



Woman Franchisor of the Year

The NatWest EWIF Awards are held every year to celebrate the achievements of women across the franchising industry. With our 2017 awards over with, we are giving each of our winners the opportunity to shine in their very own spotlight blog. The winner of our 2017 Woman Franchisor of the year at this year's awards was Jo Stone and Tracy Townsend from Puddle Ducks.

The Puddle Ducks franchise was first launched in 2008 and since then has gone from strength to strength. Having been finalists in this award category for many years, Tracy and Jo said it was "amazing to finally win". For the Puddle Ducks franchise 2016 saw large scale investment in software, a website, partnerships, technical programmes, staff, all contributing to the success of the brand profile and improved profitability for franchisees. Moreover, 2016 saw Puddle Ducks introduce Minimum Performance Standards for both new and renewing franchisees to drive customer sales and ensure coverage throughout the whole of the network. The introduction of MPS has led to three franchisees selling parts of their territory they were not utilising and generating income from this sale, alongside giving a new franchisee the opportunity to use this territory.

"We think we won the award as the combination of some very innovative projects coming to fruition and having a brilliant team in place has helped us deliver several significant changes to not only our own business but also made developments to raise our whole industry standards, whilst continuing to grow our network" explains Jo and Tracy.

In 2016, Jo and Tracy also succeeded in getting an early review of PAS 520:2015 which outlines safeguarding issues between 0-4 year olds learning to swim. The BSI document was in danger of putting smaller swim schools out of business due to the levels of insurance it demanded, making this industry uncompetitive and threatening several businesses and their owner's livelihoods. Jo and Tracy worked with others in the industry to get the document reviewed ahead of schedule and the required amends made, protecting the industry.

"We proudly display our winner's logo: proof and reassurance to our potential franchisees of our strong, ethical brand. We are enjoying our brand being in the limelight and attracting more franchisees to our network. Of course, we are also keen to be part of the great work EWIF do to encourage women into franchising and if we can help inspire future franchisors and franchisees then we are very happy to do so" adds Jo and Tracy.

EWIF's primary focus is to support women who are looking for a route into the franchise industry. Our remit is threefold; to encourage women to consider buying a franchise, to encourage business women to franchise their existing operations and to help franchisors attract more women to their networks. We are a not-for-profit organisation run entirely by volunteers, providing advice and guidance to anyone looking at trying to break into the franchise industry.