



# Women in Business Magazine

WINTER 2021 | ISSUE 24

LOCAL WOMEN PRESS REFRESH  
ON THEIR RETURN TO WORK

BELFAST CITY REGION DEAL WITH  
QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY BELFAST



INSPIRING WOMEN  
AWARDS LAUNCHED



# Inspiring Women Awards

**Do you know a remarkable woman who deserves recognition for her achievements in 2020?**

The inaugural WIB Inspiring Women Awards in partnership with Virgin Media Business will celebrate women from all walks of life who have gone above and beyond to unite and inspire, and who have changed the lives of others for the better.

We are inviting nominations in the following categories:

-   
**Person of Purpose Award**
-   
**Mentor of the Year Award**
-   
**Agent of Change Award**
-   
**Generosity of Spirit Award**
-   
**Innovator of the Year Award**

The chances are you'll not have to look too far to find an ordinary woman doing extraordinary things. Whether it's an amazing mother, nurse, businesswoman, teacher or carer, don't miss this chance to nominate and celebrate them for the wonderful impact they have on the wider community!

Nominations will be shortlisted, and winners selected by a panel of highly esteemed judges.

**For full information on the awards, please visit [www.womeninbusinessni.com](http://www.womeninbusinessni.com)**

Nomination deadline is midnight on Friday 26th February

## Chair's Message



**A**fter a long end to 2020, we find ourselves preparing to face the challenges that the coming months ahead may bring - one thing that we have certainty and reassurance on, is the unity that has grown from strength to strength throughout the Women in Business community.

The adaptability and courage of our members does not cease to amaze us. Seen clearly in the talented participants of our new Press Refresh Programme for women returners, in collaboration with the Department of Economy and Belfast Met. On their return to the working world, these women are learning new skills and qualifications in Data Analytics to help them gain entry into the growing Tech Sector. In our third year of the Yes You Can, Business Start Up and Growth Programme, a fresh wave of female entrepreneurs reminds us of the importance that small businesses have as the backbone of our economy and must be protected.

The team at WIB have built upon the success of their transition to the online world, from professional development programmes to wellbeing webinars. The dedicated work of the small team was highlighted by the 1000+ international audience that tuned in for the hybrid virtual Voices of Leadership Conference

in early November. As we near our 5000 membership, we are proud to continuously welcome leading corporate and group members to our network such as Citi, CITB NI, Vanrath, Vox FP, Extern, SDG, Cubis Systems, Alchemy Tech, Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue, Telestack Ltd, and Construction Employers Federation.

As we welcome Sir David Sterling to our diverse and passionate WIB Board, we are dedicated to supporting all women throughout Northern Ireland, as they have been disproportionately impacted in both personal and professional aspects of lockdown life. An issue that we will continue to address with the Northern Ireland Assembly. I assure you that Women in Business will continue to build on, adapt and enhance our delivery for members during these very challenging times. We aim to provide the skill sets and wellbeing support required for our members to persevere and thrive throughout 2021. As there will be a brighter future ahead for us all.



*Nichola Robinson*

**Director Strategic Sourcing  
Spirit AeroSystems, Belfast**



**Chair:** Nichola Robinson  
**Chief Executive:** Roseann Kelly

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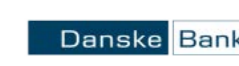
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### Key Partner



### Partners



### Educational Partners



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### New Events Schedule

- Centre of Learning  
New Virtual Programmes
- Changing the conversation on Resilience,  
Sarah Travers
- Content Marketing Strategy,  
Julietta Watson



# Creativity, empathy, innovation and communication are needed to build a better future

**A**s we work our way through lockdown, we do so with a sense of trepidation – business is back with a working from home mandate and a return to home-schooling.

So whether we are sitting in the virtual boardroom planning what steps we can take to recover, restart or save our business, or preparing to spin plates and accommodate home schooling, the uncertainty that lies ahead across all disciplines and sectors of our society, is for many overwhelming.

As we start 2021 working from home, this can undoubtedly offer great opportunities - for those returning to Northern Ireland in search of a better quality of life; for women getting back into work and for those who are aiming for a better balance of the work/life equilibrium. However, this 'new normal' brings additional challenges which businesses and individuals have never encountered before – whether that's access to high-speed broadband, reliable 3/4/5G access, a decent mobile signal, or straining to see a tiny, singular laptop screen in a less than Health and Safety /Wellness compliant 'workstation', that's before the additional challenges of home-schooling or the impact of new childcare requirements are added to the mix.

It comes as no surprise that studies have shown women bore the brunt of childcare responsibilities, household chores and home-schooling during the first lockdown, irrespective of whether they were working or not. The Boston Consulting Group also revealed that UK mothers were undertaking an additional 31 hours' housework each week than they did before the lockdown in March, an average of 12 more hours of household chores than fathers. These figures are concerning, but not really surprising!

As we move forward to this 'new normal', we must seek to support and drive greater gender responsibility, which is now more pertinent than ever. Partners must take on their share within the home and that



includes the mental load which more often than not rests firmly on the shoulders of women.

To build a more diverse and fair society, I am calling on our government to address these challenges and inequalities and implore our political representatives to pivot the skills strategy to focus not solely on knowledge-based learning or on what employers require. What we really need to do is take this opportunity and refocus on what society needs – we need to teach and inspire creativity, empathy, innovation and communication. We need a stronger focus on those soft, human skills some elements of technology have stripped away to ensure we can look after ourselves, each other and the planet. People who have these skills will be more employable as they will have the right attitude - as they say the right attitude, beats aptitude every day.

Business leaders also need to take note – there is an opportunity to hit the reset button and enable us to change how we all work to deliver the elusive goal we all seek – a better work/life balance.

By remaining flexible and empathetic and showing real leadership we can inspire and galvanise a truly committed workforce. As we boldly step into 2021, let's make it a year to remember for the right reasons.

Roseann Kelly MBE  
Chief Executive Office  
roseann@womeninbusinessni.com



## New Programme helping Women to Press Refresh on their career

**W**omen in Business are proud to introduce an innovative female returners programme in partnership with Belfast Metropolitan College. Funded by the Department for the Economy, Press Refresh aims to encourage women to “Press Refresh” on their careers and equip them with new skills needed to return to work and build their career within the expanding IT sector.

The IT sector in Northern Ireland is proving to be a key growth area with over 1,200 companies and many key global companies based here. Despite this, females are still largely under-represented within the sector with just 17% of tech jobs currently held by women. Women in Business were delighted to have had the overwhelming response to the programme, with approximately 300 women having applied to take part. Having successfully passed the assessment process, with the recruitment of 20 women, who have no previous IT experience, the participants are currently undertaking 17 weeks of relevant training and up-skilling in Data Analytics which will support them in gaining employment within the tech sector.

