

# Women taking control

by Linda Whitney

**O**VER the past seven years, there has been an 86 per cent increase in the number of women franchisees.

Tom Endean, of the British Franchise Association, says: 'For many women, juggling work and family can be difficult, and many jobs offer no flexibility or scope for homeworking. Setting up in business can be the answer, and a franchise is less risky than setting up alone.'

A franchise provides you with a tried-and-tested business template and support from the franchisor, but also makes you part of a network. This counteracts the loneliness that some women find goes with working for themselves.

Mary Chadwick, of Sutton, Surrey, who owns a Rosemary Bookkeeping franchise, says: 'It can be very lonely on your own in business, and having experienced, supportive people to back you up is extremely reassuring.'

Like many franchises, Rosemary Bookkeeping allows Mary to work from home. 'My parents live with me. Being close at hand and being able to manage my working hours to suit myself and the business is appealing,' she says.

You need no book-keeping qualifications or experience, as full training is provided. The franchise is looking for friendly, logically minded women and men with a can-do attitude and £12,970 to invest. Fran-



**WENDY PAKE** started selling medical policies with WPA Health Insurance, despite having neither sales nor commercial experience. 'I had lots of help from the franchise head office and the business took off immediately,' says Wendy, from Edinburgh, who started her business 13 years ago.

'Within 12 months I was earning around £30,000, far more than I could have earned from the usual kind of work that is flexible enough to accommodate school runs.'

WPA franchisees sell health insurance to individuals, families, the self-employed, professionals and businesses through networking and recommendations.

'I find people are very comfortable dealing with a woman, especially when discussing medical histories, and WPA's gentle approach to sales pays off,' says Wendy.

'There are great opportunities for women in franchising, but if you want to be successful you have to remain business-focused.'

Berkeley Harris of WPA says: 'About a quarter of the WPA franchisees are women. They tend to be good at engaging with people, and show drive and attention to detail – all valuable for our franchise, which is about building relationships.'

The WPA franchise costs £7,500, plus a £2,500 Fidelity Bond, which is designed to guarantee customers are treated fairly, and includes full training.

chisees also value women's communications skills. 'Our franchisees deal with staff and clients, so they need good people skills,' says Carol Stuart-Gill of the Dubcheck franchise.

Her franchisees manage cleaning services businesses, and many of them are women. No selling is required because Dubcheck pro-

vides your contracts, so the investment varies, starting at £13,750 for contracts providing turnover worth £14,400 and reaching £190,000 for turnover worth £500,000.

Women also make up around a third of the franchisees at Home Instead Senior Care. Another third work with their husbands. 'Many

of our franchisees are people who have searched for care for relatives, which has made them passionate about delivering high-quality service,' says Trevor Brocklebank, who started the business after being disappointed by the care his father received.

Franchisees run a service provid-

ing non-medical care for older people in their homes. You do not need care experience or qualifications as you will build up the business, having recruited a care manager to oversee your care workers.

Jill Evans, who with her husband runs Home Instead Senior Care in Sheffield, says: 'We chose franchising because we wanted to run our own business, but didn't want to have to set up from scratch, which is very hard to do in the care sector because of all the legislation.' The franchise fee is £32,500.

**N**OT all franchises are in traditional 'women's businesses'. Edith Kuiper is the Edinburgh franchise with MAC Tools, a mobile franchise that involves selling tools to garages.

'It's not the job for someone who needs "girly chats" in the office, as you're on your own a lot and most people you meet are men,' says Edith. 'You do get dirty, but I love the freedom of being in my van, visiting customers.'

MAC Tools is looking for more franchisees with £15,000 to invest, which covers full training including ten days at the company's 'tool school' in Ohio in the U.S.

■ Rosemary Bookkeeping, 01442 800 147; Dubcheck, 0800 317 236; Home Instead Senior Care, 01925 730 273; MAC Tools, 08450 600060; WPA 01823 625 120.