

STEPCHANGE SUMMARY OUTPUTS & OUTCOMES - 2005/06

- Established regional stakeholder advisory board and dbase of 2,500 SMEs (actual/aspirant) suppliers of local authorities.
- Redesigned /adapted and applied DTI approved process to diagnose and support SME's in e-business.
- directly supported 230 businesses in technology related business process change over a seven month period.
- developed StepChange handbook distributed to 500 other businesses
- distributed SME grants to the value of £200,000
- generated ICT investment of £0.33 million by SMEs in new ICT facilities and training
- generated referrals to regional portal (NE-Life), NEPO and BLTW and business support network
- delivered across Tyne and Wear 50% Newcastle/Gateshead with 50% North & South Tyneside and Sunderland
- 53% of customers were SME's with turnovers in excess of 0.5 – 1m+
- 50% of customers were businesses with between 30 and 100% of their turnover dependent on public sector contracts

Key issues

- confusion/ ignorance regarding the threat/opportunity for SMEs in public sector intention of working with suppliers “electronically”
- evidence that StepChange “kickstarted” SMEs interest in using ICT more effectively
- Many SMEs not using broadband in their business (20% of StepChange clients) and over 65% did not use e-commerce
- relatively low levels of general ICT use, old and obsolete equipment (unsupported operating systems), old/unused software
- lack of awareness relating to data security and continuity planning
- keen interest in increasing access to tender opportunities
- commitment to training and to improve ICT awareness by SMEs