Commenting on the Press Refresh Programme, Minister for the Economy, Diane Dodds said, “Many people and businesses have been deeply affected by the economic impact of Covid-19. It is vital, in the short term, that we provide opportunities for individuals which will support them in finding new employment, or boost the potential of their businesses when they return to work”. With the success

of the pilot of this programme, Women in Business look forward to introducing more Press Refresh Programmes in the future!

One of our current delegates, Eva Garland tells us of her Press Refresh experience so far! “I first learned about the Press Refresh Programme via a local influencer on Instagram. Immediately, I was interested and knew I wanted to apply! Having been on extended maternity leave for just over 2 years, I was at a point where I was beginning to think about my career again and I felt that this course would be the perfect opportunity to boost my confidence and gain new skills.

Having worked in marketing, membership and events (including as Marketing Manager at Women in Business until 2014) for the majority of my career, I had no prior experience of data analytics or the IT sector but I was keen to try something new. With Tech being such a huge growth industry and particularly within the Data Analytics field, this programme is a wonderful support to encourage more women to tap into a currently very male dominated industry and equip them with the necessary skills and qualifications to do so.

The course is so diverse- from coding to project management qualifications as well as careers advice and mentoring support from female role models in the Tech industry, the course offers a fast track but extensive insight into many areas.

I have met an incredible group of women on this programme from all ages and career backgrounds (albeit virtually due to

Covid19 restrictions!) and the teaching via Belfast MET has been first class as well as gaining valuable support and insights into how to build confidence and resilience with the team at Advance Coaching!

To find out more, email: [info@pressrefresh.co.uk](mailto:info@pressrefresh.co.uk)





## Former Head of NI Civil Service joins Women in Business Board

**W**omen in Business welcome former Head of the Northern Ireland Civil Service, Sir David Sterling to the WIB Board. Mr Sterling, whose civil service career spanned over four decades joins an impressive group of influential and experienced business leaders who sit on the Board, bringing with him a wealth of political knowledge and business acumen.

Nichola Robinson, Chair of Women in Business is delighted to welcome Mr Sterling as part of the team, "David's skillset and perspective will be invaluable to the Women in Business Board, particularly during these challenging times when Strategic Plans need to be reviewed. We are looking forward to working with him, as he imparts his extensive knowledge and experience."

Mr Sterling, who retired in August 2020, led the Northern Ireland Civil Service in the absence of Stormont ministers, following the collapse of the executive in 2017. Mr Sterling's leadership and wealth of experience will strengthen the Women in Business Board as he sits alongside senior executives from across Northern Ireland's business sector, providing strategic counsel.

Commenting on his new appointment, David Sterling said: "I am delighted to be welcomed on to the Board and to join a group of impactful and influential business minds in making an important difference for women in the workplace in Northern Ireland. Diversity,

Entrepreneurialism and Leadership are crucial to Northern Ireland's recovery from the coronavirus pandemic and it is now more important than ever that we support women in business."



## WIB CEO among 2020 Gold Sovereign awardees

**B**ank of Ireland has announced the 2020 recipients of its Gold Sovereign Award for leaders in society who are promoting Inclusion and Diversity, with the Women in Business CEO, Roseann Kelly MBE deservedly earning recognition.

The gold sovereign is symbolic for Bank of Ireland. In the past, employees getting married were sometimes gifted a sovereign to mark the significance of the occasion. However, for women getting married during the 'marriage bar', introduced in 1932 and abolished in 1973, this also signalled the end to their professional career.

In recent years, the sovereigns have been repurposed and are now used to recognise outstanding achievement and leadership in the promotion of Inclusion and Diversity, either through awardees' chosen career or by advocating for the cause.

A panel of business leaders were asked to recognise and select inspiring leaders who are advocates for inclusion and diversity on a national level. Commenting on her remarkable achievement, Roseann said, "To say I am delighted is definitely and understatement. Thank you to Bank of Ireland and to the external judges for this award, I am truly humbled. Gender diversity and equality is something we should all be passionate about and I am.". As Roseann's commitment to the agenda continues for the year ahead!



## Christina Bates of Allstate Northern Ireland



**L**ike most of us, Allstate Northern Ireland have been working from home since March last year. As Northern Ireland's largest IT company, they're used to working remotely to deliver services to their parent company in the US. As a result, most departments found the transition smooth with minimal disruption to their day to day tasks. However, changes were required in some business areas to respond to the pandemic. We spoke to Christina Bates, Chief Financial Officer at Allstate Northern Ireland to find out how the Allstate Northern Ireland Finance team streamlined processes and the programs in place to support employees.

On 16th March 2020 all employees were notified that they were to work from home until further notice, but I don't think many of us expected to still be at home now in January 2021. Allstate Northern Ireland had been preparing for the pandemic prior to that date and the Finance team had also been working to ensure that processes could operate smoothly and securely online from the safety of employees homes, rather than the office.

The first priority was to ensure continuity of service from Allstate Northern Ireland to business partners in the US and Canada. Employees were all able to work from home very quickly and the Field Support team worked tirelessly to ensure employees had all the equipment they needed.

Having responsive and remote-enabled Finance processes was crucial. Some processes had to be moved to new tools very quickly and digital signature processes implemented for a variety of processes. We built new workflows, re-designed and enhanced existing policies and implemented several new systems and policies over the course of 2020. It was one of the busiest years ever, but was also rewarding, seeing progress, improvement and collaboration among business areas, to implement solutions quickly.

Employee welfare has always been the number one priority for Allstate Northern Ireland. We regularly survey all employees to get a feel for the morale and listen to their voice.



Throughout 2020 we ran several surveys and the responses informed us that the greatest need for employees was office equipment to support the homeworking arrangements.

In response to this and to prepare for future potential hybrid working arrangements, Allstate introduced a company wide initiative called the 'Good Office Program'. This entitled every employee to spend a fixed sum on equipment like desks, chairs and monitors to help them work from home more effectively. This enables employees to have an excellent, permanent home office set up to keep in place even when we return to the office, so that hybrid working can be effective and productive.

This initiative accelerated the implementation of SAP Concur, our new expense system. This allowed employees to easily submit their expense claims from their laptop or on their mobile device, at a time that suited them, with successful processing of Good Office claims for more than 2,000 individuals in a short timeframe. The application allows for quick

repayment to all employees and improved visibility for managers.

In December, Allstate launched the Covid Holiday Support Scheme, for employees and their families, with the aim of helping those who had suffered financial hardship in their personal lives, as a direct result of Covid-19. This global programme was well received across all locations.

We're proud as a team to have kept regular Finance activities like payroll and operational accounting moving along smoothly, but also provide financial analysis to enable decision making in an uncertain time, to make changes to almost everything we do and keep the financials of the company in check while implementing these new initiatives and tools to improve process and employee wellbeing.

