

Claire is hoping for success in awards

# Designs on fashion title



Up for an award – Claire Priest, boss of Black Country fashion firm Blessd, with some of her designs

Forget the catwalks of London, Paris, Milan and New York – a Black Country woman with a passion for fashion is taking centre stage on the runway tonight at a ceremony showcasing the region's creative talent.

Kingswinford's Claire Priest, who set up her Blessd fashion range for women with pear-shaped and hourglass figures, is one of six finalists hoping to scoop the best young business title in the PIN Fashion competition taking place in Birmingham's Millennium Point.

And up-and-coming Walsall fashion

## Report by Maria Cusine

designer Anisa Varachhia is also one of the finalists, up for the New Designer category. The PIN contest is designed to profile the best of fashion talent in the West Midlands by finding winners for both Young Business and New Designer categories – with each winner scooping £10,000 in prize money.

Both Claire, aged 36, and Anisa, 27, will see their work take centre stage as it will be modelled on the catwalk as part of tonight's fashion event.

Claire's Cradley-based fashion brand specialises in fashionable clothing designed to compliment a woman's natural body shape.

"I am thrilled to have been short-listed for the award as this is fantastic recognition from the fashion industry

to go with my business Startups award," said Claire. "It achieves one of my goals for Blessd, which was to have a catwalk show where all of the models have naturally curvy body shapes."

Anisa, who set up her fashion label Varachhia just six months ago after graduating from university, said she was also thrilled to be a finalist in the awards.

## Tailored

"I have created a tailored and casual menswear range for spring which has quite a preppy look," said Anisa, who worked with designers at Marks & Spencer and Bhs while on a year placement from university.

● Find out how Claire and Anisa get on in tomorrow's Express & Star