

Business Initiative
Early Entry to Enterprise Programme
Programme Evaluation
June 2009

“what if. . .?”



Early Entry to Enterprise Programme

Programme Evaluation

June 2009

Report Commissioned by
Business Link

Delivered by
Wider Impact Consultancy
www.widerimpact.com



Consultant's Statement

Wider Impact Consultancy is pleased to produce an extremely positive report about the Early Entry to Enterprise programme, which is without doubt delivering:

1. Outputs agreed with the principal funder
2. What is valued by clients attending the programme
3. What North Staffordshire requires if it is to 'move on' and recover from a sustained period of economic depression; further fuelled by the current recession

Based on our findings, this locally delivered holistic programme fits with the Governments **Business Support Simplification model (BSS)**. There is also no doubt that the programme is playing a significant role in supporting local people to:

1. Come off / stay off benefits
2. Establish new businesses and;
3. Thereby contribute to local social and economic regeneration

We are delighted to commend the programme and thank those who contributed to this report.

Edwin Lewis, Wider Impact Consultancy Limited
June 2009

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1.0 Executive Summary

1.1 Introduction

Wider Impact Consultancy has been invited by Business Initiative to carry out an independent evaluation of the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**. The programme is funded through Advantage West Midlands, managed by Business Link West Midlands and contracted to Business Initiative. The programme enables beneficiaries to test their business idea for a period of **13 weeks**, whilst receiving a training allowance of **£72.00 per week**.

1.2 Project Aims

Specifically the programme aims to support and encourage beneficiaries to take up self-employment, to harness the high motivation of short-term unemployed people, whilst providing the safety net of a training allowance.

The programme aims to:

- Enable beneficiaries to test their business ideas for 30 hours per week
- Increase the business formation rate within North Staffordshire
- Improve survival rates amongst new starts by providing weekly 3 hour training sessions, to enable beneficiaries to undertake improved business planning and development
- Encourage access to on-going business support through post start advisory sessions
- Offer delegates the opportunity to complete an NVQ Level 3 Business Start-up

The programme offers beneficiaries the opportunity to:

- Be their own boss
- Receive a weekly training allowance of **£72.00**
- Obtain **free** comprehensive training in business processes and procedures
- Work towards an NVQ Level 3 in Business Start Up
- Keep the profits of their business

1.3 Eligibility Criteria

- Aged 18 and over
- In receipt of Jobseekers Allowance or Income Support
- Prepared to sign off benefits and declare self-employment status to the Tax Office
- Resident, or have business premises in the City of Stoke on Trent and be paying Council Tax to Stoke on Trent City Council / or be a resident in eligible area of Newcastle under Lyme
- Are not an overseas national subject to employment restrictions, or to a time limit on stay in Great Britain (other than a refugee or asylum seeker)
- Have produced a viable business plan that includes a cash flow forecast
- Not have accessed another Government programme in the last 6 months
- Are not at the same time on any other Jobcentre Plus funder programme or have accessed one in the last 6 months

1.4 Programme Delivery

Following an initial assessment by an experienced Business Advisor, clients are encouraged to attend a three day / five evening **Business Enterprise Programme** that covers the essentials of book-keeping, marketing and preparing a business plan.

They are then supported in preparing a Business Plan, which, when complete to the satisfaction of Business Initiative, is in effect a 'gateway' to the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**, when they are allocated an experienced Business Advisor. Clients meet their Business Advisor each week and agree 'actions' to support their business idea that would normally take up to **30 hours** each week to deliver. Clients are also handed a cheque in the sum of **£72.00**, which is classed as a 'training allowance' to be spent as the client feels appropriate.

Clients are provided with a weekly 'one to one' opportunity to discuss their individual progress and agree the following weeks 'actions'. Where appropriate clients are referred to others such as accountants and solicitors to discuss and resolve specific 'challenges' that may be beyond the experience of their Business Advisor.

It is important to note that in the majority of cases client's businesses are 'live' during the 13 week programme and a great deal of flexibility is built into delivery to ensure that business meetings / opportunities are not missed.

All clients are also provided with an opportunity to complete an NVQ Level 3 Business Start-up and are required to attend generic short courses such as Health & Safety.

On completion of the 13 week programme of weekly one to one meetings with their Business Advisor, clients attend an exit interview and are allocated a new Business Advisor, who is available to offer continued business support / advice for a period of **one year**.

1.5 Summary of Findings

Linked to commission terms of reference we are pleased to report on what is clearly a highly successful programme that is 'on target' in terms of outputs, and based on current performance, we see no reason why final targets will not be achieved. Most significantly, qualitative evidence is extremely positive in terms of the programme delivering what clients are looking for and value.

Good Practice

Based on our findings we note the following 'good practice':

- Linkage with the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce / Business Brokers
- Linkage with Jobcentre Plus
- Increasing numbers of referrals to Business Initiative from Jobcentre Plus
- Initial, **locally based**, '**one to one**' support by Business Initiative Business Advisors
- A 'menu of options' for clients that include:
 - A short business familiarisation session
 - A three day Business Enterprise programme
 - Half day course - Access to the Internet / Marketing Tool
 - NVQ – up to Level 3
 - 13 week **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**
 - 1 years support from Business Initiative Business Advisors

- **£72.00** per week training allowance
- Flexibility – clients are able to develop at their own speed
- Trained, experienced, committed and caring staff
- Staff with varying skills and abilities
- Mentoring support - providing appropriate support with personal issues that can impact on businesses development
- High quality training / support materials
- The opportunity to complete an NVQ
- Networking opportunities with fellow clients

1.6 Recommendations

Based on our findings, which include lessons learnt / areas for improvement (see [7.3](#)), we are pleased to make the following recommendations:

1. All those involved with developing and delivering the 13 week Early Entry to Enterprise programme (including clients) should be made aware of this report and congratulated and thanked for their inputs into the programme. There is no doubt the programme is valued by clients and is playing a positive role in the social and economic regeneration of the area.
2. Understanding economic issues, long-term, sustained funding to support such programmes should be a priority of organisations / funders such as Advantage West Midlands and Business Link.
3. Where appropriate, clients should be offered long-term, sustainable '**holistic**' **packages**', tailored to meet the special needs of North Staffordshire / Stoke on Trent, rather than short-term 'small bites' of support that risk being withdrawn at relatively short notice.
4. Clients appear to value **locally** based, '**one to one**' support from experienced Business Advisors. Such provision should be on offer to all those who value such support.
5. Business Link / Business Initiative should explore offering support to Jobcentre Plus to reviewing Jobcentre Plus marketing materials; with a view to providing support / encouragement to those who are considering self-employment as an alternative option to 'getting a job'.

6. Clients seeking to become self-employed should be referred to agencies such as Business Initiative / Business Link by agencies such as Jobcentre Plus as a matter of course.
7. Innovative initiatives such as a free phone line from Jobcentre Plus offices to Business Initiative should be explored.
8. Consideration should be given to offering clients attending future programmes additional workshops and networking opportunities.
9. Clients should be kept fully aware at **all times** of other areas of support open to them, rather than offering such information at the end of programmes.
10. Consideration should be given to developing / piloting a '**New Business Person's Passport of Opportunities**' (see 6.8). We suggest that such initiative could be led by the Business Brokers.
11. Opportunity should be taken to 'celebrate' the success of the end of the current Early Entry to Enterprise programme. We suggest a high profile event, when opportunity can be taken to exchange 'good practice' and 'lessons learnt' with partner agency members.

1.7 Conclusions

Wider Impact Consultancy is pleased to produce an extremely positive report about a programme, which is without doubt delivering:

1. Outputs agreed with the principal funder
2. What is valued by clients attending the programme
3. What North Staffordshire requires if it is 'move on' and recover from a sustained period of economic depression, further fuelled by the current recession

Based on our findings, this locally delivered holistic programme fits with the Governments **Business Support Simplification model (BSS)**. There is also no doubt that the programme is playing a significant role in supporting local people come off / stay off benefits, establish new businesses, and thereby contribute to local social and economic regeneration.

2.0 Acknowledgements

Wider Impact Consultancy would like to thank the following for their time and effort in making this report possible:

Peter Ball	Business Initiative Business Advisor
Julie Billingham	Independent Money Advice Consultancy (IMAC)
Roger Bingley	R J Bingley
Sandra Brookes	Business Initiative Trainer
Adele Cope	Business Brokers
Irene Elliott	Training Manager, Business Initiative
Karen Lazenby	Trentham Professional Recruitment Ltd
Jill Levens	Business Initiative
Alan Salt	'The Cheeseman'
Annette Summerscales	Jobcentre Plus, Staffordshire Partnership Manager
Peter Tomlinson	Business Initiative Business Advisor

Contributions have included data, information, time and most importantly honest feedback on the impact of the Early Entry to Enterprise programme.

3.0 Terms of Reference

The terms of reference of this independent evaluation, which has been commissioned by Business Initiative are:

1. To provide an end of project report of the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**
2. Report on the success of the programme in terms of outputs and outcomes
3. Identify 'best practice'
4. Define success factors for the project
5. Make recommendations regarding post project strategy

4.0 Methodology

The brief has been delivered in three sections:

1. Desktop (Secondary) research:
 - Access to key data and information kindly provided by Business Initiative, which includes a close examination of programme outputs
 - Analysis of reports relative to the delivery of the Early Entry to Enterprise programme
 - Analysis / reporting on key economic data / reports relative to the delivery of the Early Entry to Enterprise programme
2. Primary research that has included:
 - Analysis of **79** Business Initiative questionnaires
 - Design, distribution, analysis of **12** Wider Impact Consultancy questionnaires
 - Workshop attended by **12** clients
 - Face to face interviews / case studies with **4** clients
 - Face to face interviews with key Business Initiative staff:
 - Peter Ball, Business Advisor
 - Sandra Brookes, Trainer
 - Irene Elliott, Training Manager
 - Jill Levens, Director
 - Peter Tomlinson, Business Advisor
 - Face to face interviews with partner agency representatives:
 - Annette Summerscales, Jobcentre Plus
 - Adele Cope, Business Brokers
 - Observations of programme delivery
3. Submission of this final report drawing together the findings of the above 2 sections.

