

Women Friendly Enterprise Service Provider Assessment

Independent Review of Train 2000

By

Pat Richardson

May 2008

Richardson Howarth LLP
Ivy Cottage
Redpath
Haltwhistle
Northumberland
NE49 0LG

T: 0845 458 2510

E: pat@richardsonhowarth.com

richardsonhowarth

intelligent evaluation for long-term results

Contents

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Train 2000 Overview**
- 3. Stakeholder feedback**
- 4. Conclusions and Recommendations**

Executive Summary

Train 2000 Ltd, operating as the Centre for Women's Enterprise and Employment, currently delivers a range of business support contracts for a number of different funding organisations. Some of these organisations require Train 2000 to prove that it is a competent professional organisation with evidenced experience of providing quality enterprise services to their key target client groups.

Train 2008 engaged an independent consultant to evaluate their work, taking into account the sectors best practice standards for start up and established business support.

The evaluation approach adopted was primarily that of an external audit process involving based upon five primary sources of evidence and information gathering/verification. This included a one day on site visit on April 16th 2008 to Train 2000's premises in Liverpool.

Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that:

- 1 Train 2000 is an excellent provider of enterprise employment related and personal development support services for women.
2. Train 2000 presents as a well established, well run, professional organisation, which is also warm and friendly, offering a wide range of free services to varied groups of women delivered by a group of committed competent and enthusiastic staff.
3. All of the stakeholders interviewed were very complimentary. They see and experience Train 2000 as an extremely professional, proficient and innovative organisation in what services it delivers, how it delivers these services, the way in which it relates to clients and moreover how it supports others in the broader business support sector.
4. Train 2000 develops and delivers and demonstrates 'good practice in a number of ways. In particular it:
 - Has survived 10 years providing continuous good quality support for a large number of different women starting and growing business in the region.
 - Engages in continuous review and reflection about its services and the needs of its different clients groups adapting services, withdrawing services and trying out new things as their clients and other stakeholders inform them.
 - Does not pay lip service to inclusion and equality issues. For example the team understand how care responsibilities can hinder and suffocate women's attempts to make change in their lives. They provide empathy as well as practical and financial support so that women can manage these responsibilities alongside exploring enterprise employment and training opportunities.
 - Blends a very welcoming and supportive approach to women, many of whom are in very disadvantaged circumstances, with the hard headed realism of what is needed to start and growth businesses in a very competitive world.

- Is grounded like any good business, in the reality of their clients and 'their market place' yet operates strategically informing policy and practice at regional, national and international levels.
- Is a strong advocate for women's enterprise development at all levels providing strong social and economic evidence for how enterprise can help women, their families and their local economies.
- Is open to sharing their good practice with others and actively seek opportunities to do so.

Recommendation

The only significant recommendation coming out of the evaluation is that Train 2000 should continue to do what it appears to do so well – continue to support the women of Merseyside and the North West to explore and follow their ideas for enterprise employment regeneration.

1. Introduction

Background

Train 2000 Ltd, operating as The Centre for Women's Enterprise and Employment is a Liverpool based women's business support organisation. It was established in 1996 as a non profit distributing social enterprise. Train 2000 offers a flexible and integrated programme of learning and support services for women wishing to engage in economic activity through enterprise.

Train 2000 currently delivers a range of business support contracts for a number of different funding organisations. Some of these organisations require Train 2000 to prove that it is a competent professional organisation with evidenced experience of providing quality enterprise services to their key target client groups. In particular funders want Train 2000 to demonstrate its effectiveness as a provider of business support services for women

Train 2008 engaged an independent consultant to evaluate their work, taking into account the sectors best practice standards for start up and established business support.

Dr Richardson, of Richardson Howarth LLP consultancy, was appointed to act as the independent reviewer. She has over 25 years experience of working in the business support sector and has particular expertise in women's enterprise development and the evaluation of business support services both in the UK and abroad. This report documents the findings from her evaluation.