2020 will certainly live in our minds for some time as a challenging year from a business perspective, but we know that our situation was much easier than many companies have faced and we wish those in more difficult business circumstances, the very best for 2021.



## Belfast Region City Deal – The partnership role of Queen’s University Belfast

**H**aving joined Queen’s University Belfast in April 2019, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer Joanne Clague champions a partnership approach to leadership. As a qualified chartered accountant, Joanne’s 19 years’ post-qualification experience includes leading strategic partnerships and transformational change in the Higher Education and Healthcare sectors.



As Registrar, Joanne is overseeing the University’s involvement in developing and delivering the Belfast Region City Deal (BRCD) in collaboration with multiple regional partners. A bespoke £850 million co-investment funding package agreed between central government and the region, the BRCD is aimed at helping to harness additional investment, create new jobs and accelerate inclusive economic growth.

The Deal was created through the leadership of the region’s six councils, and this established a partnership foundation which has been integral to its development. The Deal has the potential to deliver transformative change for the benefit of everyone in the region.

City Deals are an injection of capital funding from central and regional government. They fund new physical facilities, but more fundamentally, create a partnership of local public and private sector organisations to drive growth. They offer a different way of working, and a chance to go beyond the incremental and towards genuine economic transformation.

The scale of the vision for the BRCD is unprecedented in Northern Ireland. In May 2020, the Northern Ireland Executive committed to match fund the £350m Westminster investment in the Deal, bringing the total investment to £850m, including £150m from the City Deal partners (including Queen’s). In time, these investments are expected to reach a £1bn investment package.

The Deal consists of over twenty projects in four key areas: Infrastructure, Tourism, Employability and Skills, and Innovation and Digital. Queen’s, together with Ulster

University, is developing the Innovation strand: a suite of five projects with a common thread of digital innovation, which will receive over £200m capital funding via the Deal. While the universities are facilitating these projects, their focus will be determined by industry and its needs. Queen’s is leading on three projects:

- The Advanced Manufacturing Innovation Centre (AMIC) will provide facilities to accelerate new manufacturing technology development.
- The Global Innovation Institute (GII) will foster co-innovation between researchers and industry in digital technologies, including Artificial Intelligence and data analytics, particularly across the One Health spectrum, spanning human health and agri-food.
- The Institute for Research Excellence in Advanced Clinical Healthcare (iREACH) will provide unified capability for clinical research, bringing together academic, industry, NHS and government stakeholders to create a unique ecosystem for testing new drugs through their development life cycle and integration into care pathways.

The Deal’s Innovation strand projects have been directly shaped by input from hundreds of companies spanning varied industries. Over the past two years, Queen’s has been working with a broad range of regional companies and with public sector partners, such as the Belfast Health and Social Care Trust.

The Innovation projects have a central theme of digital, data-driven innovation. As the lockdown periods have brought sharply into focus, this is something companies need to future-proof their business models.

The project buildings will be enablers to take the projects to full scale, but we have already completed a huge amount of work with partners, and there is a collective effort to finalise the Deal this Spring.

Work on BRCD began well before the current Covid-19 emergency, but the levers needed for economic growth haven’t changed: university-industry collaboration remains one of our most powerful tools for stimulating the economy and providing valuable benefits for the wider population. The Innovation projects will not only help to drive recovery, but can help develop distinctive sectoral strengths for the Belfast region and an ambitious vision for drawing in major international partners.

# Do you have the Mark of Progress?



## Diversity Mark

[www.diversity-mark-ni.co.uk](http://www.diversity-mark-ni.co.uk)

### Founding Partners



For further information, visit:  
[www.brkd-innovation.co.uk](http://www.brkd-innovation.co.uk)



## Ulster Bank's Joanne Wilson Appointed Chair of Contact Centre Network Northern Ireland



**U**lster Bank's Joanne Wilson has taken over as chair of the industry body for contact centres in Northern Ireland. The body – Contact Centre Network Northern Ireland (CCNI) – represents the biggest players in the sector here who collectively employ more than 15,000 contact centre staff. Joanne, who is Customer Experience Lead for Ulster Bank, succeeds Grainne O'Kane of Firstsource as chair of CCNI. She will chair the organisation's board and lead its engagement in Northern Ireland for a two-year period.

The contact centre industry is one of Northern Ireland's fastest growing sectors, incorporating a range of centres of excellence that service customers, employees and stakeholders across the world.

Joanne Wilson says that one of her key goals as Chair of CCNNI is to help communicate the career opportunities that the sector offers. "Working in the contact centre industry allows you to develop a wide range of critical life skills including resilience, emotional intelligence and people skills. It also very often provides entry into large global organisations with the opportunity to build a real career within them," she says.

"I am very much looking forward to the next two years as chair of CCNNI and working closely with Director Jayne Davies and the CCNNI board. The contact centre industry's key importance to businesses and people has really been underlined during the last year so it is a challenging and exciting time to be taking on the role," Joanne adds. Jayne Davies said she is "delighted to welcome Joanne as Chair

of the CCNNI and excited to be working together in supporting the NI contact centre industry".

CCNNI represents 45 members including BT, Allstate, Ulster Bank, Danske Bank, Santander, Firstsource and Concentrix. It offers innovation and support for all contact centre professionals across Northern Ireland. It aims to raise awareness of the industry and its good work, encourages the sharing of ideas and best practices and enhances skills and professional development.

To learn more, visit: [ccnni.com](http://ccnni.com)



## Women in Business offer a virtual hand of support

Whilst we are trying our best to adjust to virtual meetings, working from home and multitasking on a daily basis, Women in Business supported its members by providing a fully virtual schedule of events at the end of 2020

Over the past few months, Women in Business welcomed over 1200 registrations to their on online events. Read what some of our members had to say...

I find the events excellent, really inspiring & uplifting.

This webinar came at the best time for me as I just lost out on a job and was feeling quite down and negative about myself. I will take all I have learned today with me

Really enjoyed this networking event. I already have new contacts and look forward to the next one!

This was one of the best zoom sessions I have had since the start of the pandemic. I really enjoyed it and I know I will be able to practise it in my daily life. Thank you Women In Business for organising.

## Voices of Leadership Conference

Our highlight of the late 2020 events was the inaugural Voices of Leadership Conference - our first hybrid event in the new normal for conferences. Roseann Kelly and Sarah Travers delivered an incredible conference from The MAC Belfast and welcomed global speakers to the event including Sharon Thorne, Global Board Chair of Deloitte; Alyse Nelson, President and CEO of Vital Voices Global Partnership; Norah Casey, award-winning businesswoman and broadcaster.

The only two female CEOs featured in the Top 100 business list in Northern Ireland Elaine Birchall, CEO, SHS Group and Sara Venning, CEO, NI Water also joined Sarah and Roseann on the socially distanced 2% panel. Women in Business in partnership with InterTrade Ireland were able to offer this live virtual conference free of charge to all attendees in order to further support our members and friends!