5.0 Background to the Early Entry to Enterprise Programme

5.1 Introduction

At the time of applying for [funding] support for the programme North Staffordshire had only 62% of the national average for VAT registrations but 71% of the average for de-registrations. Self-employment was about 7% of the working population against a national figure of 11%. In the first quarter of 2003, Barclays Bank statistics indicated Stoke on Trent had the lowest formation of new businesses in the Country – based on VAT registrations of new businesses.

Around 85% of all wards in the City of Stoke on Trent featured within the top quartile of the most deprived wards in the country. The City ranked 34th most deprived local authority district in England and 3rd most deprived in the West Midlands.

Figures published in 2002 show the total number of people employed in Stoke on Trent fell from 123,600 in 1991 to 111,800 in 2001. This represented a decline of 10% placing the City 150th out of 156 areas nationally. With the announcement of further redundancies from Indesit and the fragile nature of the ceramic industry, it was likely such statistics would get worse.

This was because the City suffered from its reliance upon a narrow and declining manufacturing base. Traditional industries such as pottery, coal, steel and tyres were in decline and, in some cases, extinct from the area. These traditional industries have left a legacy of a poor culture of entrepreneurial activity within the area.

Coupled with a low skill / low wage economy and a culture of low attainment and aspirations amongst large segments of the local population the future did not look good. The knock-on effect of redundancies would hit smaller companies, whose employees would not have the route into New Deal that others had. Graduate retention was also an issue within the City and the programme aimed to help encourage more graduates to consider self-employment as a viable alternative.

Jobcentre Plus identified a number of barriers to self-employment being presented as a real option. Individuals could not access early entry to New Deal and take advantage of Business Initiative's 26-week operational business support unless they were long-term unemployed. Only since January 2008 has the Pathways to Work programme helped people with disabilities access New Deal more quickly but again, this group have often been claiming incapacity benefits for a long time.

To help re-invigorate the local community an increase in business starts at grass roots level was seen to be needed and to capture those people into a programme linked to NVQ 3 training before they became despondent was seen as vital. A need was therefore identified for the following groups who did not qualify for support from existing programmes. That is:

- Recently redundant but not from large scale employers
- Recent graduates who want to set up their own businesses
- Clients who have been registered unemployed for less than 12 months

By providing early entry to work based learning, the chance of survival would be increased as participants would only have recently left employment or university and would be more motivated. Those recently leaving work would not have lost all their contacts, enabling a potential higher survival rate in business.

Beneficiaries of the programme would have limited access to mainstream schemes because they did not fit the access criteria until they had been unemployed for 18 months. Research showed that early entry to self-employment produced the best chance of success as clients still retain up to date contacts and have the motivation needed to succeed.

It was planned that the programme would also be complementary to other projects, some linking finance to business start-up and others linking business information. For example:

- BIC Innovation Grants
- North Staffs Risk Capital Fund
- Business Brokers

Such links are important because a number of clients cited access to finance as a reason for delaying or postponing their business start. The BIC grants provided low-level finance for equipment. North Staffs Risk Capital fund would give them access to higher levels of funds for the potential high growth businesses, and the Business Brokers would help promote the programme.

5.2 Economic Climate / Deprivation Issues - (2009)

There is no doubt of the effects of the current global recession. Figures released in late April 2009 by the Office for National Statistics show an estimated reduction of GDP in the first quarter of 2009 of 1.9%, following a fall of 1.6% in the last quarter of 2008. The biggest contributor is manufacturing, which has shrunk by 6.2% in the first quarter of 2009.

An important indicator at local level is the changes in claimant count unemployment. **Table 1** shows that unemployment rates, measured in this way have increased dramatically in the past 12 months.

Table 1

Claimant Count Unemployed Rate (%)	Stoke on Trent	Newcastle	Staffordshire Moorlands	West Midlands	United Kingdom
March 2006	3.5	1.7	1.3	3.4	2.6
March 2007	3.5	1.9	1.3	3.4	2.5
March 2008	3.6	1.9	1.2	3.0	2.2
March 2009	6.0	3.9	2.9	5.3	4.0

Source: NOMIS, April 2009

5.3 Government Policy – Business Support Simplification Model (BSS)

The delivery of the **Early Entry to Enterprise** programme links into the Government's policy of making business support more understandable and easier to access for existing and aspirational business people. The **Business Support Simplification** model (**BSS**) is aiming to reduce the previous 3,000 public sector supported schemes to 100 by 2010. Further information about the Business Support Simplification model can be found by accessing *Simple Support, Better*

Business: Business Support in 2010, Department for Business Enterprise & Regulatory Reform, March 2008.

The **Early Entry to Enterprise** programme fits with the BSS 'product' – **Starting a Business** and plays a integral function in the **Business Link** 'Customer Journey' model, with clients entering the 'Gateway' at Level 1.

5.4 The Role of Business Initiative

The **Early Entry to Enterprise** programme is delivered by **Business Initiative**, which is a local 'not for profit' Enterprise Agency and was formed in 1981 by leading companies in North Staffordshire, to encourage and assist the establishment and expansion of viable small businesses.

The organisation forms part of the **North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce and Industry** and is administered by its own, separate, Management Committee. It has offices at Commerce House, Festival Park, Stoke on Trent and owns a training centre and workspace studios at Initiative House, Campbell Road, Stoke on Trent.

5.5 Aims of Business Initiative

The aim of the organisation is to *offer a professional business advisory service of the highest quality.*

5.6 Business Initiative Mission Statement

To provide a business advisory and training service of the highest standard to prospective, new and existing micro businesses in North Staffordshire through counselling and training with the objective of:

1. Encouraging a successful and thriving small business community.
2. Creating and improving jobs in our catchment area through the establishment of these businesses.

3. Raising the level of economic activity of the area through the creation of new and non-traditional enterprises by working in partnership with other major organisations in the County.

5.7 Training / Courses Available from Business Initiative

- **Business Awareness** – a half day seminar designed to provide an overview of self-employment, what is involved and how and where to access support. Funded by Business Link West Midlands, to be eligible, applicants must live, or intend to start up a business in the West Midlands area.
- **Business Enterprise Programme** – a 3 day, or 5 evening, course that covers the essentials of book-keeping, marketing and preparing a business plan. Funded by Business Link West Midlands, to be eligible, applicants must live, or intend to start up a business in the West Midlands area.
- **Using the Internet and a Marketing Tool** – a half day course funded by Business Link West Midlands. To be eligible, applicants must live, or intend to start up a business in the West Midlands area.
- **New Deal Self-Employment Option** – funded by Jobcentre Plus and aimed at people in receipt of Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support, Incapacity Benefit, or a lone parent and interested in self-employment.
- **NVQ** – funded by the Coalfields Regeneration Trust providing business NVQs up to Level 3.
- **Early Entry to Enterprise** – provides a weekly training allowance, along with ongoing training and support for individuals either resident or have business premises within the City of Stoke on Trent, or eligible areas of Newcastle under Lyme. The programme is funded through Advantage West Midlands.

5.8 Programme Description

As outlined above, the **Early Entry to Enterprise** programme is funded through Advantage West Midlands, managed by Business Link West Midlands and contracted to Business Initiative.

The programme enables beneficiaries to test their business idea for a period of **13 weeks**, whilst receiving a training allowance of **£72.00 per week**.

Specifically the programme aims to support and encourage beneficiaries to take up self-employment, to harness the high motivation of short-term unemployed people, whilst providing the safety net of a training allowance.

The programme aims to:

- Enable beneficiaries to test their business ideas for 30 hours per week
- Increase the business formation rate within North Staffordshire
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- Encourage access to on-going business support through post start advisory sessions
- Offer delegates the opportunity to complete an NVQ Level 3 Business Start-up

The programme offers beneficiaries the opportunity to:

- Be their own boss
- Receive a weekly training allowance of **£72.00**
- Obtain **free** comprehensive training in business processes and procedures
- Work towards an NVQ Level 3 in Business Start Up
- Keep the profits of their business

5.9 Eligibility Criteria

- Aged 18 and over
- In receipt of Jobseekers Allowance or Income Support
- Prepared to sign off benefits and declare self-employment status to the Tax Office
- Resident, or have a business premises in the City of Stoke on Trent and be paying Council Tax to Stoke on Trent City Council / or be a resident in eligible area of Newcastle under Lyme
- Are not an overseas national subject to employment restrictions, or to a time limit on stay in Great Britain (other than a refugee or asylum seeker)
- Have produced a viable Business Plan that includes a cash flow forecast

- Not have accessed another Government programme in the last 6 months
- Are not at the same time on any other Jobcentre Plus funder programme or have accessed one in the last 6 months

5.10 Programme Delivery

Following an initial assessment by an experienced Business Advisor, clients are encouraged to attend a three day / five evening **Business Enterprise Programme** that covers the essentials of book-keeping, marketing and preparing a business plan.

They are then supported in preparing a Business Plan, which, when complete to the satisfaction of Business Initiative, is in effect a 'gateway' to the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**, when they are allocated an experienced Business Advisor. Clients meet their Business Advisor each week and agree 'actions' to support their business idea that would normally take up to **30 hours** each week to deliver. Clients are also handed a cheque in the sum of **£72.00**, which is classed as a 'training allowance' to be spent as the client feels appropriate.