The Evaluation Approach

The terms of reference for the evaluation were to:

- Undertake an independent assessment of Train 2000 in the context of delivering women friendly enterprise services and
- Prepare a report for circulation to key stakeholders, in particular NWDA and A4E – reporting pass or fail status and highlighting areas of good practice.

The evaluation approach adopted was primarily that of an external audit process involving based upon five primary sources of evidence and information gathering/verification. This included a one day on site visit on April 16th 2008 to Train 2000's premises in Liverpool. The five sources of evidence upon which the evaluation was based are:

Train 2000's own self assessment review. Train 2000 has already undertaken quality self assessment exercises on their services and performance, based upon the Common Inspection Framework relating to skills training and learning.¹

- i. **Internal documentation, promotion and information materials and website.** Materials included financial accounts, the social accounts and other external reviews.
- ii. **Quality standards check.** Train 2000 currently holds and is working towards a number of quality standards that provide endorsement of their professional performance. During the site visit the consultant examined evidence that these standards are current and practiced by the organisation.
- iii. **Face to face interviews** with 7 staff members, 4 clients; and the chair of Train 2000's board. The staff represented all elements of the team and included both long standing and more recent recruits. The 4 clients interviewed presented a good mix of women in terms of their age,

1

background experience, and their support needs. They ran varying types of business and were at differing stages of business development with one employing others. All 4 clients had used a range of Train 2000 services, had engaged with different staff and had experience of using business support providers (both positively and negatively) other than Train 2000.

- iv. **Telephone interviews** with 3 key external partners all of whom had current experience of Train 2000 delivering enterprise support services to different client groups.

During both the face to face and telephone interviews staff, clients and partner stakeholders were asked to rate Train 2000 operations against four dimensions of quality concerning 'inclusion'; 'being client focused', 'understanding and practicing equality' and an overall view of 'quality of provision'. A simple scoring system with rating from 1 =excellent, 2= good, 3= fine/okay and 4 = poor was used for each of these elements.

2. Train 2000 Overview

Background

Train 2000 is a company limited by guarantee, which was set up in 1996, as a non profit distributing social enterprise, in order to promote and deliver a range of high quality business support services for women. The founding members of Train 2000, drawn from the voluntary, private and education sectors, identified a gap in the business support market for services that recognised and addressed the specific needs of women seeking self employment. They established a flexible and integrated programme aimed specifically at women and have been delivering such services to the women of Merseyside since that time. Train 2000 have grown year upon year and more recently have also been delivering services to women in Lancashire and Cheshire.

Train 2000 is based in premises in central Liverpool and delivers services from this site as well as a diverse number of outreach venues through the region.

In 2005 the organisation reviewed its operations, maintained its brand Train 2000 but adopted a new corporate identity strap line 'The Centre for Women's Enterprise and Employment'. Train 2000 is currently applying for charitable status, has been through the initial stages of this process and hopes to gain this status by mid 2008.

Mission and values

The mission of Train 2000 is *"to be a women's organisation that provides enterprise and employment services and influences policy, in order to improve the economic position of women"* This mission is strongly underpinned by four key values which are:

- *To be **inclusive**, recognising the needs of individuals and particularly ensuring that we reach and respect the needs of disadvantaged and underrepresented groups*
- *To be **innovative**, continually improving the way we work and provide services by incorporating new ideas, information and methods.*
- *To work in **partnership**, adding value to what we do by working with others to build trust, develop mutual understanding and through reciprocal actions develop social capital.*
- *To strive for **quality**, committing the organisation to improvement and high standards in all aspects of its activities and working environment.*

The Financials

The organisation has had an annual turnover of just over £800,000 for the past two years (2006 & 2007) with operating surpluses in both years. The organisation has healthy reserves in place with committed funding for delivering services over a future 12-18 month time frame.

This is a very credible achievement in what has been a significant period of change in the business support sector and a very challenging funding environment for women's enterprise support in particular. Train 2000 currently has support coming from a diverse range of sources including: European Social Fund; European Regional Development Fund; the Deprived Area Fund; North West Development Agency/A4E consortium; Business Liverpool; Liverpool City Council Community Resource Unit; Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council and Abbey.

