



## **South West recognised as ‘creative hot spot’ with abundance of small creative businesses contributing £315m to economy**

- 11,500 small creative businesses in South West, employing 17,000 people in the region and contributing £315m to economy
- 30% of small creative businesses in South West owned by women, well above 21% UK average of female-owned small businesses

A new report by notonthehighstreet.com and Oxford Economics has shown that the changing world of work is seeing more people than ever before turn away from traditional ‘9 to 5’ roles in favour of more flexible and independent ways of working.

Home to 11,500 small creative businesses, the South West provides a particularly hospitable environment for entrepreneurs, with lower rents and lower living costs than London, and access to a highly talented workforce, making the region an ideal location for creative businesses to start up.

The movement towards creative entrepreneurship is contributing to the 27% increase nationwide in self-employment over the last ten years, bringing current numbers to 4.8 million. The 50% increase in self-employed women is particularly notable, now standing at 1.5m. In the South West, small creative businesses see above average female ownership (30%), beating London (27%) and the South East (23%).

Today there are 134,000 small creative businesses in the UK, employing 192,000 people and contributing £3.6 billion gross value added to the UK economy. One in 40 UK businesses is a small creative business. More than 11,500 of those are in the South West, where they contribute £315m to the economy and employ 17,000 people in the region.

A ‘creative attitude’ to work has also emerged. In the last ten years, more and more people are finding their own way to make work ‘work’ for them. They are seeking choice and freedom, and thousands are building successful businesses and setting their own work/life agendas as a result. With a record number of two-parent working households, which now stands at 3.6m, people want flexibility.

The findings of the report reveal that two thirds of creative entrepreneurs are benefitting from greater flexibility and freedom, with nearly half citing this as the main motivation for starting their own business. 95% of those surveyed feel a greater sense of achievement and 90% enjoy life more and feel happier as a result of starting their own business.

**A ticket back into the world of work for mums**



The shift to a different way of working is particularly empowering women entrepreneurs and parents with children living at home. In fact, for one in ten of the notonthehighstreet.com Partners surveyed, starting their own business was their ticket back into the world of work after a period of unpaid leave to care for young children. And this movement is happening nationwide with small creative businesses driving prosperity and economic growth in every single region of the UK.

These new ways of working are being driven by a number of macroeconomic changes:

- an increasingly connected and online world where physical location is no longer a barrier to the reach and success of a business
- advances in technology enabling more of life's functions to be carried out digitally, at any time and in any location (e.g. shopping on the move and outside '9 to 5' hours)
- post-financial crisis environment forcing people to re-evaluate their careers and working lives
- the increasing number of two-parent, or carer, working families looking for ways to juggle work and life, and the reluctance of many workplaces to adapt to this change
- the refusal by many to fit their increasingly diverse lives around traditional work structures which, because of the above changes, are no longer deemed fit for purpose

**Simon Belsham, CEO of notonthehighstreet.com**, said: *"In the last ten years, thousands of small creative businesses have emerged all over the UK, creating jobs, driving wealth creation and contributing significantly to the economy. The South West has emerged as a clear hub of creativity, with small creative businesses contributing £315m to the economy and employing over 17,000 people in the region."*

*"These businesses are highlighting the huge change underway in the UK workforce more broadly; a transformation that is seeing more women in work and more people turning to self-employment and flexible working as they shun the traditional 9 to 5 model."*

*"Our hyper-connected world and advances in technology are allowing more people to find greater autonomy over working lives and fulfilment through work. This is a real gift of our time, and our nation of creative entrepreneurs is leading the way, demonstrating what it is possible to achieve both economically and socially, for these businesses and society as a whole."*

#### **South West of England case study:**

**Betsy Benn:** Betsy used to work for a financial services company, but when she had her son (now 10) she decided she couldn't meet the demands of a corporate job with a big commute while also being mum. She wanted the flexibility and freedom that running your own business provides so set up Betsy Benn, which makes personalised prints. 95% of her sales come through notonthehighstreet.com and she has a team of 4 full time and 4 part time workers. Betsy said: *"notonthehighstreet.com was like an adrenalin injection into my business; within a year we had the top-selling product across the whole site! I definitely work much harder now than I ever used to so going self-employed certainly wasn't the easy option. The difference though, for both me and my whole team, is that we have so much more flexibility to work around life's other demands. Whether that's plugging back into the emails once the children are in bed for the night or mentally working*



*out a marketing strategy whilst on the side-lines of one of their footie games, you can find the time to make it all work.”*

*Further South West of England case studies below.*

## **Other report findings:**

### ***Positive impact of running own creative business***

When notonthehighstreet.com Partners were asked to compare how they feel now relative to how they felt before starting their business:

- 95% now feel a greater sense of achievement
- 90% enjoy life more and feel happier
- 88% feel the industry they contribute to is worthwhile
- 87% feel more fulfilled when they wake up in the morning
- 80% enjoy the responsibilities that come with running a business
- 52% of the Partners surveyed were employed by another business before setting up on their own, and nearly three quarters of those have undergone an entire career change in order to start their own creative business

### ***Empowering women***

Small creative businesses are more likely to be owned by women. 27% in the UK are female-owned compared with the UK average of 21% for female small business ownership. Some 89% of notonthehighstreet.com Partner businesses are female owned. Small creative businesses are retaining women in the workforce and encouraging other women back into it; 10% of the notonthehighstreet.com Partners that were surveyed were looking after children at home and were not in paid work before they founded their business.