Clients are provided with a weekly 'one to one' opportunity to discuss their individual progress and agree the following weeks 'actions'. Where appropriate clients are referred to others such as accountants and solicitors to discuss and resolve specific 'challenges' that may be beyond the experience of their Business Advisor.

It is important to note that in the majority of cases client's businesses are 'live' during the 13 week programme and a great deal of flexibility is built into delivery to ensure that business meetings / opportunities are not missed.

All eligible clients are also provided with an opportunity to complete an NVQ in Business Start Up and are required to attend generic short courses such as Health & Safety.

On completion of the 13 week programme of weekly one to one meetings with their Business Advisor, clients attend an exit interview and are allocated a new Business Advisor, who is available to offer continued business support / advice for a period of **one year**.

Contact can be planned as one to one meetings, or in the form of short notice telephone conversations that are ideal to '*resolve moments of crisis*'.

5.11 Programme Costs

Table 2 outlines contracted capital and revenue funding to support delivery of the programme.

Table 2 Contracted Funding

Funding Source	2006 / 07 £	2007 / 08 £	2008 / 09 £	2009 / 2010 £	Total
AWM - Capital	0	0	2000	0	2000
AWM - Revenue	3,830	78,359	109,811	0	192,000
Totals	3,830	78,359	111,811	0	194,000

5.12 Staff Allocated to the Programme

Table 3 lists key staff who have had 'face to face' contact with clients.

Table 3 Key Staff Allocated to the Programme

Name	Role	Part Time / Full Time	Average Hours Per Week
Irene Elliott	Training Manager	Part Time	7.5
Sandra Brookes	Trainer	Part Time	7.5
Peter Ball	Business Advisor	Part Time	As required
Peter Tomlinson	Business Advisor	Part Time	As required

5.13 Programme Outputs

Table 4 highlights outputs agreed with the principal funder.

Table 4 Contracted Outputs

Outputs	2006 / 07	2007 / 08	2008 / 09	2009/ 2010	2010/2011	Total
Jobs Created	2	41	50	0	0	93
Businesses Created 12 Months	0	3	39	48	0	90
Businesses Created 24 Months	0	0	2	37	41	80
Skills - People Assisted	0	32	24	0	0	56

6.0 Research Findings

6.1 Introduction

We have taken opportunity to research both quantitative outputs and qualitative outputs and outcomes. This has involved:

- A close examination of programme outputs (based on forecasts and actual achievements)
- Analysis of Business Initiative questionnaires completed by beneficiaries completing the programme
- Analysis of Wider Impact questionnaires completed by clients who were part of the programme during the period of the evaluation
- Analysis of a workshop attended by 12 clients who were part of the programme during the period of the evaluation
- 4 clients case studies
- One to one meetings with key programme staff
- A one to one meeting with a representative of Jobcentre Plus
- A one to one meeting with a representative of the Business Brokers
- Observations of programme delivery

6.2 Programme Outputs

Table 5 highlights outputs agreed with the principal funder (forecast), and outputs achieved by Business Initiative.

Table 5 Contracted Outputs

Outputs	2006 / 07		2007 / 08		2008 / 09		2009/ 2010		2010/ 2011		Current Totals	
	F	A	F	A	F	A	F	A	F	A	F	A
Jobs Created	2	3	41	41	50	52	0		0		93	96
Businesses Created 12 M	0	0	3	3	39	37	48		0		90	40
Businesses Created 24 M	0	0	0	0	2	3	37		41		80	3
Skills People Assisted	0	0	32	32	24	33	0		0		56	65

Source: Business Initiative, June 2009

Key: F – Forecast; A – Actual

Table 6 highlights key statistics regarding average age, BME candidates, males, females and candidates achieving an NVQ in Business Start Up.

Table 6 Key Statistics

Year	Number of Clients	Average Age	BME %	Male %	Female %	Achieved NVQ %
2007 / 08	44	38.1	4.55	79	21	73
2008 / 09	51	40.8	1.96	68	32	Not Applicable

Source: Business Initiative, June 2009

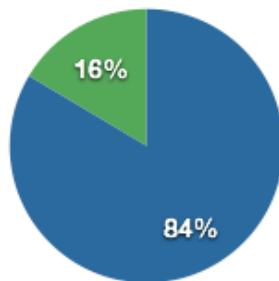
Comment – as of June 2009, outputs are clearly ‘on target’, and based on current performance, we see no reason why final targets will not be achieved. We have noted a ‘surge’ of candidates, commencing January 2009. Our research indicates that this was in great part, as a result of Business Initiative responding to local economic occurrences such as JCB redundancies. With the agreement of the principal funder, the catchment area was broadened and criteria amended. It is our view that such action was commendable and a clear example of ‘good practice’.

6.3 Questionnaire Analysis

Appendix A highlights graphs that summarise the outcomes of **79** Business Initiative questionnaires (**Appendix B**) completed by clients as they complete the Early to Enterprise programme.

Graphs 1 to 4 provide a summary of impressive outcomes achieved by Business Initiative in relation to ‘client satisfaction’ and client ‘confidence’ as a result of their attending the programme.

Graph 1

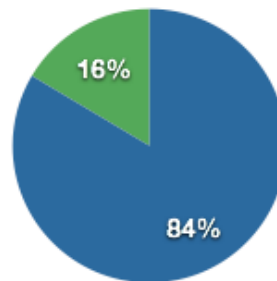


Confidence Level: Financial

As shown in the chart on the left, 84% of respondents felt their confidence levels with financial aspects of their business have increased as a result of attending the Early Entry to Enterprise Scheme.

● Greater ● Same

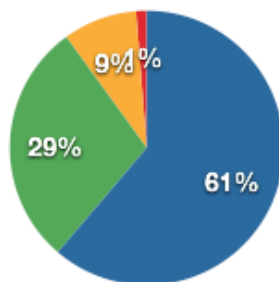
Graph 2



Confidence Level: Marketing

84% of respondents also felt their confidence levels regarding marketing their business have increased following participation on the scheme.

Graph 3

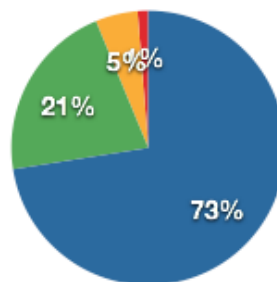


Usefulness of workshops: Market Research

As highlighted by the chart, 61% of respondents found the market research workshops very useful, 29% found them useful, 9% indicated they were of little use and just 1% stated they were of no use.

● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4

Graph 4



Usefulness of workshops: Marketing

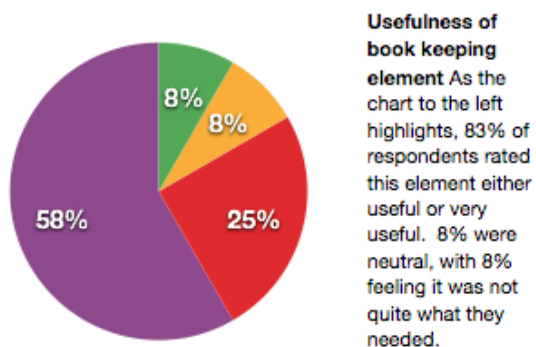
As highlighted by the chart, 73% of respondents found the marketing workshops very useful, 21% found them useful, 5% indicated they were of little use and just 1% stated they were of no use.

Key: 1 – Low 5 - High

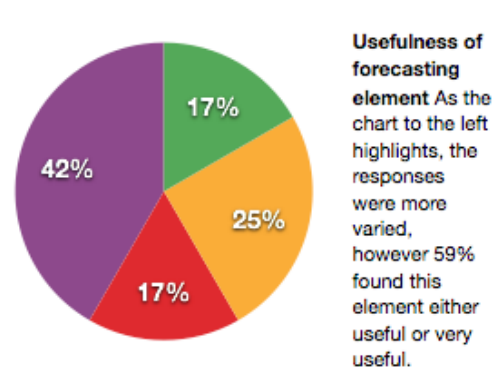
Appendix C highlights graphs that summarise the outcomes of Wider Impact Consultancy questionnaires (**Appendix D**) completed by 12 clients who were still attending the Early to Enterprise programme at the time of the evaluation.

Graphs 5 to 8 provide further evidence of impressive outcomes achieved by Business Initiative in relation to client satisfaction with the Early to Enterprise programme.