Train 2000 appear to have sound financial systems and procedures in place. Their programmes have been inspected and audited by several European, UK national as well as regional institutions and have been commended for these systems and procedures.

The Team

At the time of the evaluation the organisation was operating with a complement of 20 full time and part time staff. The team appear to be diverse in terms of age, experience, background and skills and between them a total of 9 languages are spoken. Until recently the team at Train 2000 were all women, however at the time of the evaluation a male business adviser had just been appointed. Train 2000 complement their core team through working with a number of professional associates. They had a regular group of 4 associates at time of the evaluation.

Management and Governance

Train 2000 is led by a board of voluntary directors. The organisation articles of association require that it has at least 6 but no more than 11 directors and it currently has 9. Board meetings are held quarterly with sub groups appointed to address specific issues. Evidence and feedback gained through the evaluation would suggest that Train 2000 has an appropriately qualified, very committed and enthusiastic group of directors supporting it.

The organisation runs with a flat management structure and delivers its services through 3 primary teams- engagement enablement and administration. There are mechanisms and practices in place for regular communication both within and across all of the teams as well as between the staff team and the board. Operational and management systems are in place and appear to be well understood and practiced throughout the organisation. Client and service data bases appear to be maintained with respect data protection, regularly updated, and also used by staff as management intelligence for their work.

Train 2000 engage with a range of quality standards to guide and measure their performance. During the evaluation evidence was provided to show that Train 2000 currently have recognised validation with respect to:

- IIP Status.
- SFEDI accreditation for their business advisers. New recruits to the team are being put through this accreditation process.
- MATRIX- Advice and Guidance Standard.
- Self Assessment against Common Inspection Framework - Adult Learning Inspectorate
- Approved Centre for National Open College Network

They are also working towards ISO9001.

In addition since 1998 Train 2000 has undertaken a commitment to go through a social accounting process to review both the efficiency and effectiveness of its work. Train 2000 have to date produced 5 sets of social accounts the last being in 2006 accounting for the calendar year 2005. All of these accounts are available to the public on their website. At the time of the evaluation they were going through the process of pulling together their 6th set of social accounts reflecting activities and performance over the period 2006 and 2007. These will be published by mid 2008.

Train 2000 has also been recognised as a model of good practice by the European Commission in 1999 and 2003 as well as receiving national and regional recognition for its work.

Services

Train 2000 offer a suite of free services helping women to explore personal development, business ownership, developing their existing businesses, and management development as well as considering alternative employment careers and undertaking training.

These services include a flexible and integrated programme of learning under a branded initiative called the POWER programme (Promoting Opportunities for Women in Enterprise and Regeneration). Services are delivered through 1 to 1 counselling, small groups sessions, face to face training, on line learning and printed materials. The full services of Train 2000 are initially accessed through a Women's Gateway service that presents a welcoming means for women take that first step of engaging with the 'support sector'. Train 2000 did run a loan fund which was suspended in 2006 due to a lack of funding. They are currently reviewing whether or not to resume that service, but in the meantime continue to work with other financial providers to access their clients to a wide range of funds. All of the clients interviewed mentioned how Train 2000 had helped them to access various forms of financial support.

The design and implementation of all services; culturally sensitive delivery of support; the extensive engagement of women advisers the offer of women only sessions and the promotion of positive role models all contribute to an extensive portfolio of support offered within and by a women friendly culture at Train 2000.

Train 2000 are very particular in recognising that many women have care responsibilities. They take these into account by offering crèche facilities when needed, holding events during school hours and term times and offering alternative evening and weekend sessions in some cases. In addition they make available a small financial contribution to help cover travel, subsistence and care costs incurred by women coming to use their services. The travel and subsistence contribution ranges from £5 to £10. The contribution for care cost varies depending on the nature of the care being provided.

Clients

Train 2000 focuses on helping women only, although it should be said that they do support women working in partnership with men. Also they do signpost any male enquirers to appropriate alternative support services.

In the past 10 years Train 2000 has delivered services to a significant number of women regularly working with well over a 1000 women per year.

