

Institution: University of South Wales		
Unit of Assessment: UOA17		
Title of case study: Influencing and Developing Women's Entrepreneurship Policy in Wales and the UK		
Period when the underpinning research was undertaken: 2013-2020 and continuing		
Details of staff conducting the underpinning research from the submitting unit:		
Name(s):	Role(s) (e.g. job title):	Period(s) employed by submitting HEI:
Christine Atkinson	Senior Lecturer/Head of Women's Entrepreneurship Hub	1999-present
Dr Andre Clark	Senior Lecturer	1995-present
Celia Netana	Research Assistant	2008-2020
Dr Ramdane Djebarni	Senior Lecturer	2002-2020
Professor David Pickernell	Professor of Entrepreneurship	2006-2016
Dr Christopher Miller	Senior Lecturer	2014-2017
Period when the claimed impact occurred: January 2019 – December 2020		
Is this case study continued from a case study submitted in 2014? N		
1. Summary of the impact (indicative maximum 100 words) <p>Women are underrepresented in entrepreneurship. Research by the University of South Wales (USW) into female entrepreneurship has contributed to the development of government policy and business support in Wales and the UK. While entrepreneurship has been promoted by Welsh Government (WG) in the past, previously there was no specific policy regarding women's entrepreneurship. Building on a 20-year track record of research in this field, USW academics were commissioned by the WG to investigate challenges and business support experienced by women entrepreneurs. This research has directly contributed to the development and publication of two policies: "Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: An Approach for Wales" and "Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Two Year Action Plan", which were endorsed by the WG in 2019. USW research and expertise has also directly benefited over 400 women entrepreneurs in Wales and supported the business support community.</p>		
2. Underpinning research (indicative maximum 500 words) <p>Women are underrepresented in entrepreneurship. Generally, men outnumber them (2:1) and there are fewer women-owned businesses in Wales than the UK average (28% compared to 31%) (Welsh Government, 2019).</p> <p>USW Research by Djebarni 2010 to 2012 into the entrepreneurial motivations of women comprised a case study approach of different business sectors, utilising hybrid qualitative interviews. The work explored and questioned the dominant discourse around some of the key concepts in the literature on female entrepreneurship [R1]. This research confirmed the contemporary motivations and barriers that affect women's choices, opportunities, and challenges in relation to entrepreneurship and also provided important nuanced perspectives on how they may change from pre-start to start-up and growth/development stages of business. For example, while seeking flexibility may be a motivation at pre-start, work-life balance emerged as the greatest challenge, increasing as the business develops. Significantly, the research revealed a disconnect in perceptions and understanding between women entrepreneurs and business support advisers/mentors. Recommendations of the research included the development of gender aware, gender sensitive business support, underpinned by an understanding of intersectionality and the need for diverse role models, networking and mentoring opportunities.</p>		

USW's collective research into entrepreneurship, and women's entrepreneurship specifically, resulted in the identification of methodological preferences and limitations within the field. The research showed the predominant methodologies used in research on women's entrepreneurship across seven decades (1949-2014) were theoretical, non-empirical and non-gender, following quantitative and qualitative studies. Very few studies considered gender. USW's research discussed the advantages of using mixed methods research within women's entrepreneurship [R2].

Most significantly, the £5 million [Women Adding Value to the Economy Project \(WAVE\)](#) (2012-2015), funded by the Convergence European Social Fund through the Welsh Government [F1], investigated the underlying causes of gender pay inequalities in Wales. **Atkinson**, Deputy Director of the Centre for Enterprise and Head of the Women's Entrepreneurship Hub at USW (then University of Glamorgan) led this collaborative project with partners Cardiff University and The Women's Workshop (TWW). USW is recognised for its involvement in shaping and participating in enterprise and economic development policy and practice, and particularly in relation to women's enterprise and entrepreneurship through its Centre for Enterprise and Women's Entrepreneurship Hub. WAVE involved three strands of research and interrelated and targeted activities with employers, employees and self-employed women. USW (**Atkinson**) delivered strand three 'Women in Self-Employment Resource' (WISER) which explored the experiences of women living in contemporary Wales aspiring towards self-employment, and women already in self-employment.