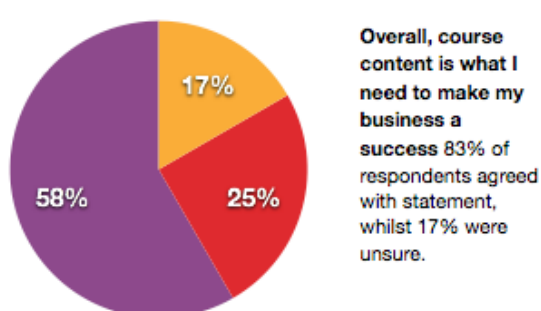
Graph 5



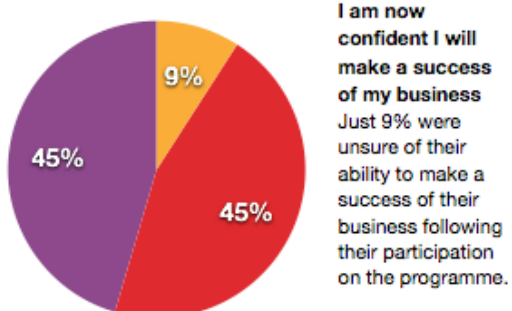
Graph 6



Graph 7



Graph 8



Key: 1 – Low 5 - High

6.4 Client Workshop

We took opportunity to meet with **12** clients who were still attending, or had recently completed the Early to Enterprise programme. **Appendix E** provides highlights of workshop outcomes. In summary clients:

- Are keen stay off benefits
- Heard about the programme from a variety of sources – **Jobcentre Plus** being the most consistent
- Gained confidence from being on the programme
- Value one to one support - delivered at local level
- Value ease of access to the Business Initiative Advisors
- Value support with issues such as finance, book keeping, marketing and business planning
- Gain benefit from networking with other people in the same situation as themselves
- Enjoy the flexibility of the programme
- Gained little about becoming self-employed from Jobcentre Plus
- Did not enjoy their experience of Jobcentre Plus
- Can see value in free phone access to Business Initiative at Jobcentre Plus offices
- Would value more workshop / networking opportunities whilst taking part in the Early Entry to Enterprise programme
- Did not appear to have much understanding of what other support was available to them to develop their business
- Would value more information about other support available at an earlier point in the Early Entry to Enterprise programme
- Would value more support in the future, such as free IT / advertising / marketing / training / the purchase of equipment

6.5 Case Studies

We are grateful to the following who gave up their valuable time and provided honest and frank feed back of their personal experiences of being unemployed and launching their own businesses:

- **Karen Lazenby**, Trentham Professional Recruitment Ltd

- **Julie Billingham**, Independent Money Advice Consultancy (IMAC)
- **Alan Salt**, 'The Cheeseman'
- **Roger Bingley**, R J Bingley, Sole Trader, Market Stall Holder, Specialising in Second Hand / Reconditioned Tools

Full case studies can be read at [Appendix F](#). In summary:

- All those interviewed were understandably traumatised when they were unexpectedly made redundant, or became otherwise 'unemployed'
- Jobcentre Plus did not meet their expectations, in terms of the support they required to start up their own businesses
- One client (**Karen Lazenby**) was **£618.00** per month better off by attending the Early Entry to Enterprise programme.
- All clients benefited from the first / early one to one meetings with the Business Advisor (Peter Ball)
- All clients benefited from attending the 3 day Business Enterprise programme, delivered by Business Initiative
- They most enjoyed '*meeting other like minded people and networking*' whilst attending the Business Enterprise programme
- They also valued learning about subjects such as marketing, book keeping and tax whilst attending the Business Enterprise programme
- All clients were extremely appreciative of receiving £72.00 per week by attending the Early Entry to Enterprise programme and generally treated it as '*income into their business*'
- All clients gained a great deal of benefit from attending the Early Entry to Enterprise programme and cite the following for the reasons for this:
 - '*They [the Advisors] gave me confidence in myself*'
 - '*The Advisors are excellent – they give you what you want, when you need it and are always there for you, either one to one, or on the telephone*'
 - '*The programme is flexible and tailored to what I need and want*'
- All clients stated they would value more information about other support available to support their business

- All clients stated they would have valued more group work, workshops and networking opportunities whilst on the Early Entry to Enterprise programme

6.6 Interviews with Programme Staff

We are grateful to the following who gave up their valuable time and provided honest and frank feed back of their personal experiences of supporting clients attending the Early Entry to Enterprise programme:

- **Irene Elliott** Training Manager
- **Sandra Brookes** Trainer
- **Peter Ball** Business Advisor
- **Peter Tomlinson** Business Advisor

All agreed that the Early Entry to Enterprise programme is a worthwhile initiative and made the following comments:

- *'Part of my role is to calm those who come to me down; listen and help them understand what they really want to do. Clients are often in shock, having recently been made redundant and it is a traumatic time for them. There is no doubt they value the calming influence only a one to one contact can provide'.* **Peter Ball**
- *'Everyone is so different and there is no 'one size fits all'. When I have listened, I take time to work with them to decide the best route for **them**. There is no doubt that the Early Entry to Enterprise is a good route for those who can develop good business plans'.* **Peter Ball**
- *'We don't just provide business advice and support. We are often mentors as well. Clients can have a lot going on in their lives and we are good listeners'.* **Sandra Brookes**
- *'It is a pleasure to do this job and to see a business idea develop into fruition. It is important to remember, there can be no quick fix to someone being made redundant and being unemployed.* **Irene Elliott**
- *Some clients are ringing us twice a week, long after the 13 week programme has ended for business support and advice. They clearly trust us and we aim to be here to support them'.* **Irene Elliott**

- *You have to remember there is nothing new in this. Such programmes have been around for a while. The titles have just changed. It is essential that clients receive long-term **holistic support** and are aware of what support and advice is there for them at any given point in time'. **Peter Tomlinson***

6.7 Meeting with Jobcentre Plus

We are grateful to **Annette Summerscales**, Jobcentre Plus, Staffordshire Partnership Manager for taking time to meet and contribute to the evaluation.

From our research, it is clear that whilst clients are on a 'Client Journey', when they walk into a Jobcentre Plus office, Jobcentre Plus staff have little apparent knowledge or experience of supporting clients who aim to enter self-employment. It is also clear that marketing materials, including the Jobcentre Plus website is geared to clients '*getting a job*', rather than exploring the option of self-employment.

We were however impressed to learn from Annette Summerscales of the following recent referrals of clients from Jobcentre Plus to the Early Entry to Enterprise programme:

2007 / 08	18
2008 / 09	86

We took opportunity to discuss our findings regarding the negative views and opinions of Early Entry to Enterprise programme clients regarding their experiences with Jobcentre Plus. We also pointed out our findings that not all the clients we interviewed either one to one; or met at the workshop were referred as quickly as they possibly could have been to agencies such as Business Initiative.

We do note that staff are trained and encouraged to refer appropriate clients to agencies such as Business Initiative and Business Link; and most encouragingly, as the above referrals highlight, are making increasing numbers of referrals to such organisations.

6.8 Meeting with the Business Brokers

We are grateful to **Adele Cope**, North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce Business Brokers for taking the time to meet and contribute towards the evaluation.

We shared our concerns regarding clients interviewed and attending the workshop not being fully aware of opportunities open to them that could support the development of their business. There are a host of support organisations / funding opportunities and networking opportunities throughout North Staffordshire open to individuals on their 'Client Journey'. We have taken opportunity to highlight examples at **Appendix G**.

Consensus was reached that it is essential that individuals such as those attending the Early Entry to Enterprise programme:

- Are made aware of what is on offer at the earliest / most appropriate opportunity
- Make sure best use is made of those resources / opportunities

We explored the opportunity of providing clients with a '**New Business Person's Passport of Opportunities**', which could for example:

- Enable clients to be 'registered' as they enter the 'Client Journey' (see **6.7**)
- Enable a central 'register' of clients to be accessed by key partner agency members
- Enable clients to be aware of what is on offer at any given point in the 'Client Journey'
- Track clients as they take up support / opportunities available to them
- Avoid duplication and replication of often scarce local services / resources
- Measure / evaluate the take up / success of services / resources

7.0 Summary of Findings

7.1 Introduction

We are pleased to report on what is clearly a highly successful programme that is 'on target' in terms of outputs, and based on current performance, we see no reason why final targets will not be achieved. Most significantly, qualitative evidence is extremely positive in terms of the programme delivering what clients are looking for and value.

7.2 Good Practice

Based on our findings we note the following 'good practice':

- Linkage with the North Staffordshire Chamber of Commerce / Business Brokers
- Linkage with Jobcentre Plus
- Increasing numbers of referrals to Business Initiative from Jobcentre Plus
- Initial, **locally based**, '**one to one**' support by Business Initiative Business Advisors
- A 'menu of options' for clients that include:
 - A short business familiarisation session
 - A three day Business Enterprise programme
 - Half day course - Access to the Internet / Marketing Tool
 - NVQ – up to Level 3
 - 13 week **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**
 - 1 years support from Business Initiative Business Advisors
- **£72.00** per week training allowance
- Flexibility – clients are able to develop at their own speed
- Trained, experienced, committed and caring staff
- Staff with varying skills and abilities
- Mentoring support - providing appropriate support with personal issues that can impact on businesses development
- High quality training / support materials
- The opportunity to complete an NVQ
- Networking opportunities with fellow clients

7.3 Lessons Learnt / Areas for Improvement

Based on our findings we make the following comments:

- Whilst positive links have been made with Jobcentre Plus, there is clearly a need to ensure that clients looking to develop a business idea / become self-employed are referred to agencies such as Business Initiative / Business Link as a matter of routine – rather than the ‘lottery’ situation in terms of referrals that currently seems to exist
- We are concerned that current Jobcentre Plus marketing materials / website makes little reference to self-employment as an alternative option to ‘getting a job’
- We feel that free phone access to Business Initiative from Jobcentre Plus offices is worthy of consideration
- We noted that a number of clients would value additional workshops / networking opportunities during their attendance on the 13 week Early Entry to Enterprise programme
- We noted that a number of clients were not aware as we expected of other business related support on offer / available whilst they are attending the 13 week Early Entry to Enterprise programme
- We also noted that a number of clients were not aware that further support, in the form of 1 year access to a Business Advisor, was freely available to them at the end of the 13 week Early Entry to Enterprise programme
- Following an initial ‘needs analysis’, it has been suggested to us that appropriate clients should be offered an **holistic package of support**, which should include for example, the three day Business Enterprise programme, the 13 week Early Entry to Enterprise programme and one years support from a Business Advisor; rather than the current provision of offering / providing individual ‘smaller bites’ of support

7.4 Summary

Based on commission terms of reference:

1. **Outputs** – as of June 2009 outputs are ‘on target’.
2. **Outcomes** – are impressive in terms of clients establishing new businesses and being no longer unemployed / claiming benefits. ‘Knock on’ outcomes of such steps by those

concerned are at the moment impossible to measure in terms of theirs, their immediate families and the wider communities' well-being and prosperity. It is clear that the Early Entry to Enterprise programme is without doubt playing a significant role in the social and economic regeneration of the local area.