Profile	Merseyside population (women)	Women accessing services in 2007
Employed or already in business	68.4%	53%
Economically inactive	31.6%	39%
Students		9%
Lone parents	15%	21%
Black or from minority ethnic background	3.3%	22%
Disabled in the workplace or have disabilities that affect their ability to work	3.1%	8%
Experienced mental ill health	n/a	16%
Offending record declared	n/a	2%
Below 25 years	30.4%	19%
Between 25-49 years	33.4%	73%
Over 50 years	36.1%	8%
Live in Pathways Areas	35%	37%

In 2007 they had enquiries from nearly 1600 (1593) clients gave support to 1297 of whom 197 started their own businesses within that period and 110 further developed their existing businesses. The figures presented above give a summary profile of clients in 2007 and this is compared with the profile of women in Merseyside as a whole. As it shows the profile of Train 2000 clients in many ways mirrors that of women in Merseyside.

Train 2000 have a slighter higher % of those from disadvantaged or under represented in business amongst as their client group as would be expected given their remit. Figures for the initial quarter of 2008 would suggest a similar level and profile of client activity for Train 2000.

Presence

Train 2000 are located on an upper floor of an office building in central Liverpool. The building appears (from feedback during the evaluation) to be well located with good access for public and private transport routes. However much of Train 2000's work is conducted outside of the offices at a wide range of community base facilities and centres.

The office is welcoming and in the entrance there are a wide range of leaflets and information about the organisation as well as its clients and their businesses. Throughout the offices there are a series of attractive wall boards showing different clients and their businesses with one also stating Train 2000's mission and its key values.

The organisation has a well established website (www.train2000.org.uk) which is clear and easy to navigate. It contains information about the organisation, its services as well as information about local networks and contacts and local regional and national events, reports and research on concerning women's enterprise. The website also provides access to self directed enterprise resources including accredited qualifications. The website has been awarded the highest level of web accessibility and in January 2006 it was awarded a 'Quality Universal Design' award. Some elements of the website needed updating at the time of the evaluation, however it did feature current events with the latest news column reporting the annual Train 2000 lecture (March 2008) two clients winning business awards, and future programmes for April to June.

Train 2000 have a wide range enterprise related materials, information and promotional materials available in a number of different languages. It also produces a newsletter.

In summary Train 2000 presents as a well established, well run, professional organisation, which is also warm and friendly, offering a wide range of free services to varied groups of women delivered by a group of committed competent and enthusiastic staff.

3. Stakeholder Feedback

This section reflects on all of the evidence and feedback derived during the evaluation and is presented under the four key aspects of quality provision noted earlier i.e. Inclusion, Being Client focused, Equality and overall Quality of services including impact.

Up front, it has to be said that Train 2000 was rated as 'excellent' or 'very good' on all aspects of these standards by all of those interviewed within each of the three stakeholder groups. All of those interviewed were very complimentary and reported that they see and experience Train 2000 as being extremely professional proficient and innovative in both what services it delivers, how it delivers these services, the way in which it relates to clients and moreover how it supports others in the broader enterprise support sector.

Inclusion

In essence this element of quality asks whether has an inclusive approach in what it does that recognises and reflects the often very different needs of the varying groups of women exploring enterprise within their region.

Evidence showed that providing an inclusive approach in what and how it delivers its services is a core element of Train 2000's work. Indeed 'being inclusive is one of the organisation's core values and one that is evidently practiced. As one of the partners interviewed noted: "Train 2000 live and practice their values and another said "as an organisation they put their principles into practice".

The staff interviewed all felt that Train 2000 is inclusive and accessible in what it does, rating the organisation as 'excellent' in these respects. They felt there was a range of evidence to show that Train 2000 is inclusive beyond the overriding fact that their services are offered free of charge.

For example the proactive way in which Train 2000 goes out to find and work with different groups of women rather than waiting for women to come to them; the varied places in and times at which they offer services with venues ranging from Train 2000's own offices to those of their partners, community based venues and sometimes in women's own homes and finally through the flexible tailored pace at which women are supported through their journey into enterprise employment and or training. One staff member reported that the previous week she had worked with Polish interpreters to help one older client.

