

BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL SOCIAL ECONOMY CONSORTIUM

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working together for the Birmingham and Solihull social economy

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Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs (I'SE) wins new Star social firm award

Birmingham-based social enterprise development organisation, I'SE – the Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs – is among the first five organisations in the UK to be awarded Star Social Firm status.

The award is in recognition of the quality of I'SE's business practices and the rewarding employment they provide for severely disadvantaged people.

Social Firms are a distinct category within the social enterprise sector. While social enterprises have all sorts of different social missions, Social Firms exist specifically to provide quality employment for severely disadvantaged people within a real business context. The newly launched Star Social Firm logo signifies a first-rate business with high standards of employment for severely disadvantaged people. Customers have a real social impact when they buy from Star Social Firms.

I'SE's Chief Executive Officer Sarah Crawley – who is also a co-chair of BSSEC – says, “We are immensely proud of being a Star Social Firm. We have always been committed to the employment of people disadvantaged in the labour market, but this award will help us further spread the message about our values and philosophy. For us, it's about leading by example.”

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Led by CEO Sarah Crawley and co-founder Tony Davis, I'SE is a well-established organisation that provides business support to social enterprises and voluntary and community organisations across the West Midlands. A core objective is to help other companies provide quality employment for people with disabilities or other disadvantages in the labour market.

Established in 1998, I'SE has grown from two original staff members to a team of eleven, supported by further freelancers. Of these eleven, four are classed as severely disadvantaged in the job market. The organisation also sets an example to the other Social Firms by providing a supportive and positive working environment for people with disabilities, including flexible working hours, a stress management policy and supported training through a supervised appraisal system.

Recent changes in policy regarding skills development and employment are also thought to present further opportunities for the development of Social Firms and I'SE will be encouraging other organisations to achieve commendation for the work they do.



Notes to the Editor

1. Social Firms UK is the national support structure for Social Firm development in the UK: <http://www.socialfirms.co.uk/>
2. i'SE: <http://www.i-se.co.uk/>
3. For more information contact: Andy Beaton, Business Development Manager, or Sarah Crawley, Chief Executive Officer on 0121 771 1411.
4. Picture caption: [from left] Sarah Crawley, chief executive officer, i'SE, Nigel Kershaw, a national ambassador for social enterprise and chief executive of BIG Invest, Andy Beaton, Business Development Manager, i'SE. Photograph courtesy Social Firms UK.