# 2021 with Women in Business

As we look ahead for 2021, we are proud to continue ongoing support for our members with a brand new schedule of online! Don't miss out on our inspiring **conferences** and **awards**. Grow yourself and your network with our **FREE webinars** and **roundtables** for WIB members. Get booking now and we will see you virtually soon!

## January

**26<sup>th</sup> Women in Business Round Table**  
12.30 – 13.30  
Tuesday 26<sup>th</sup> January

**28<sup>th</sup> Progress your Ambition**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Barbara McKiernan, Vanrath  
Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> January

## February

**9<sup>th</sup> Achieving 'Executive Presence'**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Keith Lippert, Allstate  
Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February

**16<sup>th</sup> Positive Thinking**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Annette Kelly, Little Penny Thoughts  
Tuesday 16<sup>th</sup> February

**23<sup>rd</sup> Women in Agriculture Webinar**  
19.00 – 20.30  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> February

**25<sup>th</sup> The Future is Tech?**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Julie McCandless, Queen's Management School  
Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February



## March

**4<sup>th</sup> Entrepreneurs Round Table**  
10.00 – 11.30  
Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> March

**7<sup>th</sup> WIB Inspiring Women Awards**  
Sunday 7<sup>th</sup> March

**BUSINESS**

**23<sup>rd</sup> Wellbeing and Resilience**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Aileen McAvoy, Danske Bank  
Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> March

**26<sup>th</sup> Women in Tech Virtual Conference**  
Friday 26<sup>th</sup> March

**MCS GROUP**  
INTELLIGENT RECRUITMENT SOLUTIONS

## April

**13<sup>th</sup> Women in Construction Round Table**  
10.00 – 11.30  
Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> April

**15<sup>th</sup> Transitioning in the Workplace**  
14.30 – 15.30  
Speaker: Glandore  
Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> April

**22<sup>nd</sup> Stay Cyber Savvy With These Top Tips**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Victoria Logan and Rachelle Reid, Allstate  
Thursday 22<sup>nd</sup> April

## May

**6<sup>th</sup> Women in Energy Round Table**  
10.00 – 11.30  
Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> May

**11<sup>th</sup> Women in Finance Round Table**  
10.00 – 11.30  
Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> May

**20<sup>th</sup> Creative Thinking**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Belfast Met  
Thursday 20<sup>th</sup> May

**25<sup>th</sup> The Chemistry of Wellbeing**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Catherine McIntosh, Strive and Thrive  
Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> May



## June

**3<sup>rd</sup> Women in Engineering Round Table**  
10.00 – 11.30  
Thursday 3<sup>rd</sup> June

**8<sup>th</sup> The Value of Mentoring**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Baker McKenzie  
Tuesday 8<sup>th</sup> June

**10<sup>th</sup> All-Island Entrepreneurs Conference**  
09.30 – 15.00  
Thursday 10<sup>th</sup> June

**15<sup>th</sup> Work Life Balance**  
10.00 – 11.00  
Speaker: Anne Donaghy OBE, Mid and East Antrim Borough Council  
Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June

**22<sup>nd</sup> Young Women's Network Event**  
Tuesday 22<sup>nd</sup> June





## CITB NI continues to invest in mental health training for the construction industry



**T**hroughout the COVID-19 crisis CITB NI has been committed to working with mental health and wellbeing partners, including the social enterprise Inspire Workplaces, to provide a range of support services for registered employers and staff. Mental health is recognised as one of the key training priorities for the organisation who, over the past few years, has invested over £50k in training hundreds of participants in this area.

CITB NI has worked most recently with Inspire Workplaces to provide services including a 24 hour Confidential Helpline as well as a range of webinars including Stress and Anxiety, Bereavement and loss and Addiction support.

Working in partnership with employers to identify key areas of importance is essential to the development of relevant training. Regular communications with employers ensures that CITB NI provides key training and services that supports employers with the mental health and wellbeing of all of their staff.

Barry Neilson, CITB NI Chief Executive said: "Supporting the industry in the area of mental health and wellbeing is one of the key priorities for our training. We are very aware of the difficulties and challenges facing the construction industry and we are committed to working within our partnership networks to ensure that we do everything we can to help, support and guide our industry by providing the access to quality training."

Supporting CITB NI's mental health training programme, Maria Bradley HR Director from registered employer Gilbert-Ash said: "Mental health awareness and support for our employees is very important to our company, so we were delighted to have the opportunity to avail of CITB NI mental health training. Removing the stigma around mental health is a challenge for all industries but with this support from CITB NI and coming together as one we are breaking down barriers."

For more information log on to [www.citbni.org.uk](http://www.citbni.org.uk) or follow CITB NI on



## Award Winning Artist, Jacqueline Rooney Follows Her Dreams



**A**ward winning, Rostrevor artist Jacqueline Rooney achieved her lifelong dream of opening her own studio after a 500% increase in sales over lockdown. After an eventful period, losing 2 family members to cancer and having her two sons within the same 18 months she realised life was too short and decided to follow her ultimate dream. She handed in her notice in 2018 after 12 years as Head of Art in a busy secondary school to pursue her true vocation to become a full time artist.

Jacqueline's work has been described as being vibrant, atmospheric and emotive. She works with interior designers, commercial and residential clients to create paintings to enhance interiors and evoke happiness. A typical day in the office for Jacqueline commences at 5:30am with cuddles from her two sons, Finn 5 and Evan 4. She completes all of her social media posts first thing before making a strong coffee then going into her studio to set up her easel for a day of creating.

A few of her highlights recently were receiving the INTO artist of the year award in 2019, the SBS award from Theo Paphitis and getting a phone call from BBC's "The Repair Shop" presenter Jay Blades saying he loved her work and wanted to collaborate. One of her biggest achievements has been building her own bespoke gallery & studio through the growth of her business. It has been a lifelong dream to exhibit her work in a studio with views of the sea and mountains to inspire her every day. "I am absolutely delighted to have opened my first studio, where I can showcase my Art & meet & connect with the collectors of my work" explained Jacqueline.

The start of lockdown was a worrying time for her as all of the galleries were closed due to the pandemic. So, Jacqueline focused on developing the e-commerce side of her website which has massively transformed her business over the past few months. Jacqueline is now exporting her work throughout Ireland, the UK and Internationally,

Her advice for anyone starting their own business would be to go for it! Research and plan before making the leap and never lose sight of your vision and dream. It is undoubtedly Jacqueline's unrivalled passion for her work that has contributed to her growing success. She strives to keep growing her business going forward and hopes she can inspire others to follow their lifelong dreams!