3. **'Good practice'** – highlighted at [7.2](#) is impressive and is worthy of note by others working in the field of providing support and guidance to new business start-ups.
4. **Success Factors** – are summarised at [7.2](#).
5. **Recommendations** regarding post project strategy - see [Section 8](#)

8.0 Recommendations

8.1 Introduction

Based on our findings, we are pleased to make the following recommendations:

1. All those involved with developing and delivering the 13 week Early Entry to Enterprise programme (including clients) should be made aware of this report and congratulated and thanked for their inputs into the programme. There is no doubt the programme is valued by clients and is playing a positive role in the social and economic regeneration of the area.
2. Understanding economic issues, long-term, sustained funding to support such programmes should be a priority of organisations / funders such as Advantage West Midlands and Business Link.
3. Where appropriate, clients should be offered long-term, sustainable '**holistic**' packages', tailored to meet the special needs of North Staffordshire / Stoke on Trent, rather than short-term 'small bites' of support that risk being withdrawn at relatively short notice.
4. Clients appear to value **locally** based, '**one to one**' support from experienced Business Advisors. Such provision should be on offer to all those who value such support.
5. Business Link / Business Initiative should explore offering support to Jobcentre Plus to review Jobcentre Plus marketing materials; with a view to providing support / encouragement to those who are considering self-employment as an alternative option to 'getting a job'.
6. Clients seeking to become self-employed should be referred to agencies such as Business Initiative / Business Link by agencies such as Jobcentre Plus as a matter of course.
7. Innovative initiatives such as a free phone line from Jobcentre Plus offices to Business Initiative should be explored.
8. Consideration should be given to offering clients attending future programmes additional workshops and networking opportunities.
9. Clients should be kept fully aware at **all times** of other areas of support open to them, rather than offering such information at the end of programmes.

10. Consideration should be given to developing / piloting a '**New Business Person's Passport of Opportunities**' (see 6.8). We suggest that such initiative could be led by the Business Brokers.
11. Opportunity should be taken to 'celebrate' the success of the end of the current Early Entry to Enterprise programme. We suggest a high profile event, when opportunity can be taken to exchange 'good practice' and 'lessons learnt' with partner agency members.

9.0 Conclusions

9.1 Introduction

Wider Impact Consultancy is pleased to produce an extremely positive report about a programme, which is without doubt delivering:

1. Outputs agreed with the principal funder.
2. What is valued by clients attending the programme.
3. What North Staffordshire requires if it is 'move on' and recover from a sustained period of economic depression, further fuelled by the current recession.

9.2 Outputs / Outcomes

As of June 2009 outputs are 'on target'. Outcomes are impressive in terms of clients establishing new businesses and being no longer unemployed / claiming benefits. 'Knock on' outcomes of such steps by those concerned are at the moment impossible to measure in terms of theirs, their immediate families and the wider communities' well-being and prosperity.

9.3 'Good practice'

Details of 'good practice' are highlighted at [7.2](#) and appear to be based on a well thought out, locally based programme delivered by experienced and committed staff who are able to deliver what clients value and require.

9.4 Lessons Learnt

Details of lessons learnt are highlighted at [7.3](#) and include emphasis on client's experiences of their time with Jobcentre Plus. There is no doubt that early referrals to agencies such as Business Initiative / Business Link for those who are looking to enter self-employment is essential. In relation to delivery of the Early Entry to Enterprise programme, clients will value a degree of 'fine tuning' to the programme, with particular reference to the provision of workshops / networking and earlier access to other areas of business support.

9.5 Summary

There can be no doubt of the value of supporting the growth of SMEs. For example, according to the Department for Business Innovation and Skills:

- At the start of 2007, there were **4.7 million** SME businesses
- **99.9%** of all UK businesses are SMEs
- SMEs employ **13.5million** people – **59.2%** of the total private sector
- SMEs contribute as much as large businesses to UK output (**50%** of Gross Value Added, and turnover of **51.5%**)

There is also no doubt that the majority of those first entering business require support. For example, according to the latest information from the DTI Small Business Service, one year survival rates have decreased recently, after a steady eight year increase. Three year survival rates have however continued to increase.

Based on our findings, locally delivered holistic programmes such as the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme** fit with the Governments **Business Support Simplification model (BSS)**. There is no doubt that the programme is playing a significant role in supporting local people come off / stay off benefits, establish new businesses, and thereby contribute to local social and economic regeneration. In summary, we emphasise two report recommendations:

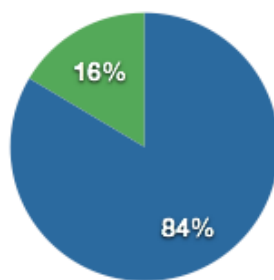
Recommendations 2 - Understanding economic issues, long-term, sustained funding to support such programmes should be a priority of organisations / funders such as Advantage West Midlands and Business Link.

Recommendation 3 - Where appropriate, clients should be offered long-term, sustainable ‘**holistic**’ **packages**’, tailored to meet the special needs of North Staffordshire / Stoke on Trent, rather than short-term ‘small bites’ of support that risk being withdrawn at relatively short notice.

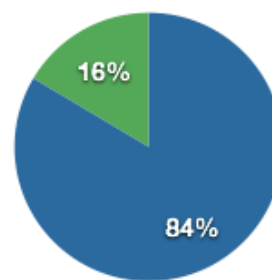
We are delighted to commend the programme and thank those who contributed to this report.

Appendix A

Business Initiative Questionnaire Outputs

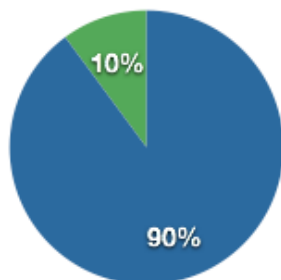


Confidence Level: Financial
As shown in the chart on the left, 84% of respondents felt their confidence levels with financial aspects of their business have increased as a result of attending the Early Entry to Enterprise Scheme.

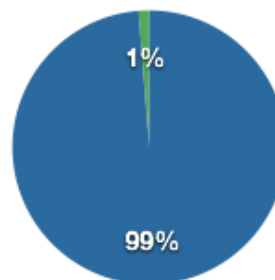


Confidence Level: Marketing
84% of respondents also felt their confidence levels regarding marketing their business have increased following participation on the scheme.

● Greater ● Same

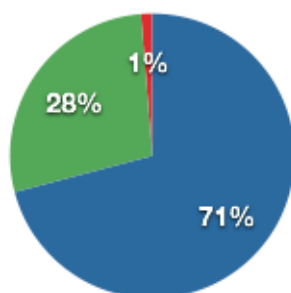


Confidence Level: Business Planning
90% of respondents indicated that they feel more confident about business planning, with 10% saying they were no more or no less confident.

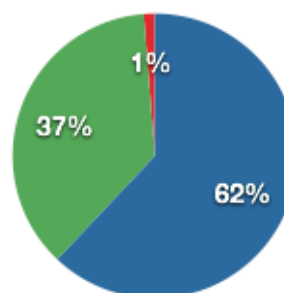


Will you now be able to develop / improve your business skills because of this course?
As the graph states, just 1% felt they would not be able to develop or improve their skills, compared to 99% would felt they could.