All 4 clients rated Train 2000 as excellent with respect to being inclusive. They felt that Train 2000 went out of its way to connect with women in different ways and at different venues. They commented that services were free and two specifically mentioned the financial support available to women who want to use their services. Two felt that this had been important enabling them to easily access the services. Two clients commented that leaflets were available in different languages² and that they did know of others who had been helped through interpreters. One client said that she often had mobility issues because of problems with her legs and if she was not able to come to the office then her adviser had visited her at home.

All 3 partners said that they regarded Train 2000 as an inclusive and accessible organisation that goes about its work in a very inclusive way. One partner felt that Train 2000 helped other support providers to adopt more inclusive approaches to women by demonstrating good practice and another felt that Train 2000 helped her to make her own organisation become more inclusive in how it regarded and supported women's enterprise.

² Train 2000 currently have leaflets in Chinese Arabic Urdu and Bengali as well as English.

All of those interviewed were pressed to think of how Train 2000 could improve the inclusivity of its services. None felt there was any significant to suggest. One client did state that she had only had found out about Train 2000 after she had left college. She suggested that Train 2000 could further build upon its existing connections with further and higher education institutions in order to access women students before they graduated. In this way they could raise student awareness about business ownership and make them aware of Train 2000's services well before the students graduated.

Client focused

This aspect of quality asks whether Train 2000 knows and understands the market place in which it operates, the potential and actual client groups it serves and what different clients need. Does it ensure that its services continue to meet client needs? Does it listen to clients' experiences and concerns and how does it help its clients to promote and celebrate their businesses?

Written evidence and feedback from interviews would suggest that Train 2000 is a very client focused organisation that regards effective monitoring of their market and evaluation of their services as core elements of how they 'do business'. Moreover feedback to the organisation seems to be genuinely discussed throughout the organisation and actions taken as a result rather than evaluation forms and reports 'being filed for the record'.

The staff interviewed all felt that they and their colleagues are very client focused with one pointing out that this ethos underpinned the mission and values of Train 2000. Again they rated the organisation as 'excellent' in terms of being client focused. They felt that the Train 2000 team researched the need for services before offering anything new, that they evaluated what they did on a consistent basis and used client and partner feedback to adjust what they offered or to consider the provision of new or additional services. They gave recent examples of this.

They also felt that the Train 2000 team was often used by other service providers to provide intelligence and guidance on how to work with different groups of women. A fact conformed by feedback from the partners interviewed. It was interesting to note that during the discussions about this standard the staff were reflective and self critical challenging themselves saying *"perhaps we shouldn't rate ourselves as excellent because there is always room for improvement and we don't know about those who don't access our services currently"*.

All 4 clients interviewed strongly endorsed the view of Train 2000 as a client focused. They felt that Train 2000 went out of its way to listen to the needs of different women and accommodate their needs wherever possible. Two of the women had given feedback on minor issues which had been acted upon promptly and positively. Three of the clients commented specifically that they felt services were tailored to their needs at Train 2000 and that they were treated as individuals and "not just another number" which is how two said they felt at some business support agencies. One gave the example of how she needed to be pushed to grow her business and how her adviser at Train 2000 knew just the right balance of being supportive and when to firmly prompt her to action.

One client commented *"Liz is like my mum – she is dead straight and helps me focus on what needs to be done"*.

Another felt that she had been matched up with an adviser that knew her business sector very well. She commented *"they give you a reality check but in a very supportive way...what I like about them is that you can get quite isolated working for yourself and they keep in touch."*

Another stated: *“Other agencies can be good but Train 2000 sees you as a person within your life as well as a business person. They are very ‘win win’ focused ...they gently direct me out of my comfort zone before I know it!”*

The fourth reported “Even when my adviser was off ill someone else on the team phoned me up to see how I was progressing which I thought was very good – they really keep an eye on you”.

