Scotland. Estimates suggest that women-led businesses contribute (at a minimum) £5 billion gross value added with opportunity for more growth. Research by Professor Sara Carter of Strathclyde University suggests that *“if rates of women-led businesses equalled those of men, the contribution to Scotland’s gross value added would increase by £7.6 billion to nearly £13 billion. This equates to a 5.3% growth in the size of the Scottish economy”*.

The Cross Party Group (CPG) on women in enterprise was set up to: -

- Establish a forum for the sharing of experiences and information on the position of women in enterprise in Scotland;
- Enable discussion and debate on the gender gap in enterprise, and seek solutions on how this might be tackled;
- Bring partners together with an interest in women and enterprise to develop a collaborative approach.

To achieve these aims, CPG meetings are organised around key themes for Women and Enterprise. Organisations and individuals with expertise and interest in each theme are invited to attend and participate in the CPG. Female business owners themselves attend every meeting. This format enables relevant and structured discussion on a thematic basis and allows for varied attendance at each meeting. A summary of each quarterly meeting follows.

November 2016: Meeting theme: ‘Issues for Women Starting in Business’



This meeting was held during Global Entrepreneurship Week, and a motion on Women and Enterprise had been delivered in the Parliament Chamber just prior to the meeting. Business women, representatives of business organisations and MSPs including the Leader of the Scottish Labour Party, the Minister for Employability and Training and the Deputy Presiding Officer packed out

the CPG meeting. Women from the Women Enterprise Scotland (WES) Ambassador programme, and women from the WES/MOD Military Spouses business start-up programme spoke at the meeting, to convey their experiences of starting up in business and of business advice and support.

Research over the years has shown that there are a number of challenges for women setting up in business. Some of these include -

- Access to finance
- Cultural norms and stereotypes
- Balancing caring responsibilities and paid work
- Issues of ‘gender-blind’ policy
- Discrimination

Adopting a mainstream gender-aware approach to all enterprise and growth policies is critical to meet the needs of women led businesses in Scotland and to unlock the economic potential going forward.

February 2017: Meeting theme: 'Importance of Data'



The gathering and analysis of gender disaggregated data is fundamental to measure the economic impact of closing the gender gap in enterprise. GenAnalytics highlighted the importance of gender disaggregated data, and referred to the relatively slow progress in recognising the contribution of diversity to the economy. Diversity matters because evidence shows that companies which promote diversity within their workplace have better financial

returns. Scottish Enterprise also presented on the position of business women taking part in Scottish Enterprise programmes. The meeting also heard from WES ambassadors Leah Hutcheon and Fiona Turnbull, who spoke of their own experiences as business owners.

Fiona Turnbull, a sheep farming entrepreneur and joint-owner of Fruix Storage in Kinross.



"In seeking to come out of low paid and low skilled work, starting up in business can be an option for women"

"The relationship between the business adviser and the client business is extremely important, and getting the match right can be crucial."

"It is important to make the messages from business support agencies more attractive and relevant to women, thus ensuring better engagement from women."

Leah Hutcheon, founder and CEO of Appointedd



"Being with other women in similar business stages and circumstances can be important and provides much needed support for women."

"Early education is really important to tackle gender stereotyping in subject choice."

"Growth is really important for women's businesses and perhaps we should be more creative in our thinking towards more 'short cut' ways to growth."

May 2017: Meeting theme: 'Gender Specific Support'

In a recent study conducted by Women's Enterprise Scotland, 80% of women led business survey respondents stated they faced specific challenges as women business owners including –

- achieving credibility for their business or business idea;
- difficulties with childcare / caring responsibilities;
- discrimination and issues of confidence.

To deal with some of these challenges, initiatives valued by women-led businesses include gender specific training programmes and gender-specific business support.

The importance of gender-specific support for women in enterprise was highlighted at this meeting with Business Gateway, presenting on the success of their women-only business support programmes. Tailored local support in Edinburgh has proven to be very successful and a welcome addition to the business support offering with pre start up workshops very popular.

Research has shown that women tend to prepare first before jumping in to start a business immediately.