● Greater ● Same ● Yes ● No

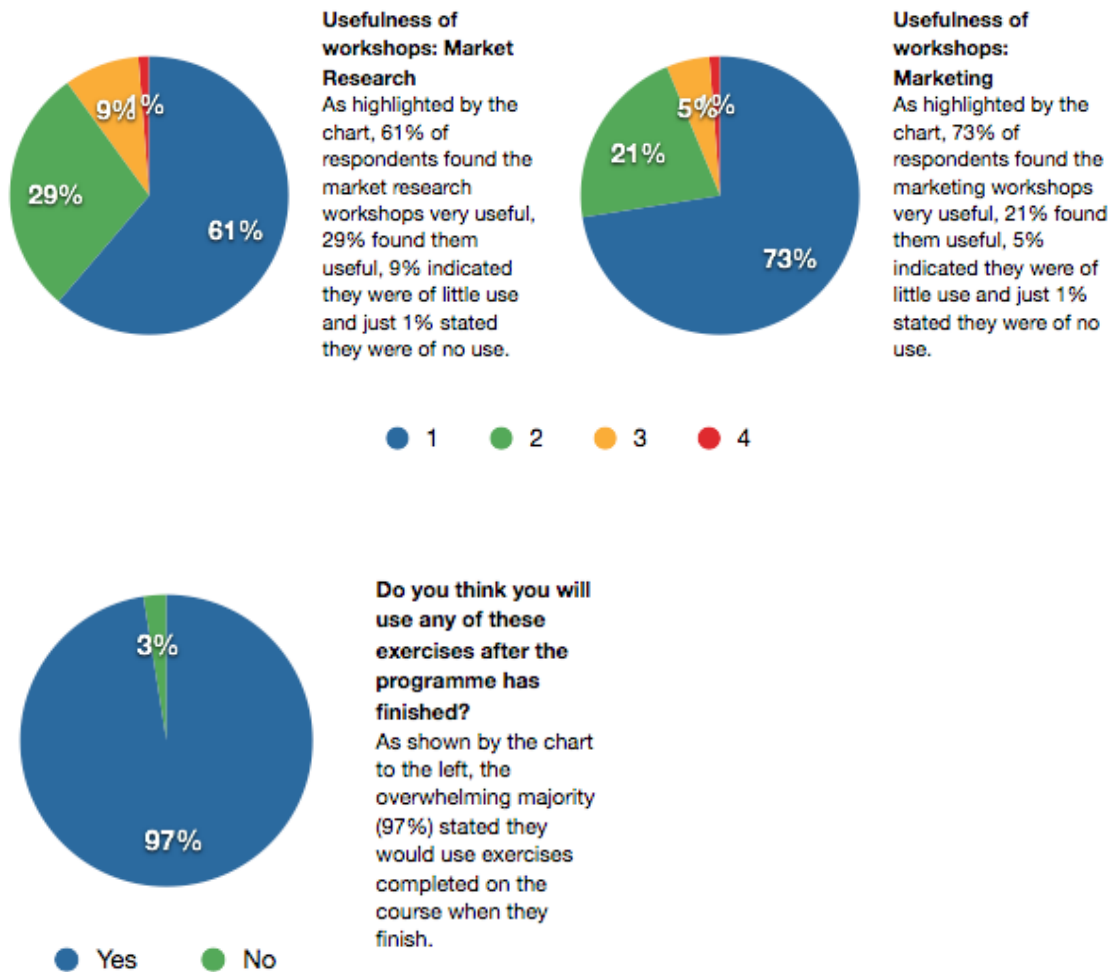


Usefulness of workshops: Book-keeping
As highlighted by the chart, 71% of respondents found the book-keeping workshops very useful, 28% found them useful, and just 1% stated they were of no use.



Usefulness of workshops: Cash Flow Forecasts
As highlighted by the chart, 62% of respondents found the cash flow forecasts workshops very useful, 37% found them useful, and just 1% stated they were of no use.

● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4



Appendix B

Business Initiative Questionnaire

BEP COURSE EVALUATION

NAME:

DATE:

1. Please take a moment to rate our overall service (Please circle your response):

Very Good Good As Expected Poor Very Poor

2. How much did you enjoy the course and why?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

- 3.As a result of today, do you have greater confidence in the subjects covered?

Confidence Level
(Please circle)

- | | |
|----------------------|-----------------------|
| a) Financial | Greater / Same / Less |
| b) Marketing | Greater / Same / Less |
| c) Business Planning | Greater / Same / Less |

4. Will you now be able to develop / improve your business skills because of this course? YES/NO? Please comment further.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

5. Below you will find a list of the different parts of today's workshop. Please circle a number from 1 to 4 according to how useful to how useful you found each part of the workshop.

TOPIC	VERY USEFUL	USEFUL	OF LITTLE USE	OF NO USE
Book-keeping	1	2	3	4
Cash flow forecasts	1	2	3	4
Market Research	1	2	3	4
Marketing	1	2	3	4

6. What specific exercises helped you the most? Why? Please give details.

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

7. What specific exercises helped you the least? Why? Please give details.

.....

.....

.....

.....
.....

8.Do you think you will use any of these exercises after the course has finished?

YES/NO (please circle)

9.Do you think there was anything missing from the day? YES/NO (please circle)

If YES please give details.

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

10.Do you think the trainer(s) understood your needs sufficiently? Any
comments you may have would be welcomed.

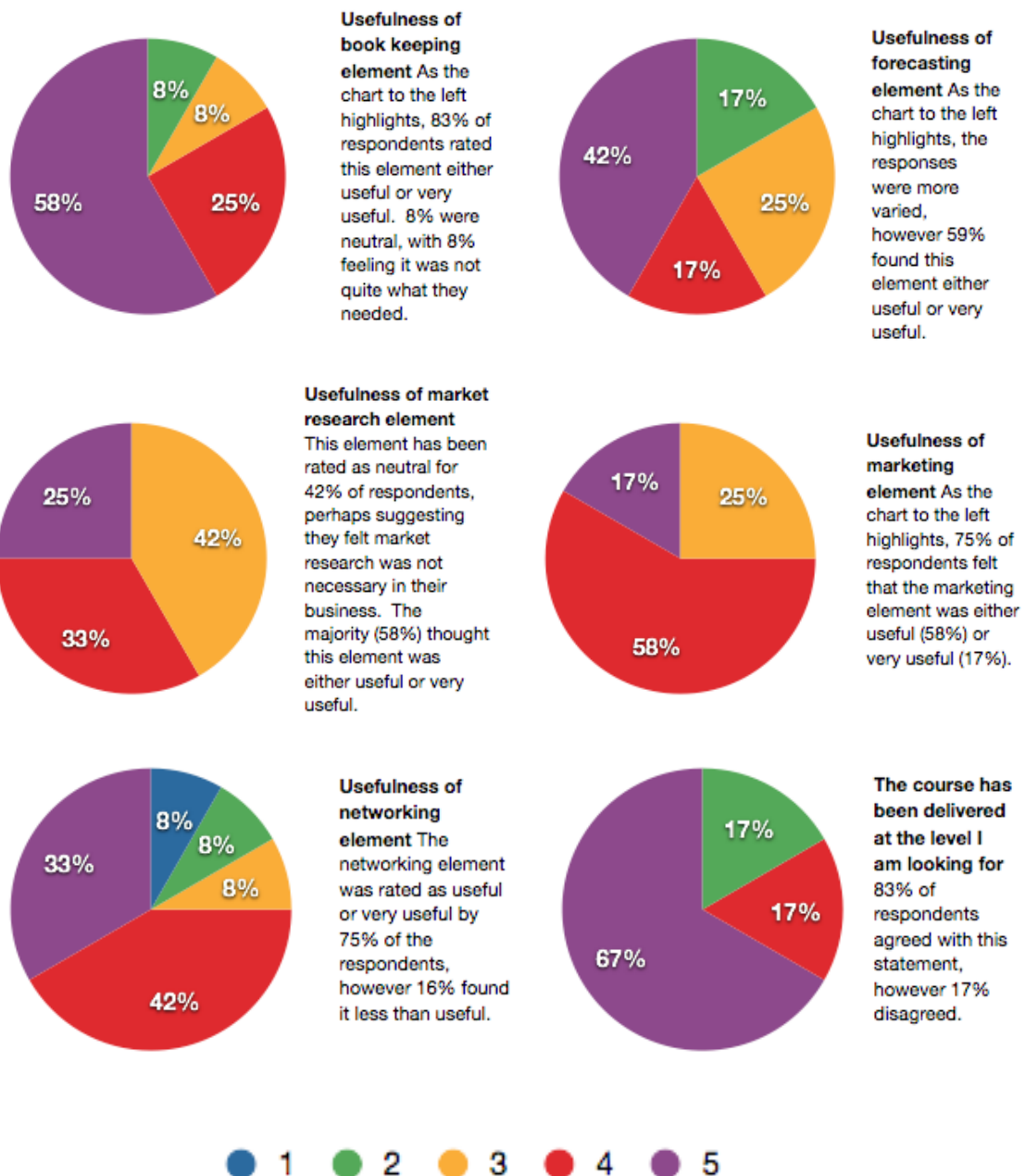
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THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP

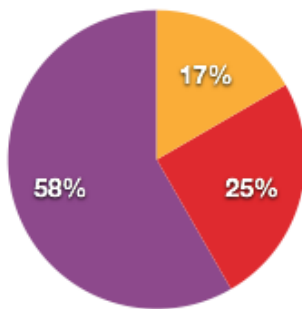
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Appendix C

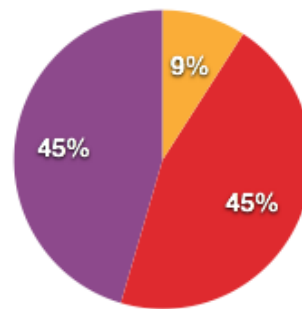
Wider Impact Questionnaire Outputs



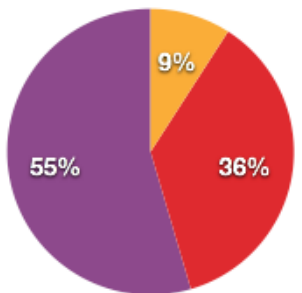
Key: 1 – Low 5 - High



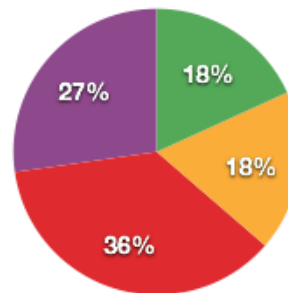
Overall, course content is what I need to make my business a success 83% of respondents agreed with statement, whilst 17% were unsure.



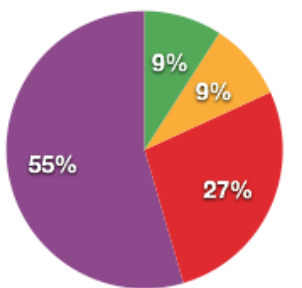
I am now confident I will make a success of my business Just 9% were unsure of their ability to make a success of their business following their participation on the programme.



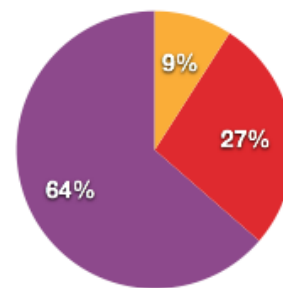
I am now more confident in financial issues Again, just 9% of respondents were unsure of their abilities in financial issues, whilst a very impressive 55% agreed strongly that they were now more confident.