View Jacqueline's work on her website [www.jacquelinerooney.com](http://www.jacquelinerooney.com)

You can also keep up to date on social media

Jacqueline Rooney Art

@jacquelinerooneyart



## Supporting You Today and Empowering you for the Future

We often find ourselves throwing away the phrase 'you learn something new every day', however have you ever taken a moment to ask yourself what do you want to learn, how do you need to develop and how could both your personal and professional life be improved if you had even greater knowledge of key skill areas?

At Women in Business, we believe knowledge is power, and it is through continuous personal and professional development (CPD) that you not only climb the ladder of success and achieve your goals but also know your worth, increase your confidence, and find a sense of purpose and direction.

A recent survey by People Management reported that 63% of individuals said that upskilling and training opportunities had become more important to them since

restrictions came into force. Due to these findings and the incredible popularity of the virtual Centre of Learning programmes which put your needs at the heart of everything we do, we are delighted to announce our new schedule until June 2021.

### What are the benefits of Women in Business External Training?

- Women get more from programmes when they can open up and share their experiences with women outside of their organisation.
- Learning with others from different sectors brings a new and valuable perspective
- Research confirms that women only groups for very strong peer support groups adding value to learning

- Extended training programmes (over 1 month) allow for a longer period of growing connections and networking with other professionals
- 4 bespoke modules led by industry leading experts ensure that individuals can put theory into practice between each module and allow for greater understanding and development
- Limited number of places (15 max) to ensure that training is intensive, intimate, and interactive

**Find out the impact our programmes had for previous delegates and make this the year you invest in yourself (all programmes will be taking place twice this schedule- both before and after Easter so you don't miss out!):**

### Powerful Resilience Skills Programme Pre Easter 2nd February/Post Easter 14th April: Bespoke Communications

"Amazing course. Made me stop, reflect, understand, acknowledge, develop, and enhance my resilience both personally and professionally. My confidence has grown, and I am working on being "bold" and taking some risks. Couldn't recommend this course highly enough to women looking to recharge and start over."  
**Lesley-Ann Smyth, Shorts Brothers PLC, Spirit Aerosystems**



Cost : £250 + VAT for members  
£350 + VAT for non- members for 4 modules

### Brilliant Communication Pre-Easter 11th February/post Easter 21st April Proclaim Consulting

"Each week there were a lot of excellent hints and tips for more effective communications. All the modules tie in together really well and build a bigger picture of communication techniques, that are applicable to a wide range of situations. I also met some really lovely people on the course. Would definitely recommend".  
**Roisin Harkin, Arity Allstate**



Cost : £250 + VAT for members  
£350 + VAT for non- members for 4 modules

### Empowering Women in Leadership Pre-Easter 3rd March/post Easter 4th May Marcomm Training

"The Empowering Women in Leadership programme has been highly useful and empowering for me. I originally joined the programme as I wanted to learn how to present well in the boardroom, however I ended up loving the Leadership Presence module the most. Each and every module was useful, and it was fantastic to have the input of both Una and the other ladies. I truly feel that I have developed my leadership skills and most of all I feel more confident about them".  
**Ellie Francis, Nepturnal Ltd**



Cost : £250 + VAT for members  
£350 + VAT for non- members for 4 modules

### Digital Marketing & Performance Commences 27th April Alchemy Digital Training

"I found the Digital Performance and Marketing programme very helpful. I have a far better understanding of a wide range of digital platforms, how to create quality content and how to measure my success. I would recommend this programme for those new to digital marketing or those who wish to refresh their knowledge"  
**Julie Mills, The Tap Room Restaurant**



Cost : £120 + VAT for WIB members or  
£170 + VAT for non- members for 4 modules

### WIB Mentoring Programme sponsored by Advance Coaching Onboarding 20th May Advance Coaching

"My mentor is fantastic, very supportive and encouraging. We are meeting through zoom and it has been invaluable. She is very positive and very knowledgeable about business generally, so I'm really delighted all around" - **WIB Mentee**



Admin Cost : £50 + VAT for mentees  
(exclusively available to WIB members)

### Back to Business Pre-Easter 25th February/post Easter 29th April

"I found this programme really beneficial. It was an amazing experience to connect with other women in the same situation as myself. The team is amazing and very good communicators. I would definitely recommend this programme to any woman."  
**Pily NIE Networks**



Cost : £1,000 + VAT for WIB Members or  
£1,400 + VAT for non-members 3 group sessions,  
2 1-2-1 coaching sessions



# Changing the conversation on Resilience with Sarah Travers

**I**f only we'd had 20/20 vision, we could have steered the ship in another direction. Or could we have? The truth is we did our best in circumstances we couldn't control and coped by drawing on a deep well of resilience.

I've come to believe that we need to change the conversation around that R word. Resilience is not about manning up, donning a suit of armour, blazing through to the other side come hell or high water. Yes, we need to be able to tolerate discomfort – because that's life. However, resilience is also about learning to say "No" or "Yes...if" or about recognising when we need to stop, reflect and in some cases let go.

My business Bespoke Communications, like many others, came to an abrupt halt last March as our face to face presentation skills and media training company was no longer able to operate as before.

The transition to online delivery proved to be a steep learning curve but a positive one too. My business partner, Camillia Long and I are based up on the north coast and the massive cutback on travel time has allowed us to be more productive but also gives us a much better work life balance. I've been able to join the many dry robed sea dippers embracing the love of a cold water swim first thing every morning (even in January) something I would never have found time for before and I love it!

Long before I set up my own business in 2015 - I studied broadcast journalism at Nottingham Trent University and graduated in 1997 straight into the busy world of 24/7 live news broadcasting. Adding the arrival of my baby son when I was just 22 into the mix focused me like nothing else and I do believe there was no tougher a time for me than when my son was an infant and I was working early and late shifts whilst commuting from Portstewart to Belfast. I did this for 17 years, followed by a stint at UTV, teaching, magazine writing and then setting up Bespoke Communications.



Now in my forties I can see I've changed so much. I used to look to others to tell me what to do when a crisis hit. Behind the calm exterior of the tv news reader I became, lay a young woman constantly anxious about what lay ahead and all the things that could possibly go wrong. 2020 has made me realise that finally I don't do that anymore.

Life has certainly thrown curveballs, (no maternity pay whilst with the BBC, caring for my late dad with dementia, juggling work and two children, a painful divorce and losing a job) but each time I've been bruised I've picked myself up and started again. Also, amazingly each time I've moved on it's actually been to better things.

It's important to acknowledge that you're not where you are through luck but through everything you've experienced and worked hard for up until this point.

Trying to be perfect all the time damages our ability to be resilient. It is an unrealistic, flawed aspiration and the sooner we stop beating ourselves up and worrying what others think - the better. We need to press pause at times to give us the energy we need to keep on keeping on. To jump in the sea at 8.30am and feel alive and a little bit crazy. I hope you can find your little bit of crazy. It feels so good.