Findings of the WAVE WISER research strand revealed a complex set of interrelated motivations and barriers among 'potential' and 'practising' female entrepreneurs [R3] [R4]. The data confirmed the significance of the entrepreneurial ecosystem in moderating the effects of both opportunities and challenges. Difficulty in establishing credibility was identified as a key barrier in addition to accessing finance, lack of business skills and lack of role models. The prevailing view, regarding the underperformance of female entrepreneurs and their businesses, was challenged through controlling for sector and considering the range of success indicators being pursued by women entrepreneurs. Its negative impact on the perceptions of policy makers, business support practitioners and women themselves, regarding women's entrepreneurial potential, was identified. The WISER strand developed role modelling, networking, clustering and mentoring activities, along with undergraduate and postgraduate level educational programmes to raise awareness and aspirations and to build entrepreneurial capital. Implications of the research for policy centred on the need for targeted, gender specific interventions including role models, networking and mentoring schemes and reconsideration of indicators of success in entrepreneurship and recognising success and awards for women entrepreneurs [R5] and [R3].

In November 2017, USW won a Welsh Government competitive tender [F2] to undertake a consultation of female entrepreneurs, related support organisations and stakeholders to investigate the potential for the development of a Female Entrepreneurship Framework for Wales [R6]. Stakeholders the Development Bank of Wales, Business Wales, Welsh Government, Chwarae Teg ('Fair Play'), Bangladeshi Chamber of Commerce, Federation for Small Businesses, and Big Ideas Wales. USW researchers engaged and consulted with 38 organizations, 23 business support organisations and 116 women entrepreneurs via an online poll (n=88), 5 focus groups and 8 individual interviews. The research confirmed previously researched motivations and barriers to female entrepreneurship and the impact upon women's business start-up in Wales [R1] and found that they were still relevant.

In 2014 **Atkinson** received the prestigious [Queen's Award for Enterprise Promotion](#) in recognition of her work in promoting enterprise and career progression for women, including the creation of the USW Women's Entrepreneurship Hub in 2008 which has been involved in projects in Wales, the UK and across Europe. The annual Queen's Award is bestowed by the Queen on the advice of the Prime Minister. In 2016, **Atkinson** was named [IOEE Enterprise Educator of the Year](#) at the Celebrating Enterprise Awards, held in the House of Lords. The

Institute of Enterprise and Entrepreneurs (IOEE) Enterprise Educator of the Year award recognises an individual who has demonstrated an enterprising approach to developing and delivering enterprise and entrepreneurial learning and skills, inspiring students and enabling them to realise their enterprise potential.

3. References to the research (indicative maximum of six references)

[R1] Djebarni, R. (2013) Entrepreneurial Motivations of Women in Wales. ISBE Conference. <https://doi.org/10.1068/c3301ed>

[R2] Tomos, F., Djebarni, R., Rogers, A., Thomas, A., Clark, A. and Balan, O.C. (2015) Mixed Research Methods: Former and new Trends in Women Entrepreneurship Research. Former and new Trends in Women Entrepreneurship Research. In F. Bezzina & V Cassar (eds), *Proceedings of the 14th European Conference on Research Methodology for Business and Management Studies: University of Malta, Valletta 11-12 June 2015*. ECRM Proceedings, Academic Conferences and Publishing International, Reading, UK. E-Book ISBN: 978-1-910810-12-5 E-Book ISSN: 2049-0976

[R3] Atkinson, C., Netana, C. and Pickernell, D. (2017) The myth of underperformance and experiences of self-employed Women in Wales: A Business Life History Approach. In *SEAAZ Annual Research Book 2017: Economic Gardening: The role of entrepreneurship, innovation and small business ecosystems in regional, rural and international development*. Tilde University Press, Melbourne, Australia. ISBN: 978-0-7346-2229-7

[R4] Atkinson, C., Netana, C., Pickernell, D. and Dann, Z. (2017) Being Taken Seriously – shaping the pathways taken by Welsh female entrepreneurs. *Small Enterprise Research*, 24(2), 132-148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13215906.2017.1337587>

[R5] Pickernell, D.G., Atkinson, C. and Miller C. (2015) Government SME intervention policy: perception is 9/10ths of the truth? Introduction. *Environment & Planning C: Government & Policy*, 33 (1), pp. 4-8.