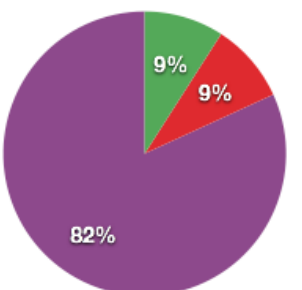
I am now more confident in marketing issues 18% of respondents still feel less than confident about their abilities in marketing issues. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that marketing, unlike finance, is not an exact science, with a right or wrong answer.



I am now more confident in business planning issues Just 9% of respondents were unsure of their abilities in business planning issues, whilst a very impressive 55% agreed strongly that they were now more confident.



I am more likely to continue in business as a result of being on this course An amazing 91% of respondents agreed with this statement, with a further 9% being unsure.



I would recommend this course to others 91% of respondents agreed they would recommend this course to others.



Key: 1 – Low 5 - High

Appendix D

Wider Impact Questionnaire



Thank you for taking the time to complete this short questionnaire, which will be used as part of our evaluation of the **Early Entry to Enterprise Programme**.

Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions about this survey.

Edwin Lewis, Director, Wider Impact Consultancy

Personal Information	
Name
Post Code
Business Name
Business Description
Email

Question 1	
What category does your business best fit into?	
Arts, sports, recreation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Catering, accommodation	<input type="checkbox"/>
Construction	<input type="checkbox"/>
Customer services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Education, training	<input type="checkbox"/>
IT, media, telecommunications services	<input type="checkbox"/>
Manufacturing	<input type="checkbox"/>
Professional services	<input type="checkbox"/>

Retail, hire, repair	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Transport, distribution	<input type="checkbox"/>	
Other* (<i>Please specify below</i>)		
.....		

Question 2

How would you rate the following: (1 is low – 5 is high)

I have found the book keeping element useful	1 2 3 4 5
I have found the forecasting element useful	1 2 3 4 5
I have found the market research element useful	1 2 3 4 5
I have found the marketing element useful	1 2 3 4 5
I found the networking element useful	1 2 3 4 5
The course has been delivered at the level I am looking for	1 2 3 4 5
Overall, course content is what I need to make my business a success	1 2 3 4 5

Question 3

How would you rate the following as a result of your attending this course
(1 is low – 5 is high)

I am now confident that I will make a success of my business	1 2 3 4 5
I am now more confident in financial issues	1 2 3 4 5
I am now more confident in marketing issues	1 2 3 4 5
I am now more confident in business planning issues	1 2 3 4 5
I am more likely to continue in business as a result of being on this course	1 2 3 4 5
I would recommend this course to others	1 2 3 4 5

Please complete the following (please feel free to continue on a separate sheet of paper)

I have enjoyed / did not enjoy (delete as appropriate) the course because.....

.....

The course could have been improved by

.....

For further information / contribution please contact **Edwin Lewis** at Wider Impact Consultancy by email at edwin@widerimpact.com, or on 0845 165 0491

Appendix E

Workshop Outputs

How Did You Hear About the Programme?

- Job Centre (4)
- Business Initiative website
- GMB Unity House
- Visit to Chamber
- Redundancy support package - company

What Attracted You to this Programme?

- Help with being self-employed (2)
- Lack of jobs
- Funding route to get off Job Seekers (2)
- To start off on the right footing
- Stay Legal

What is Good About the Programme?

- Being with other business start ups
- Networking (5)
- The support available (6)
- Free advice and support
- Planning
- Learning about book keeping, tax and advertising
- How to get money back from the tax man
- Help with all the background work – makes confidence for you to do the manual work
- Confidence to communicate with others
- Help only one phone call away
- Flexibility

How Could it Be Improved?

- More workshop type classes
- More info about support available
- Improved communication from other agencies
- Free phone from Job Centre to BI for info
- Job Centre section for self-employment
- Wider availability
- Advertise the course more
- Supply the £72.00 a bit longer
- If it were a longer course – 3 months money is not enough
- Longer course and support. More incentive
- It could not / don't know yet

What Would You Now / Next Value Most to Develop Your Business?

- More local interest in small business
- Build up client base further
- Internet advertising
- Funds
- Funding and IT support
- Help with more advertising
- More financial support to buy equipment and training
- More ongoing help
- Business Advisor

What Else is There Out There to Support You?

- Don't know! (2)
- Prince's Trust
- PROWESS WECOE
- Train to Gain
- Business Link
- Businesses
- Free Courses

'Wish List'

- Lots of customers
- Free advertising for small businesses
- Establish
- Be more profitable
- Healthy bank balance
- To be successful. Stay self employed
- Financial support for training and to purchase equipment
- To work 7 days a week
- Get rich and retire
- Have a good life style / life balance

Appendix F

Client Case Studies

Karen Lazenby, Trentham Professional Recruitment Ltd

Julie Billingham, Independent Money Advice Consultancy (IMAC)

Alan Salt – ‘The Cheeseman’

Roger Bingley, R J Bingley, Sole Trader, Market Stall Holder, Specialising in Second Hand / Reconditioned Tools

Karen Lazenby – Trentham Professional Recruitment Ltd

Karen has been a beneficiary of the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme** from March 2009 to June 2009. She is 43 years old and lives in the City of Stoke on Trent. She has two children aged 14 and 18 years. Up until January 2009, when she was suddenly made redundant, Karen was employed for **17 years** in the pharmaceutical industry. Her salary was in the region of **£30,000** per year and she has a mortgage of around **£500.00** per month.

Karen says, 'I was devastated when I was made redundant as it was not expected. I had meetings with HR and support was offered, but I was in shock. I had a lump sum from the redundancy, but that was all I had to pay my mortgage and live on'.

*Her experience of 'signing on' was 'Not good – I expected so much from Jobcentre Plus. It was an awful experience. I felt like a second class citizen and just a number. No-one seemed to care and had any empathy for my situation and what I was going through. It felt so cold and uncaring. Even though they kept pushing me to get a job and look for work, there were no jobs on offer. They did not seem to understand that I wanted to form my own business and work for myself. All I got was **£60.00** per week Job Seekers Allowance. There was no help or guidance on offer to me. It was a horrible place!*

Things changed for Karen when a friend referred her to the North Staffordshire Chamber, 'What a difference. I got to meet a Small Business Advisor and he was lovely. He spoke to me as an adult and understood where I was coming from. He believed in me and helped me to build up my confidence. He arranged for me to attend a 3 day course, where we were given help, advice and guidance in areas such as marketing, book keeping and tax issues. This course was great, because in addition to learning about such important subjects, you get to meet and network with like minded people. You realise that you are not alone and self-employment is a realistic option.

*The Advisor supported me with my Business Plan, which enabled me to attend the 13 week **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**. I was given a weekly training allowance of **£72.00**. I established my new business – as a Recruitment Consultancy, specialising in the Care Sector*

*Because I had 'signed off' and become self-employed through my newly established business on a low income, I now qualify for **£570.00** per month in Tax Credits. Can you imagine what this has meant to me? I am now self-employed, I have my pride back and financially I am sound for a while until my business 'kicks in' and starts to support my family.*

Karen is praising of the Early to Enterprise programme. *'The £72.00 training allowance is very important as you can image in financial terms. It also meant 'income' was coming into my new business. But most importantly, I am receiving valuable help and advice from the Advisors and am regularly referred on when I need support they are unable to provide.*

I get a meeting every week and it is good to bump into colleagues who are waiting for their one to one sessions. All the Advisors are excellent and really care for you. They understand what you are going through and know what you require and the time when you need it'. I am given weekly tasks to carry out in relation to my business and the week after we check to see how I have gone on. It keeps me focussed and on track'.

Karen would have liked to have seen more networking opportunities during the 13 weeks. *'Apart from a Health & Safety talk, we did not get to meet many other people starting up their own business in the same way as we did on the 3 day course. I personally would have liked more group sessions.*

Karen is realistic about the future, *'I know it is going to be hard work and the future will be uncertain, but I now have the 'tools' for the job and know I can always rely on Business Initiative for support when I need it.*

I have my pride back, my confidence is growing and I have valuable time to make things happen for me.

I could never thank all those involved with Business Link enough for what they have given me'.

Trentham Professional Recruitment Ltd has been established since March 2009 and currently employs Karen Lazenby as a Director. The companies target market is the social care sector and typical clients include Social Services, Local Authorities and private residential care homes and companies. More information about the company can be found at www.tprltd.co.uk

Julie Billingham, Independent Money Advice Consultancy (IMAC)

Julie has been a beneficiary of the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme** from March 2009 to June 2009. She is 48 years old and lives in Stoke on Trent. She is married with no dependent children. She worked for 11 years for Lloyds TSB until she was made redundant due to her local branch closing. Her area of expertise was client support and legal procedures.

Not wanting to stand still Julie completed a full-time 3 year Law degree and a Diploma in Legal Practice.

Julie started as a volunteer working for the Citizen Advice Bureau, which led to a full time position as a Money Advisor. She held this position for 8 years, earning around £24,000 until she had to leave due to internal issues she does not wish to expand on. Suffice to say, her confidence was damaged and she made a claim for contribution based Job Seekers Allowance.

It was whilst working as a specialist debt advisers in the voluntary sector that Julie and her business partner first mooted the idea of setting up a consultancy. Feedback from clients showed that whilst they appreciated the free help they were given, they were frustrated by the lack of service availability and felt that they had not been given enough support to make the advice they had received effective.

Julie took her ideas to Jobcentre Plus but, *'My experience at Jobcentre Plus was awful. I received the basic £60.00 per week Job Seekers Allowance and that was about it. The staff there did not want to know about me the person and the fact I had a business idea. They did not seem to want to listen to me and just kept on about getting a job. But there were no jobs out there for me and they did not appear to recognise that. I was just a number. It was a horrible experience.'*

Things changed for Julie when she found details about Business Initiative on the Business Link website, *'I made an appointment and met Peter Ball. He was super. I had a business idea and he listened to me and immediately started to build up my confidence. He knew where I was coming from and his advice was good and realistic.'*

He arranged for me to attend a 3 day course, which was excellent. We covered marketing, cash flow and things such as tax. It was good because I got to meet people like myself and we got on really well. We exchanged ideas and I still keep in touch with some of them now.