Develop your Resilience Skills in 2021 with Bespoke Communications in our Centre of Learning on page. 16-17



# The Mentoring Path

## A route to success and wellbeing

### Virtual Organisational Mentoring - Why it's a win, win, win!



We have been designing and delivering mentoring programmes for nearly a decade. Partnering with diverse organisations including technology, finance, legal, fashion, housing, criminal justice, not for profit and business networks. Diverse they may be, but we have found that all have three aspirations in common.

1. To utilise the resources of those who are more experienced to maximise the potential of those who are less so.
2. To increase connection across organisational systems and networks to enhance understanding, collaboration and innovation.
3. To engage current talent in proactively developing and supporting the future talent pipeline.

Many programmes have inclusion and diversity at the heart of their aims, such as supporting career advancement for women where they are under represented in industries or at a senior level. The Women in Business Mentoring programme, delivered by Advance over the last 6 years, is a very successful example of this and is now the largest mentoring programme for women on the island of Ireland.



Coincidentally when the pandemic crashed into all of our lives in early 2020, we had already begun to virtualise our mentoring offering with a new all Ireland programme we were launching with a global professional body. We were able to act quickly, repurpose all our current mentoring programmes to a complete virtual offering and provide support and resources to mentors and mentees to enable their work to continue.

The big stretch and learning in designing and supporting the shift to virtual mentoring programmes over this last year has been outweighed by the significant reward of the many achievements we see as a direct impact of the support offered by mentor to mentee.



Mentoring has never been more important, as we are challenged with change in every aspect of our personal and professional lives and forced to dig deep for personal resilience. Research tells us that one of the most important factors that supports the building of resilience is our relationships with supportive others. Mentoring is a uniquely supportive relationship and so actively builds resilience when we most need it.

Virtual mentoring enables organisations to stay connected in a world where health risks and restrictions require us to stay apart. It helps mentors feel affirmed and engaged and offers an important value's driven purpose beyond the day job. Mentors often say their "why" is to make a difference and build a legacy for the future. In a context of severe economic and business disruption mentoring enables the mentee to focus on what they can influence, develop, achieve and so provides some career certainty in an environment of much wider uncertainty.



Mentoring is a win for the organisation, the mentor and the mentee and that has got to be good news for 2021.

Please reach out if we can help you design your organisational mentoring programme to spread the magic of mentoring.

#### Niamh Shiells, MD Advance Coach Ltd

Advance Coach Ltd is an ILM Centre registered to deliver Coaching & Mentoring qualifications. We partner with organisations to design and embed virtual mentoring programmes, train & provide CPD and networks for mentors and partner with organisations to evaluate the impact of mentoring services. [www.advancecoach.co.uk](http://www.advancecoach.co.uk)





## We'll be there for you... Let WIB Be Your Friend In Business!

Women in Business offers a diverse membership spread throughout all industry sectors - from young women, small business owners to corporate organisations and ambassadors.

With unique online networking events to raise your profile and our Centre of Learning to help further your career, let us help you reach your full potential to grow professionally in 2021.

### Membership Benefits:



#### Professional Networking:

Avail of industry based online networking to connect with women within your sector to share and learn in eachothers experiences



#### FREE Online Webinars:

Register for our free online webinars to grow your personal & professional development while supporting your overall well being



#### Members Directory:

Access to the exclusive members virtual networking platform, to contact and connect with your fellow members



#### Celebrate your success with us:

You are welcome to attend our inspiring annual Awards



#### Company & Self Promotion:

Profile yourself or share your knowledge in a Blog throughout the network to share across our website & 47k social media audience



#### Be part of the WIB Conferences:

Choose from our 3 amazing annual conferences throughout the year



#### Membership Support:

We are here to help lobby on your behalf on the important issues members may face



#### Members' News:

Contribute your company's news to the WIB website and monthly Ezine, for free with our unique audience



#### Bi-annual Magazine:

Contribute to our bi-annual magazine. Submit an article to help raise the profile of your role or organisation



## Leading the way in Business

Women in Business has been working hard over the past difficult months to support all our members and provide the opportunity to keep building those all-important connections and professional development, all while ensuring that the personal wellbeing of members our paramount!

Recently we welcomed onboard many progressive organisations including:

- Extern
- CITB NI
- Alchemy Tech
- Northern Ireland Fire and Rescue
- Telestack Ltd
- Construction Employers Federation
- Vox FP
- Vanrath
- SDG
- Cubis Systems

### We spoke to our members recently to see what they had to say about being part of the network...



"Females play a key role in farm businesses; however, their passion, commitment and hard work can go unnoticed. Membership of WIB, allows our female members the opportunity to develop their skills, build confidence and progress into leadership roles within their family farm business, their own business or career and indeed within the structure of the UFU."

Sarah Morrell  
Ulster Farmers Union



"Joining WIB has given EY Belfast the impetus to create our own EY Women's Network. It is a pleasure to be part of the membership of WIB. The events are relevant, well run and fun and give our EY team the opportunity to network and socialise in different business environments."

Emma-Jayne Mawhinney  
R&D Tax Incentives Manager  
EY



"The WIB 'Back to Business' programme has been immensely beneficial to our employees returning from maternity leave. The programme offers career coaching, networking and masterclasses to help the individuals navigate the practical and professional challenges when returning to the workplace. Membership has provided our employees with opportunities to network and attend webinars to help drive forward their career and performance."

Maeve Gorman, HR Business Partner  
Baker McKenzie

### With corporate membership you can avail of all WIB benefits plus:

- Unlimited membership for all staff
- Opportunities to host events
- Raising the profile of the organisation

We are delighted to have the opportunity to support so many corporate members at this time. For more info on corporate membership contact Head of Membership Clare Gallagher: [clare@womeninbusinessni.com](mailto:clare@womeninbusinessni.com)



## Building a career in a pandemic with Christine Carrigan, Young Women's Network Chairperson

**H**aving worked as a Journalist for two years Christine Carrigan is no stranger to working in a fast-paced and ever-changing environment. However, a career change just before a global pandemic is something no one can prepare for.

Christine has a Bachelor's and a Master's degree in Journalism from Ulster University, and after working in the industry transitioned to the business sector where she secured employment as an Associate with Hays Recruitment in November 2019. Embarking on the Associate training scheme, Christine exhibited a natural flair for recruitment – rapidly cultivating a specialist portfolio in the Private Sector Office Support area of recruitment. Then COVID-19 struck. By April 2020 she had been furloughed along with thousands of others across the UK.

With potential of redundancy, Christine successfully re-interviewed for her position at Hays and has returned to work –

even managing to secure a promotion to Consultant on her return! Christine believes that adaptability, perseverance, and resilience are key to her successes since returning to Hays.

