

## INTO SOMERSET CASE STUDY – ENTREPRENEURIAL

### Cuddledry

Cuddledry was founded in September 2006 by Somerset-based entrepreneurial friends and mums Helen Wooldridge and Polly Marsh. Their founding product was the innovative and multi-award winning Cuddledry baby apron bath towel, created to give new parents two free hands for safely bathing, lifting and drying babies. The company now manufactures and supplies a range of top quality, organic bath, swim and beach towels and accessories for babies and young children, which is sold successfully in over 30 countries worldwide.



Cuddledry has become the market leader in baby bath towels, winning many awards including this year's 'Must Have' Nursery Product of the Year, Best New Somerset Business 2009 and Best Somerset Business 2009 (0-5 employees). The Cuddledry range of products has been featured on television, radio and in magazines nationally and internationally and is perhaps best known for turning down offers of investment on BBC TV's Dragons' Den.

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Over the past two and a half years, Cuddledry has become one of the fastest growing companies in the region, exceeding all targets and financial projections. Turnover is currently in excess of £500,000 per annum and growing rapidly. Thanks to this, the founders have been named amongst the 40 top Young Entrepreneurs in Europe.

Director and co-founder Helen Wooldridge (pictured above, on the right) praises the exceptional level of business support that she and her business partner have received in Somerset. “At Cuddledry we have had truly amazing support from business groups in Somerset. Our Business Link advisors have helped us significantly and some aspects of our business growth would not have been achieved without their advice.

“Our team members have attended a range of valuable training courses where we have gleaned some useful nuggets of information and networked very effectively with other local businesses. They have also ‘signposted’ us to many other organisations and contacts who have supported us both financially and with guidance.



"Most significant has been our work with UK Trade and Investment, through its exceptional 'Passport to Export' scheme and now its 'G3' scheme, with our local advisor Hilary Charman. With this support we have been able to achieve rapid and strategic international growth, so despite being a very young business, we are already quickly building the export percentage of our turnover and extending our brand worldwide."

Helen believes that Somerset is the perfect location for Cuddledry for many reasons. "Our location is excellent because of proximity to Bristol for port and warehousing; transport links for the whole of the rest of the country; fantastic local suppliers such as our web company, graphic designers, printers and PA service; and of course, the lifestyle benefits of living in such a beautiful and healthy part of the country."



"We are running an intense, fast-growth business but don't have to lead a lifestyle to match – at Cuddledry we have shown that it is perfectly feasible to quickly grow an international business whilst living a lovely rural and healthy lifestyle."

One of the key reasons for choosing Somerset as a place to live for the founders of Cuddledry was its excellent transport links. "The M5 leads us to all the events we attend at the Birmingham NEC and further north with ease, and the A303 and rail links have us whizzing back and forth to London for meetings as required. It's always a buzz to go back to London, but always such a breath of fresh air to step out of the car or train back in lovely Somerset."

The company champions remote working and, as the recent winner of the UK Remote Employer of the Year Award, relies greatly on Somerset's first-rate broadband internet connectivity. "We all work remotely from home offices so we are able to work in different parts of the county, nation and across the world mainly through the internet. Being in Somerset offers us all the support we need to run the business in this way."

Summing up her thoughts about why businesses should consider relocating to Somerset, Helen says, "For a multitude of reasons – but primarily to achieve a business location where you can combine low overheads with good links for transport, technical and business networks, excellent business support and a healthy lifestyle."

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