The Royal Bank of Scotland gave a presentation on their UK and Scottish women in business (WiB) programme supporting women-led businesses with 400 WiB specialists across the UK. The specialist role can be undertaken by male and female staff and WiB Specialists range from Business Growth Enablers to Directors of Corporate Banking. Scotland has 60 specialists offering support across 4 key areas – events; mentoring; connecting; business growth.

Research undertaken by the bank underscores the importance of women-owned businesses to the UK and Scottish economies and the value in recognising and providing needs-based support.



Scotland's female entrepreneurs boost UK economy by £268million

Source: RBS

September 2017: Meeting theme: ‘Economic Development’ and AGM.

After the AGM business was completed, and a review of the year was discussed, the meeting heard a presentation from Fife Council and their approach to better engagement with women in business. SMEs are critical for the local economy, and the development of a New Enterprise Hub had helped to engage more women, with Women-specific business leadership courses.

The ‘Leadership for Growth’ courses, designed by Women’s Enterprise Scotland were oversubscribed and more are now planned. Undertaking Business Advisor Gender Balance training to build staff capability was also part of the Council’s plan to improve service delivery in the local area. The initial training is complete and staff are now participating in the ongoing CPD and measuring the impact of their client-focussed actions.

Lisa Wardlaw started her own business at a young age and spoke of the value she found in having the right support and advice in place to help her business progress.

This meeting reviewed the success of the CPG in the previous year, and looked forward to developing themes further in 2018. Ideas from delegates included –

- Business adviser gender balanced training
- Different forms of finance and gender issues related to different finance streams
- Rural enterprise
- Young people and entrepreneurship
- The budget and a gender budgeting approach to economic development and enterprise funding



“Starting young in enterprise doesn’t just help the economy, it shapes who you are as a person, giving you valuable skills you may not have had before. Starting young in enterprise can be daunting, so it’s important to have the right support in place for any advice needed to make that dream a reality. I for one, would not be the person I am today without starting my own business at age 24!”

Lisa Wardlaw, Programme Executive - Edinburgh & Lothians, Young Enterprise Scotland.

Moving Forward: Framework for Women in Enterprise

In the Foreword to the Scottish Government Framework for Women in Enterprise, Nicola Sturgeon MSP First Minister of Scotland states,

“Demonstrating equality shouldn’t be something that gets in the way of doing business. It should simply be a natural state of affairs.”

Moving forward, the CPG will examine some of themes contained within the recently published Scottish Government Framework and Action Plan for Women in Enterprise: –

Measurement

It is recommended that public agencies collate customer data in a manner which allows reporting by gender in line with Data Protection and Equality Legislation. This focus will support an improved approach to monitoring and evaluation of intervention programmes and will support the development of accessibility and analysis of data towards influencing policy decisions.

Mentoring and networking

More networking opportunities for women will be developed across Scotland, extending collaboration to include other women’s business networks. It is important to extend the provision of networks for women to assist with building social capital, as well as combatting isolation.

Role models

Women’s Enterprise Scotland’s Ambassadors programme will continue to grow and develop to encourage and inspire women in enterprise. It is hoped that more ‘Womenablers’ will be identified and encouraged and support more women into leadership roles. This work will support businesses taking up the Scottish Business Pledge which requires businesses to make progress on gender balance and diversity in the workforce and the boardroom.

Growth and finance

By working with financial institutions and initiatives, the provision of microcredit for women at early stage business creation will be explored. Greater participation of women’s businesses in the innovation process, including access to innovation support and participation within innovation hubs, will also be developed. Scotland wide workshops and events, including those by Investing Women, will be supported in order to help women entrepreneurs prepare for investment and go for growth.

Gender aware support and best practice

Work will be promoted with business support organisations to raise awareness of the needs of women led businesses and activities which encourage more women to access business support provision. Best practice and solutions that improve staff awareness of gender specific business support considerations will be shared across the country. Collaborative learning will be initiated to develop an understanding of gender proofed best practice within the context of the Scottish ecosystem.



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