Encouraged by her colleagues, Christine joined Women in Business as an exciting opportunity to learn from experienced businesswomen. With COVID-19 the job market is more competitive than ever, and she believes the connections and experience Women in Business provides have never been more important to succeeding in your career. Christine has recently been appointed as the Chairperson of Women in Business's Young Women's Network (U25) and is looking forward to helping build on the brand, values, and ethos of the organisation in this role!



For support on your career journey, visit Hays: [www.hays.co.uk](http://www.hays.co.uk)

## Naomi McGregor on her multi-award-winning tech start-up Movetru®

**N**aomi is the CEO and founder of Movetru®, a multi-award-winning tech start-up that specialises in reducing rehabilitation time and optimising athletic performance. Naomi recently graduated with a 1st Class Master's in Product Design Engineering from Queen's University Belfast. Since July 2020, she has received funding to enable her to continue with her business development.

Movetru® was inspired from Naomi's childhood passion, ballet. She grew up as a dancer and began as an assistant ballet teacher at 13 years old. A year later, Naomi was devastated when she injured herself, taking over three years finally diagnose her injury. Thankfully, Naomi is still dancing. Unfortunately, her story is not unique. Athletes across the world suffer from life altering injuries that ruin their career. To help overcome this, Naomi created Movetru®, home physio for anyone, anytime.

Naomi's success with Movetru® has achieved the Catalyst Invent Enterprise Software award and won QUB Dragon's Den! Having launched the Movetru® website in January 2020, Naomi is now super excited for prototype testing to begin, as she looks forward to taking each opportunity as it comes and appreciates how a start-up journey adapts and changes so quickly.

Continuing her role as a STEM Ambassador, Naomi shared the story on her journey into engineering at the TEDxDerryLondonderry Women event in November 2020 - which has now been played in schools across the UK and Ireland. "I am so pleased! It has been amazing for students to reach out to me after due to the impact it made on them", says Naomi as she follows her passion to inspire other women into a career in STEM!



To find out more visit: [movetru.io](http://movetru.io)



## The Virtual Recent Graduate Life of Eileen Quinn

**A** recent graduate." That was the criteria for my current position. Recent meaning five years or less since graduation. I graduated from Ulster University in Marketing in 2016. Fast-forward to 2019: I applied for Invest Northern Ireland's Graduate to Export programme and secured the position of International Marketing Executive in Invest Northern Ireland's Boston office.

An international career was always on my agenda. It took me a bit longer to arrive there than my fellow grads, but sometimes the right opportunity comes when the time is right for you. My time came when I secured this position. The program helps NI companies achieve international growth by providing financial assistance to recruit a graduate to help with an export project for 18 months, but it also helps recent graduates develop skills and gain international work experience.

The plan was to spend six months at Invest Northern Ireland HQ in Belfast, then move to Boston to work with that team in April 2020. Alongside my new role, I would also complete a post-graduate diploma at Ulster University Business School.

I was ahead of the remote-working game because I virtually on-boarded with my new Boston team from Belfast. In that initial six months, I got to learn about all things trade and exporting.

I supported Invest NI's Americas trade team during the World Ag Expo and CONEXPO trade shows, connecting NI agriculture and materials handling companies to potential international buyers by prospecting and booking meetings.

I was looking forward to seeing how things worked in the U.S. when international travel plans were put on hold for the foreseeable future due to Covid-19. At least I had a six-month head start on virtual work, unlike the rest of the world (always the optimist!).

Virtual on-boarding on this scale is new for everyone, and not everyone has years of professional experience to help them handle such a situation. Newer graduates can be vulnerable to such an introduction due to lack of professional experience. My survival advice for grads is that communication is your best tool. Communicate often, and use your time wisely when interacting with your new team. Show some character, open up and allow them to get to know your personality. Importantly, employers taking on board recent graduates should recognise this is a vulnerable experience for grads.

Show patience and provide support for them. Despite current circumstances, I have continued to work with our Americas trade team supporting Northern Ireland businesses, and I've developed a track record of success. One of my main achievements has been the execution of a multi-million dollar deal for an Agri-tech client.



I am nearing the end of my programme, with a completion date of April 2021. I have high aspirations to relocate to the U.S. when it's feasible, but I'm open to opportunities for an experienced Irish grad. In true Tyrone fashion, if you don't ask, you don't get, so now I'm asking. If anyone is looking for an experienced marketing or business development associate, I'm all ears!

For advice on your virtual on boarding experience, connect with Eileen on LinkedIn: [Eileen Quinn](#)



**Get ahead in the initial stages of your career with the Young Women's Network for only £20 per year**

Contact Marguarita McNally, Membership Executive: [info@womeninbusinessni.com](mailto:info@womeninbusinessni.com)



## If you see it, you can be it!

As we enter our 3rd year of Yes You Can in collaboration with Invest NI and 11 Councils, the mantra 'be strong enough to stand alone, smart enough to know when you need help and brave enough to ask for it' feels more important than ever. Despite the pandemic which has had a huge impact on everyone, particularly women due to caring responsibilities, we were amazed and inspired by the number of resilient, determined women who not only adapted to the changing climate, but also took the next steps on their entrepreneurial journey to start and develop their business.

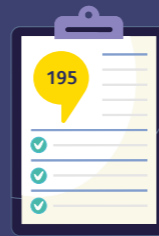
Over 2,000 Women engaged with Yes You Can since 2019, and with applications open for the 4-month 'Explore It' initiative, new 'Next Steps' Webinars coming soon and the return of the £20K Pitching Competition, we are set to reach an even larger number of women:



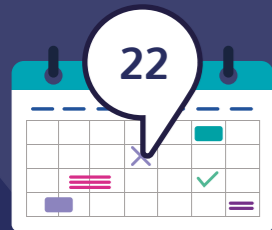
360 were inspired at **Female Entrepreneurs Conference**



833 women engaged with the **Imagine It Bootcamps**



Approx. 195 women have engaged with the **Explore It programme**



22 women attended a **2-day intensive growth residential**



404 **pitching applications received**



72 women throughout **Northern Ireland pitched through regional centres**



**£20k** was shared among 6 regional winners in both 2019 and 2020

## This year we are delighted to be offering even more support:

### Explore It:

In addition to six 2.5-hour workshops on business themes, 3 inspirational evenings with local entrepreneurs, a closed FB group to continue building relationships and 8 hours of buddy support, the Explore It programme for women at the pre-start, early stages of trading and low-level trading, now also offers 3 half day Digital marketing workshops!

### Next Steps:

Following feedback from participants, we are delighted to introduce Eight 2-hour webinars to support female entrepreneurs with the 'Next Steps' in business. Time, money, and resources contribute to the success of businesses, so we are bringing bespoke, focused webinars covering these key areas and more!