[R6] Final Report: Review to Inform Possible Female Entrepreneurship Framework for Wales, Atkinson, C. and Netanna, C., August 2018

FUNDING INFORMATION

F1. Women Adding Value to the Economy (WAVE), funded by Welsh Government through WEFO ESF convergence funding-West Wales and the Valleys, University of Glamorgan (Christine Atkinson), April 2012 – June 2015 (£4.9 million)

F2. FEMALE ENTREPRENEURSHIP CONSULTATION TO DRAFT A FRAMEWORK IN WALES CONTRACT, funded by Welsh Government, USW Commercial Services Ltd (Christine Atkinson), October 2017 – June 2018 (£8333.00)

4. Details of the impact (indicative maximum 750 words)

USW research influenced and developed female entrepreneurship and business support policy in Wales: While entrepreneurship has been promoted by Welsh Government (WG) in the past, previously there was no specific policy regarding women's entrepreneurship. The research conducted by USW academics into female entrepreneurship and female entrepreneur's experiences and perceptions of business support that was available, has allowed them to provide strategic guidance to the Welsh Government (WG) and has directly contributed to the development of WG policy to support female entrepreneurs and female entrepreneurship.

In 2017 **Atkinson** was appointed as a member of the female entrepreneurship panel of experts advising the Welsh Government. The panel included representatives from Welsh Government, Federation of Small Business (FSB), FSB Cymru, Business Wales, Chamber of Commerce, Development Bank of Wales and chaired by Helen Walbey (then Chair for Diversity and Health Federation of Small Businesses,) **[S5.1c, S5.1d]**. The remit of the panel was to consider how best to encourage, develop and support female entrepreneurship in Wales. Atkinson and the panel **[S5.1a, page 14]** directly informed the development of a new

WG policy framework “**Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: An Approach for Wales**” (the SEWW Approach) [S5.1a] and a Good Practice Guide [S5.1c.] to inform how the Welsh Government and the business community in Wales works to drive the number of women entrepreneurs in Wales [S5.1a].

The WG also published the “**Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Two Year Action Plan**” [S5.1b] which identifies 10 specific ways in which the WG and business community can create the right environment for female entrepreneurs to prosper [S5.1b]. The 10 recommendations include tailoring business support to be gender aware, increasing availability of women business advisors and mentors, improving awareness of finance options available, engaging with young women to encourage entrepreneurial attitudes, and ensuring business awards recognise businesswomen and have a gender balanced judging panel.

The SEWW Approach, Action Plan and Good Practice Guide were launched by the Welsh Assembly Minister for Economy and Transport in Cardiff in 2019 [S5.4] and was followed by a roadshow of regional launch events across Wales from January to March 2019 aimed at women entrepreneurs and business support organizations and attended by over 120 women business owners. The launch was supported by an associated media campaign [S5.1e], [S5.1a], [S5.1b: p.6 and 9]. Following the success of the roadshows, additional events were organised for the Mid Wales Women Entrepreneurs in Agriculture in November 2019 and the Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales in November 2019 (in both Cardiff and Swansea). The SEWW Approach was disseminated more broadly on Welsh Government websites and in national press [S5.4] [S5.5] [S5.6].

Following the publication and launch of the SEWW Approach, the expert panel was reformed in 2019 to support implementation, adoption, and monitoring of the new framework. **Atkinson** was again appointed as a member of the new panel and continues to support WG to progress this work.

USW research informed UK government female entrepreneurship and business support policy: USW’s research into female entrepreneurship has contributed to the development of government policy at a UK level. **Atkinson** was invited to contribute to a study by Lorely Burt MP, Government Ambassador for Women in Enterprise, which explored the issues affecting women entrepreneurs and considered how UK government could increase opportunities for women in business [S5.6, page 21]. The “Burt Report: Inclusive Support for Women in Enterprise” published in 2015, made several recommendations to increase the number of female entrepreneurs, create jobs and promote a stronger, fairer economy.

