



**TOP LEFT:** Work produced by Suzie Dean **RIGHT:** Pima Cotton and Alpaca Laceweight  
**BOTTOM LEFT:** Jungle Fever Cotton and Tencel all hand dyed by Kirtsy Clarke

...sanguine about the pay packet that goes with working as a self-employed knitter. "For me it's not about the money; it's just something I enjoy doing," she says. "I've always enjoyed working. As a child I always wanted to own a wool shop and sell my stuff, so I'm partly living my dream now." It's a career to be envied, and she's happy to share her tips. "Keep focused. Always be professional in your behaviour with customers and on forums because it does affect your business. You've got to keep everything as well – all your receipts. And keep persevering!"

Suzie Dean was determined to create a fulfilling career for herself, and again wool proved the perfect medium. "I turned 50 and started questioning where I was going in my life," she recalls. "I was looking at the work I was doing as a complimentary therapist, which I'd always enjoyed, but it was just a job really."

At the same time, friends began asking her to teach them to knit. Suzie's passion from the age of seven. "Gradually word spread in the town where I live. They were prepared to pay me for my time and I thought, 'This is what I want to

do. This is fantastic, I love teaching people."

She merrily wound down her therapy practice and started up two courses, advertising in cafes and the local press. "That was 18 months ago and I haven't stopped; I've always had a full course." She teaches beginners and those returning after a hiatus, and also designs kits that are sold in local shops.

With her cottage industry booming, it's clear she has no regrets. "I like working for myself, picking my own hours and being in charge really." The major downside has been getting to grips with her website ([www.lovetoknit.co.uk](http://www.lovetoknit.co.uk)) and online marketing, a necessary component of any business plan these days.

"That has been a tremendous challenge actually because I was a complete technophobe."

Her advice to those thinking about entering the woolly workforce? "Be brave enough to do it, because I think we come from a culture where work should be difficult, and so we think that to do a job for fun is not the right thing to do. But of course – it's absolutely the right thing to do!" ●

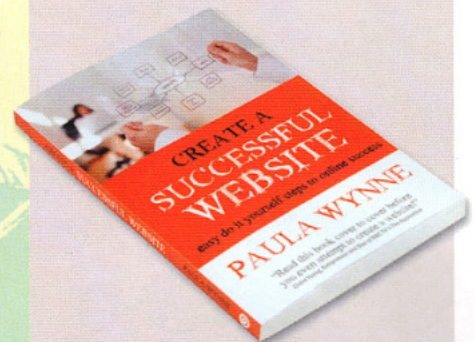
"Be brave enough to do it, because I think we come from a culture where work should be difficult, and so we think that to do a job for fun is not the right thing to do. But of course – it's absolutely the right thing to do!"

## How to knit a new path

- Make use of skills from your primary career.
- Borrow the resources of family and friends.
- Use Business Link for advice on registering as self-employed, paying National Insurance and filing taxes. ([www.businesslink.gov.uk](http://www.businesslink.gov.uk))
- Join Collective, a new programme of professional development schemes for craft makers at various stages of their career. ([www.craftscouncil.org.uk](http://www.craftscouncil.org.uk))
- Research grant opportunities with regional development agencies, local authorities, the European Union and, for under-25s, the Prince's Trust
- Search the internet for advice websites such as [www.smallbusiness.co.uk](http://www.smallbusiness.co.uk) or [www.startinbusiness.co.uk](http://www.startinbusiness.co.uk)

## Suggested reads

Create a successful website by Paula Wynne, ISBN 978 1 90749 835 0



The Knitrrl Guide to Professional Knitwear Design by Shannon Okey, ISBN 978 0 97920 171 4

