

SOCIAL ENTERPRISE START UPS INCREASE AS RECESSION DEEPENS

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The number of people deciding to take a new direction and start up a social enterprise is growing, according to leading support agency iSE (Initiative for Social Entrepreneurs).

“We will have helped 15 new enterprises start up in recent months,” says Sarah Crawley, Chief Executive of iSE “and are seeing the number of enquires increase almost daily. The impetus for some is having been made redundant and deciding that now is the time to take action on a business idea they have been thinking about for some time, for others it’s part of the natural business process of identifying needs and opportunities in a growing market and deciding to meet them.”

One of the latest social enterprises iSE has helped to launch is Roots HR CIC – the first social enterprise in the UK to offer HR services for the Third Sector. Managing Director Jan Golding comments: “Charities, voluntary and community organisations are often too small or under-funded to employ in-house HR professionals, yet the field of HR can be a minefield to the uninitiated and unprepared. I noticed that the number of employment tribunals per employed head within voluntary organisations is significantly disproportionate to the overall UK workforce, so I decided to set up a not-for-personal-profit business with the aim of providing an affordable service to support them in improving practices and avoiding the cost and heartache of getting it wrong.”

After consultation with iSE, Jan opted to make Roots HR a Community Interest Company (CIC). She successfully registered the company in January and has already won a number of contracts enabling her to start creating jobs. “I am looking for qualified or studying HR professionals to work with me to make Roots HR CIC a leading company in its field,” she says. “I want all Third Sector organisations, regardless of their size or income, to be able to access excellent HR support.”

According to research commissioned last year by Advantage West Midlands, there are over 5,500 social enterprises in the region, generating around £5.7bn of traded income each year. They account for approximately 6.6% of all employment in the West Midlands, providing over 156,000 jobs of which over 105,000 are full time. They also support over 210,000 volunteering opportunities. “It’s not just people mid way through their careers wanting to change direction and ‘put something’ back who are interested in setting up social

enterprises,” says Sarah Crawley. “We are increasingly seeing young people opting to set up in business when they leave education and choosing social enterprise as their preferred way of doing it.”

Anyone interested in setting up a social enterprise can find out more at www.i-se.co.uk.

For more information about Roots HR CIC see www.rootshr.org.uk.

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