USW, through its Women’s Entrepreneurship Hub headed by **Atkinson**, also contributed to Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) research to inform economic and business support policy at both UK government and devolved government levels. The research set a measurement baseline for the economic value (GVA) of women owned business and women led businesses to the UK economy and identified gaps in the provision of gender-disaggregated economic data. The associated report “Supporting Women’s Enterprise in the UK: the economic case” [S5.3, page 2] published in 2018 highlighted the significant contribution women-led businesses make to the UK economy and made recommendations on the gendered business data available in the UK.

USW research increased entrepreneurial capital of female entrepreneurs and improved employment practices in Wales: The Women Adding Value to the Economy Project (WAVE) led by USW sought to address the underlying causes of gender pay disparities in Wales. The project offered a broad range of support from role modelling, mentoring and training to sharing of best practice to build entrepreneurial capital. The project directly supported 357 women participants in terms of job progression and development with 92 gaining qualifications and 23 entering further learning e.g. Postgraduate Diploma in Entrepreneurship Practice and Postgraduate Certificate in Mentoring for Entrepreneurial Practice. The project also directly supported 46 employers with 17 employers benefitting from adopting or improving their

equality and diversity strategies and monitoring systems to create a gender balanced workforce.

As an institution, USW has committed to support the 10 recommendations set out in the SEWW Approach, building on the work of the USW Women's Entrepreneurship Hub established in 2008. Face to face networking events and workshops are supported by a virtual Women's Entrepreneurship Hub Facebook Group. This currently comprises a network of 455 women, including alumni, which connects current female students and alumni with experienced businesswomen and women in the business support sector and encourages networking between women entrepreneurs and the wider business community [S5.1a: p.10]. In addition, USW provides a [Developing Entrepreneurial Women Programme](#) in partnership with and funded by NatWest Cymru. The programme is underpinned by USW's research in the field [R1] [R2] [R3] [R6] and provides expert-led workshops, networking sessions, personal development and coaching to tackle the barriers to female entrepreneurship.

5. Sources to corroborate the impact (indicative maximum of 10 references)

5.1. The key documents:

S5.1a [Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: An Approach for Wales](#), 2019

S5.1b [Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Two Year Action Plan](#), 2019

S5.1c [Supporting Entrepreneurial Women in Wales: Good Practice Guide](#), 2019

S5.1d Email of Appointment to Female Entrepreneurship Advisory Group and Minutes 2019 & 2020.

S5.1e "Be The Spark" Press Release - <https://bethespark.wales/inspiration/news/supporting-entrepreneurial-women-wales>

S5.2. Dissemination to women entrepreneurs and within the business support community -

[S5.2a] "It's About Time!" Campaign Press Article <http://ioee.uk/2019/04/09/its-about-time/>

[S5.2b] <https://www.business-live.co.uk/opinion-analysis/need-more-female-entrepreneurs-help-17877674>

S5.3. Supporting Women's Enterprise in the UK: The Economic Case. November 2018 fsb.org.uk -

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/supporting-women-s-enterprise-in-the-uk.html>

[S5.3b] <http://pembrokeshire-herald.com/50638/new-drive-supports-women-entrepreneurs/>

<https://www.fsb.org.uk/resource-report/supporting-women-s-enterprise-in-the-uk.html>

S5.4. Endorsement by Welsh Government Ministers and Dissemination of the SEWW Approach and Action Plan across Wales and beyond to women entrepreneurs and other stakeholders - <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/business/business-news/initiative-launched-increase-number-women-15763615>

S5.5. New Drive to Support Women Entrepreneurs Jane Hutt Comments - <https://gov.wales/new-drive-support-women-entrepreneurs>

S5.6 National Press Coverage, Pembrokeshire Herald <http://pembrokeshire-herald.com/50638/new-drive-supports-women-entrepreneurs/>

S5.6 The Burt Report: Inclusive Support for Women in Enterprise, 2015

S5.7 WAVE Project Closure Letter, February 2016