All 3 partners felt that Train 2000 is a client focused organisation and rated them as excellent in this respect. Two said that they were specifically working with Train 2000 because of their reputation for working well with women and their ability to develop and deliver appropriate support for a wide range of different groups of women. One stated that she used Train 2000’s knowledge and research into the women’s enterprise market and sector to inform her own programmes and policies and another said that they used Train 2000 to help inform and raise the standard of women friendly support amongst other providers in the region.

All three partners said that they had received independent evidence that Train 2000 was a listening organisation which actively sought out feedback from their clients, partners and other stakeholders. More importantly they felt that Train 2000 actually listened to this feedback and used it to improve their services.

All three groups of stakeholders felt that Train 2000 sought to help promote their clients and their businesses in a number of ways: through the local media, holding showcase events , getting clients to attend exhibitions and to apply for awards and featuring them in Train 2000’s, publicity materials, leaflets and on their website and in the website online business directory.

One of the clients interviewed is on a Train 2000 brochure another had brought press cuttings and her own promotional material with her to the interview and said Train 2000 had helped her pull together and a third client said *“I am being gently nudged and actively supported to apply for a local enterprise newcomer award”*. Train 2000 has recently nominated 4 clients for the local Business Link ‘Celebration of Success Awards and one has been short listed. One client suggested that Train 2000 could use their clients more as live role models on some of their training programmes. She would happily do this and felt that others would as well.

Train 2000 have also held their own events to help celebrate their work and the success and achievement so their clients --- examples being annual international women’s day events and Train 2000’s 10th birthday party celebration. This latter event this celebrated the success of their clients as well as themselves. Further more Train 2000 actively encourages their clients to join networks as a way of promoting and gaining additional support for their businesses. Train 2000 supports the establishment of local women’s enterprise networks and encourages their clients to be aware of and join other ‘mainstream’ networks relevant to their particular businesses.

Ensuring Equality

This element asks whether Train 2000 understand issues of diversity and equality, especially as they concern women and is the organisation demonstrably committed to promoting equality.

Train 2000 currently serve only women – 100% of their client base is women. When questioned what would happen if a man got in touch the answer, from several sources, was that he would be listened to and referred on to an appropriate enterprise support provider in his area. All bar one of Train 2000 team are women and their profile does well in reflecting the backgrounds and experiences of its client group.

Again Train 2000 is viewed by all those interviewed, as an organisation that is strongly committed to promoting diversity through its organisational policies and practice, the nature of the services it offers and how and where this support is made available. Monitoring data shows

that Train 2000 serve well above a proportionate amount of BME women when compared to the proportion in the local population. BME women make up some 22% of Train 2000 clients as compared to being just over 3% of the local population.

Staff and partners felt that Train 2000 had made great efforts to access and work with refugee asylum seekers and recent immigrant groups. Both groups of interviewees said that Train 2000 works closely with groups and leaders within these communities and uses native speakers and interpreters to help raise the awareness of Train 2000 services and business support services more broadly.

Indeed one partner said that they engaged with Train 2000 because they knew that Train 2000 would work with excluded groups – *“Train 2000 don’t go for the ‘easy to reach’. They do not shy away from working with ‘hard targets’”*. Another partner noted *“they live their values and measure their success against these and that means working with the most disadvantaged”*

Quality of Services and Performance

This element takes an over view and asks whether Train 2000 provides a coherent comprehensive and diverse portfolio of good quality services which positively impact on their recipients.

Those staff interviewed felt that Train 2000 provided a good range of well established as well as new services.

All 4 clients interviewed were very satisfied with the services delivered to them by Train 2000, would recommend Train 2000 to others and all had already done so. Each of the women felt that they had also been signposted and guided to the services of other providers and networks as and when needed. Three of the clients mentioned how they valued the longer term relationship developed with their Train 2000 adviser. They felt that they could come back to Train 2000 at any time and still get help. One client said *“they have never failed me and never let me down “*

Two of the clients were not aware of the Train 2000 website based business directory and were interested in exploring this further. There may be a case for raise greater awareness about the website business directory amongst new clients.

