

## **BIRMINGHAM & SOLIHULL SOCIAL ECONOMY CONSORTIUM**

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*working together for the Birmingham and Solihull social economy*

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## **PRESS RELEASE: IMMEDIATE**

# **Birmingham – first for social enterprise**

## **A new free service will help more people set up socially useful businesses in Birmingham**

Social enterprises – businesses that trade in order to benefit the community and reinvest their profits in socially useful activities – are thriving in Birmingham.

Recent research shows that social enterprise in Birmingham is a growth sector, with around 320 such businesses trading, employing a workforce of almost 12,500 people. Some of the largest turn over as much as £5m a year and almost half of those surveyed turn over between £100k and £1m. In economic terms, the sector is increasingly significant.

And soon the sector will be in an even stronger position because specialist support agency, I'SE, based in Camp Hill, has secured over £470k from the Big Lottery to fund additional training and support for social entrepreneurs in the city.

Sarah Crawley, I'SE's chief executive says, "These extra resources mean that over the next two years or so anyone who is looking to grow or start a social enterprise in Birmingham will be able to get free, specialist support delivered locally – which we know is what people prefer."

Ms Crawley, who chairs both Birmingham & Solihull Social Economy Consortium and the Birmingham voluntary sector consortium, ChangeUP,

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believes the new free support service will also have a wider relevance, too. “The social enterprise approach to trading and income generation is now being increasingly widely adopted in the voluntary sector,” she explained, “and so as well as assisting existing enterprises we’ll also be targeting those that are newer to social enterprise – we’ll help them refine their business models, get their costings right, and improve their contracting skills.”

The new service will be provided by a partnership that includes I’SE, Business In the Community, Jericho Foundation and Birmingham & Solihull Social Economy Consortium. Alun Severn, secretary of BSSEC, added, “This is great news for Birmingham’s social enterprise sector. This service is something we have wanted to see in place for a long time and I’SE are to be congratulated for making it happen.”

The service will be open to all Birmingham residents who want to grow or start a social enterprise in Birmingham and is free of charge.

For more information contact David Lane, i’SE BASIS programme manager on 0121 771 1411 or email [David.lane@i-se.co.uk](mailto:David.lane@i-se.co.uk).

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#### **Notes to editors**

1. Information about the new service will shortly be available on iSE’s website at [www.i-se.co.uk/](http://www.i-se.co.uk/).
2. For more information about social enterprise see the BSSEC website: [www.bssec.org.uk](http://www.bssec.org.uk).
3. For more information about the Birmingham social enterprise survey see: <http://www.bssec.org.uk/thelocalsector.html>
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