*Following the 3 day course Peter assisted me with my Business Plan and I got accepted onto the 13 week **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**. I signed off and was provided with a **£72.00** per week training allowance. I got*

to meet an Advisor every week and we agreed business related tasks that I carry out each week'.

Julie also took advantage of the availability of the NVQ in Business start up. 'I felt it would allow me to expand my knowledge of the business skills I require through the activities undertaken such as how to win and keep customers and decide the financial needs of the business.

It is a qualification worth gaining to place your business in the best possible position it can be to prosper. It also impresses the bank manager because he knows that your competence has been tested'.

Julie is praising of the Advisors, 'They are wonderful. They know what you need at any given time and are prepared to refer you to others when appropriate. They also care for you as a person and are helping me to build up my confidence, which is still low. I know they are there when I need them'.

Julie continues, 'Another benefit of undertaking the courses with Business Initiative is the opportunity to learn alongside others in the same situation and network with people who were offering services that would compliment ours. The Business Advisors have also introduced us to many other wonderful organisations such as the North Staffs Chamber of Commerce, WIRE and WECOE and have helped us with funding bids.

Looking back at my time with Business Initiative I feel that it has been one of the most beneficial journeys I have undertaken. I took full advantage of the services on offer and after attending the session on using the internet as a market tool I was able work with our web designers to give us the best possible advantage on the internet.

I am so glad I picked up the phone and contacted Business Initiative. The service is of real value to start up businesses and I feel that if we were to lose any aspects of this valuable service it would be a very sad day for young businesses in North Staffordshire'.

The Independent Money Advice Consultancy Ltd promotes responsible money management and offers expert advice in debt and welfare benefits providing practical solutions to small businesses and individuals. From assistance at court with housing arrears to negotiating with creditors we are happy to help.

Our money management courses are designed to be flexible in order to suit any organisational set up and learner ability. Our aim is to equip students with effective budgeting skills and enhance their knowledge so they can make rewarding decisions about money. To find out more about our services please contact us on 0800 917 6079 or visit us at www.money-consultants.co.uk

Alan – The Cheeseman

Alan has been a beneficiary of the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme** from March 2009 to June 2009. He is 53 years old with no dependent relatives. He lives in Leek, Staffordshire and until December 2008 worked for 36 years for Diary Crest, when he was made redundant.

He says, 'Word got about that staff were going to be made redundant and I eventually got the phone call and had the meeting I was dreading. I was numb after and realised how much stress I was under. It was not a pleasant time of my life I can tell you'.

Alan quite wisely sought advice when he received details of his redundancy package and began to realise that perhaps things were not as bad as he feared.

A life changing moment however changed his life for ever, 'I had a health scare and for a while thought the worst. When I got the all clear, I realised that life was for living and nothing was going to get me down again like I felt when I was made redundant'.

His first port of call was Jobcentre Plus, 'What a waste of time that was'. Because of my financial situation I was not entitled to a penny, despite my never being unemployed and claiming a penny. They were next to useless as far as I was concerned. To rub salt in, I had to travel from Leek to Hanley because we do not have a Centre in Leek. I was paying out petrol money to get nothing of use to me. They had no idea about my business ideas and just kept telling me to 'get a job' – but there was none out there for me'.

Alan does however recognise that someone at Jobcentre Plus did refer me to Business Initiative, *'That is when things changed and began to move'.*

'I met up with Peter Ball, an ex banker and he really understood what I was looking for and needed. He put me onto a 3 day course, where we learned about marketing, cash flow and tax. I enjoyed that because I met other people like me. You could exchange ideas and experiences.

*Peter then helped me with my business plan and cash flow. That got me onto the 13 week **Early Entry to Enterprise programme** and I have not looked back since'.*

Alan is extremely praising of the programme, *'They know exactly what you want and when they need it. Irene, Sandra and Peter have been great. For example, I am not to sure about paperwork and they arranged for me to*

meet with an Accountant who has really helped me.

The programme is about taking one step at a time and I really appreciate the opportunity to meet one to one with the Advisors. As well as providing what I need in terms of the business, they cheer me up and put me on track'.

'I have a spring in my step and am looking forward to the future. I am looking into applying for funding to purchase a new laptop and I know that Peter will help with my application.

I am picking up work and am really enjoying working for myself. I would recommend anyone thinking of starting a business to contact Business Initiative. The team there are first class and I cannot thank them enough.

About The Cheeseman

Alan Salt is a freelance self-employed consultant providing help and support to cheese producers and retailers. He also enjoys providing demonstrations and writing articles about the cheese making process.

Roger Bingley – R J Bingley, Sole Trader, Market Stall Holder, Specialising in Second Hand / Re-conditioned Tools

Roger is 51 years old with no dependent relatives. He lives in Stoke on Trent and was a joiner by trade, until he was made redundant in 2007. Roger is carrying significant personal debt. Since being made redundant he has been claiming benefits of **£60.00** per week until October 2008, when he joined the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**. He completed the programme December 2008. He is now 'self-employed' and no longer claims benefits.

Roger enjoyed and valued the **Early Entry to Enterprise programme**, *'It delivered what I was looking for. I learnt a lot by completing my business plan. It made me think about what my business idea was all about. The Advisors are really helpful and support me with issues such as the paper work, which was a weak area for me. Receiving the £72.00 per week was really useful and my only complaint is the programme is not long enough'*.

Roger is still accessing the support provided by his Business Advisor allocated after the programme ended and says, *'Running a business and being self-employed is different than the theory. It is hard work and not an easy option. There is supposed to be support from the banks, but mine will not grant me a small £500.00 overdraft, which I need to carry out my business of purchasing tools from members of the public and dealers. My Advisor has even contacted by bank on my behalf to make my case, but it has been no use'*.

Despite such challenges Roger is *'Paying my way'*. He is running a market stall and attends trade events and car boot sales. He is exploring setting up a web site, acknowledging he still, *'Has a lot to learn about running small businesses, staying off the dole and avoiding claiming benefits'*.

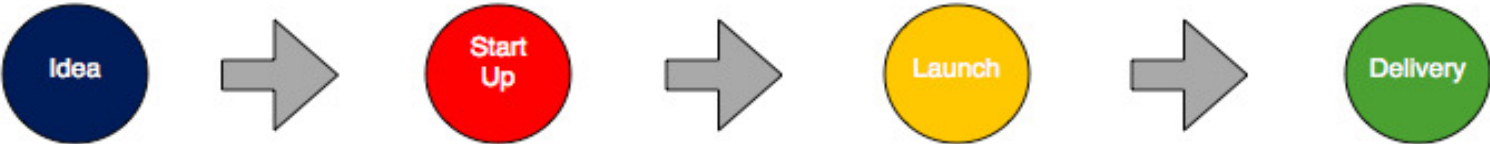
Advisor **Irene Elliott** comments, *'Roger is not finding it easy and is still dependent on the Advisors. We often receive two or three calls a week from him. It is good he keeps in touch with us, which demonstrates that people can feel alone when setting up a business and value someone at the end of a phone to talk to for advice, support and often vent their frustrations. We will stay with Roger for as long as we are able'*.

Roger is praising of Business Initiative, *'They really care about you and have passion for what they do. They have the knowledge and networks I need, and I would give them ten out of ten for what they are doing for me'*.

Roger Bingley – is without doubt an 'expert' in his field of purchasing, cleaning and renovating 'quality' second hand tools. He meets clients and members of the public at car boot sales and on his market stall looking to sell unwanted tools. He has a 'good eye' for something rare / unique and is of interest to specialists.

Appendix G

North Staffordshire New Business Start Up Client Journey

Support <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jet • Early Entry to Enterprise • Job Centre Plus • Biz Fiz • Business Initiative • Business Innovation Centre • Business Brokers • Chamber of Commerce • VAST 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biz Fiz • Early Entry to Enterprise • Business Initiative • Business Link • Business Innovation Centre • Chamber of Commerce • Burslem Live / Work • Websites • Staffordshire Moorlands Council • Newcastle Under Lyme Council 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Initiative • Business Link • Chamber of Commerce • Stoke City Council • Business Brokers • BNI Breakfast Club • Finest • Connect Midlands • University of Warwick Science Park • Staffordshire University • Business Innovation Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Business Link • UK Trade and Investment • Chamber of Commerce • InStaffs • Business Brokers • HM Revenue and Customs • Trading Standards • Stoke City Council • Staffordshire County Council • Newcastle Under Lyme Council
Stage 			
Funding <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantage Early Growth Fund • Enterprise Fellowship Scheme • PRIME 50+ • Prince's Trust Business • Shell LiveWIRE • Advantage Proof of Concept • Arrow Small Business Finance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantage Business Angels • Advantage Proof of Concept • Advantage Early Growth Fund • Innovation Networks • Innovation Vouchers • North Staffordshire Risk Capital Fund • UK Steel Enterprise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantage Business Angels • Advantage Early Growth Fund • Innovation Networks • Innovation Vouchers • North Staffordshire Risk Capital Fund • UK Steel Enterprise • Minerva • Enterprise Finance Guarantee 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Advantage Business Angels • Michelin Development Fund • Advantage Early Growth Fund • Innovation Networks • Innovation Vouchers • North Staffordshire Risk Capital Fund • UK Steel Enterprise • Minerva • Enterprise Finance Guarantee

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