### ***Empowering parents***

55% of creative entrepreneurs working with notonthehighstreet.com have children living at home, compared with 41% of working households nationally. When considering the rise in number of two-parent working families - up 14% in the decade to 2016 - and the need to work flexibly around childcare, it is not surprising that this industry is attractive to, and supportive of, working parents, particularly as we know that two thirds of notonthehighstreet.com Partners work from home, meaning no time or cost is spent commuting. Nine out of ten Partners with children at home ranked freedom and flexibility in the top benefits of starting their own business.

### ***Employment on the rise***

Total UK employment has risen 9% from 29.1m ten years ago to 31.7m today. UK employment for women has risen by 1.4m to 15m over the last decade.



### ***Self-employment on the rise***

4.8m people were registered self-employed in 2016, compared with 3.7m ten years ago; an increase of 27%. The increase in self-employment amongst women is even greater, growing by 50% over the same period, from 1m to 1.5m. Male self-employment has risen from 2.7m to 3.2m in the last ten years.

### ***Flexible working***

In the ten years to 2016, part-time work has increased from 24.9% to 26.4% of all employment, and full-time work has decreased from 75.1% to 73.6%. The majority of notonthehighstreet.com Partners work full-time but flexibly, fitting working hours around personal life and other commitments.

## **Case Studies – South West**

**Eggnogg** is a Bristol based notonthehighstreet.com Partner who has gone from strength to strength. Founder Kate Edmunds had always wanted to create a business around her family, and was inspired on a trip to Italy when she watched her children struggle to find an inch of white space on the tablecloth at dinner to do some colouring. Using her background in TV graphics and as a published children's book illustrator, Kate created a tablecloth filled with quirky creatures for her children to colour in. Eggnogg's colour-in products are now multi-award winners and have been featured on Woman's Hour and ITV. They were asked to wallpaper the press tent at Kirstie Allsopp's Handmade Fair two years running and have been mentioned in many editorial features, such as the Guardian's top 10 children's Easter gifts and The Independent's top 20 DIY Christmas decorations. With sales now in excess of £150k, Kate has had to recruit a team and take on both a dedicated office and warehouse space.

**Letterfest** was a business that was started on notonthehighstreet.com in 2009 by Wendy Harrison. In just eight years, the business has grown rapidly and in 2015 the business hit a major milestone, selling more than £1m with notonthehighstreet.com that year. Today the business, which is located in Devon, employs 15 local designer-makers and illustrators and continues to expand its product range, which includes hand-drawn illustrations, personalised story books and engraved keepsakes with their unique, contemporary and hand crafted style.

**Chi Chi Moi** was founded in 2005 by Jan Ollis from her home in Somerset. The idea for the business, which sells handmade gifts, came when Jan saw a gap in the market for beautifully knitted items for her new home. More than a decade on, Jan runs a thriving business, employing a small team of local people, plus a group of mainly retired knitting/crochet ladies who range in age from mid-50s to 90. As the business has grown, Jan has had to move operations from her home to rented premises, which will enable her to continue growing as the product range and business expands.

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**Notes to Editors**



For a full copy of the report, infographic, and national and regional versions of the press release, please go to: [www.notonthehighstreet.com/workthatworks](http://www.notonthehighstreet.com/workthatworks)

### **About notonthehighstreet.com**

[Notonthehighstreet.com](http://Notonthehighstreet.com) is the leading curated modern marketplace connecting the best small creative businesses, with the world. The brand has gained the trust and loyalty of its customers through offering an alternative to the High Street: a curated product selection with unique designs, high-quality craftsmanship and inspiring stories behind the people that make them.

Customers choose to support small creative businesses and therefore contribute to building the great creative talent and community of artisans across the United Kingdom. Shopping with [Notonthehighstreet.com](http://Notonthehighstreet.com) is an opportunity for customers to be a conscious consumer, bringing human values back into retail and enabling the things they buy to say something about who they are.

Founded in 2006 by Holly Tucker MBE and Sophie Cornish MBE, the brand has experienced exceptional growth with gross sales (TTV) in 2016 reaching £158 million and delivering a compound growth rate of 135% since launch. Under the leadership of newly appointed CEO Simon Belsham, there is renewed energy and focus on building a brand that will captivate customers for decades to come by supporting Partners' growth and innovation.

With a team of over 200 at its headquarters in Silicon Upon Thames, South West London, [Notonthehighstreet.com](http://Notonthehighstreet.com) is Chaired by retail veteran Darren Shapland and backed by media and technology company, Hubert Burda Media and venture capitalists including Index Ventures, Industry Ventures and Eight Roads Ventures.

### **About Oxford Economics**

Oxford Economics was founded in 1981 as a commercial venture with Oxford University's business college to provide economic forecasting and modelling to UK companies and financial institutions expanding abroad. Since then, they have become one of the world's foremost independent global advisory firms, providing reports, forecasts and analytical tools on 200 countries, 100 industrial sectors and over 3,000 cities.

### **Available for interview:**

- Simon Belsham, CEO, [notonthehighstreet.com](http://notonthehighstreet.com)
- Andy Logan, Associate Director, Oxford Economics
- Ian Saxon, Senior Economist, Oxford Economics
- Ella D'Amato, Chief Commercial and Partner Officer, [notonthehighstreet.com](http://notonthehighstreet.com)
- Any of the case studies mentioned above. Other case studies also available.

**Photos** of case studies listed also [available here](#).