All three partners said that Train 2000 were delivering on their contracts and meeting or exceeding their output and outcome targets. One partner said that they had recently undertaken an independent evaluation on their providers which included mystery shopping activities and feedback from clients. Train 2000 had been highly rated in that evaluation exercise. Another partner also noted the fact that Train 2000 has been providing support for women starting and growing business in the region for 10 years. She felt that this track record had earned Train 2000 credibility and respect. It also means that women can rely on them. *“Women appreciate the fact that they can ‘come back’ to Train 2000 years after they started and can still find an open door”*.

In terms of partnership working Train 2000 would appear to work well and closely with a wide range of partners. As noted earlier two of the partners interviewed felt that Train 2000 made great efforts to work with other providers in order to ensure that their clients and women in general throughout the region received appropriate support. One stated that some other providers sometimes rebuffed Train 2000’s attempts efforts to work in partnership but she felt that Train 2000 *“took such rebuff on the chin”* and quietly kept up efforts to collaborate and share where ever they felt this would add value to supporting women’s enterprise in the region. Another partner referred to Train 2000 as *“the gem in my portfolio of deliverers”*.

In terms of impact, since 2001 Train 2000 has helped well over a 1000 women per annum with nearer 2000 in 2007. Each year they help at least 80 women to start up new businesses– the figures were 186 in 2006 and 197 in 2007 and these businesses have created almost twice the number of jobs.

Train 2000 have also been very active in raising awareness about the impact of women's enterprise more broadly lobbying around the economic benefits of helping women to explore the career option of starting and growing their own business. Train 2000 have used Treasury and well recognized economic models to demonstrate the impact of their work and their clients businesses on the local and national economy. For example they showed that: in 2005 Train 2000 by helping 136 women to start a business these businesses contributed £10,200,000 gross value added contribution to the economy in their first year. In 2006 186 women started business amounting to a £18,600,000 gross value added contribution. The details of these calculations and others can be found in Train 2000 social accounts and other documents.

In summary Train 2000 performs very well against all of the four elements of operational quality considered as good practice in the provision of enterprise support for women. Train 2000 is viewed as a high quality delivery organisation by all of the different stakeholders interviewed as part of the evaluation exercise.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

Conclusions

The evaluation concludes that:

1. Train 2000 is an excellent provider of enterprise employment related and personal development support services for women.
2. Train 2000 presents as a well established, well run, professional organisation, which is also warm and friendly, offering a wide range of free services to varied groups of women delivered by a group of committed competent and enthusiastic staff.
3. All of the stakeholders interviewed were very complimentary. They see and experience Train 2000 as an extremely professional, proficient and innovative organisation in what services it delivers, how it delivers these services, the way in which it relates to clients and moreover how it supports others in the broader business support sector.
4. Train 2000 develops and delivers and demonstrates 'good practice in a number of ways. In particular it:
 - Has survived 10 years providing continuous good quality support for a large number of different women starting and growing business in the region.
 - Engages in continuous review and reflection about its services and the needs of its different clients groups adapting services, withdrawing services and trying out new things as their clients and other stakeholders inform them.
 - Does not pay lip service to inclusion and equality issues. For example staff understand how care responsibilities can hinder and suffocate women's attempts to make change in their lives. They provide empathy as well as practical and financial support so that women can manage these responsibilities alongside exploring enterprise employment and training opportunities.
 - Blends a very welcoming and supportive approach to women, many of whom are in very disadvantaged circumstances, with the hard headed realism of what is needed to start and growth businesses in a very competitive world.

- Is grounded like any good business, in the reality of their clients and ‘their market place’ yet operates strategically informing policy and practice at regional, national and international levels.
- Is a strong advocate for women’s enterprise development at all levels providing strong social and economic evidence for how enterprise can help women, their families and their local economies.
- Is open to sharing their good practice with others and actively seek opportunities to do so.

Recommendation

The only significant recommendation coming out of the evaluation is that Train 2000 should continue to do what it appears to do so well – continue to support women of Merseyside and the North West to explore and follow their ideas for enterprise employment regeneration.