Finance

24TH FEBRUARY  
**How to get £££ back into your business**  
Deirdre Fitzpatrick of Fitzpatrick Associates

Sales

23RD MARCH  
**How to get consistent Profitable sales growth**  
Richard McMullan of Aurelius Advisory

Pitching Support

13TH APRIL  
**In It to Win It**  
Sarah Travers of Bespoke Communications

Resourcing

6TH MAY  
**Your time, your business, Your Way**  
Alison Matthews of VirtuAli

Digital

16TH JUNE  
**Let's Get Digital - Marketing at your fingertips**  
Emma Gribben of Alchemy Digital Training

Marketing

22ND SEPTEMBER  
**Achieving your Competitive Advantage through a winning Marketing Strategy**

Confidence & Resilience

20TH OCTOBER  
**Being a Woman in BusinessS**

Goals

18TH NOVEMBER  
**If your dreams don't scare you, they're too small**

## Interested in getting involved? Hear what some of this year's delegates had to say:

"The Yes You Can programme provides you with everything you need to know to get out there and start your own business. The amount of networking opportunities, mentoring, advice, support is fantastic!"

Emma Hughes EFFITNI

"Through the Explore It programme I have grown in confidence both professionally and personally. From discussion evenings with inspiring local entrepreneurs to focused and thorough buddy support, digital and marketing training and the wonderful support of friends made on the course, I have been given the tools and confidence to step out of my comfort zone to launch my business."

Sinead Farry Illustrations

"It was a great bootcamp with fantastic speakers. The time flew in and I came away with many tips and lots of advise to start up my business".

"Today's session was invaluable and I feel really inspired and motivated to take my idea forward. Thanks so much to everyone involved".

Stay tuned to Women in Business for more information on the **£20K Pitching competition** as applications open late March and we bring entrepreneurs from early stage to trading, growing and expanding, even more events and support throughout the year!



Visit [www.womeninbusinessni.com/Yes-You-Can](http://www.womeninbusinessni.com/Yes-You-Can) or email [yyc@womeninbusinessni.com](mailto:yyc@womeninbusinessni.com) for more info



## Virgin Media Business - Why connectivity is fundamental to helping businesses stabilise and rebound

**M**ike Smith, Managing Director of Virgin Media Business (Direct) shares his views on how Covid-19 has revolutionised businesses forever. Since March last year, many have taken radical steps to survive and stabilise, rapidly pivoting to support remote working. After the vaccine rollout, we're likely to see a hybrid working model emerge. This will involve employees operating from multiple locations. And consumer expectations will remain sky high, having grown used to online shopping over the last twelve months. It's clear the businesses which succeed beyond the vaccine rollout will be those that invest in advanced connectivity.

**Supporting remote and hybrid working**  
Over 80% of large enterprises now see networks as a top organisational priority, according to our research. They realise this is critical to keeping employees connected during the national lockdown and supporting hybrid working over the long term.

But our study into large enterprises has shown awareness of advanced connectivity solutions can be low – particularly SD-WAN, which wasn't ranked as an investment priority. This is worrying because this solution has a critical role to play. It provides businesses with much greater control over how they use their bandwidth. It enables them to make changes however and whenever they want and easily scale their network up and down with demand.

**Delivering world-class digital services**  
With a national lockdown until March 2021, seamless online services for consumers have never been so important. The good news is businesses have rapidly pivoted to serve customers over the last year, opening up new revenue streams in the process. The Web Summit event, one of Europe's largest tech conferences, went virtual in 2020. It has already announced its November 2021 event will combine digital and in-person events (if possible). This will allow them to invite 70,000 attendees in Lisbon and up to 80,000 online, doubling their usual ticket sales.



And while the Premier League was temporarily halted in Spring last year, EA Sports created and broadcast professional footballers playing a tournament on their video game, FIFA 20. As well as raising a million for charity, they created an important brand-building event, giving viewers the opportunity to migrate over to channels such as Twitch, which became a crucial platform for the rest of the year.

Businesses should continue investing in these first-class digital experiences and thinking imaginatively about how they can serve their customers. But they need to remember the critical importance of advanced connectivity technologies in powering these, providing the flexibility, agility and security needed to prevent network crashes and manage customer demand.

### Setting up the rebound

The first few months of 2021 will be about stabilisation, with a national lockdown introduced to protect the NHS.

But there is light at the end of the tunnel with the vaccine rollout. And businesses will eventually be able to start thinking about rebound. By investing in advanced connectivity solutions, leaders can position their organisations for hybrid working and first-class digital experiences, enabling them to recover and race ahead.



## SDG is 'Stronger Together' as it celebrates £6.1m delivery



**A**rmagh specialist construction supply company, SDG, celebrated £6m in sales for the year, against a challenging backdrop of the Covid 19 pandemic. The company, which is one of the leading global supply partners of specialist products to the construction industry here has been involved in projects including The Curragh Racecourse, Titanic Exhibition Centre, Belfast, and Central Bank of Ireland in Dublin.

SDG, which was established in 1990, has doubled its turnover in the last 3 years, and grown staff from 15 to 25 during this time. The company has just launched its new 'Stronger Together' brand, which includes a new website, a new ecommerce website and a new brand across its business fleet, an investment of over £500,000.

It is currently in the process of recruiting a Strategic Management Analyst to the team, in partnership with Queens University, and has appointed a Business Development Manager for Ireland to add to the existing sales team and grow its Ireland business focus.

Commenting on the business growth and ambition, Louise Skeath, CEO, said: "I am delighted with our business achievement of £6.1m in sales, during this really tough time right now for business across the island of Ireland and further afield. We are investing more locally, nationally, and internationally working on projects across Ireland and UK, and as far away as Dubai. The business has added 3 new staff roles across Logistics Management, Business Development for Ireland and currently we are recruiting in partnership with Queens University, all signals of our ambition and vision for growth."

"SDG is focused on achieving even more working with our customers, clients and supply chain. This will include identifying business needs and emerging trends, proposing solutions and delivering operational transformative change to our clients and customers. We are already transitioning SDG, looking at opportunities for business growth, exploring new product development opportunities and setting the business up to be Brexit ready," Louise concluded.

To learn more, visit:  
[wearesdg.com](http://wearesdg.com)



NIE Networks apprentices Jack Hoy, Molly Guy, Ryan Morgan and Neil Freeburn.

## NIE Networks launches intake for award-winning apprenticeship programme

**N**IE Networks is launching its Apprenticeship Programme for 2021 with online applications opening at the end of January. NIE Networks has been training apprentices for over 50 years, during which time more than 600 have qualified with the company.

The NIE Networks Apprenticeship Programme is a bespoke training course delivered by experienced instructors and includes a range of roles of each year depending on the skills required within the company. This year there are opportunities for apprentices to apply for IT design based AutoCad roles as well as planners and cartographers over a two year period.

John Burns, Training Manager at NIE Networks, said: "The NIE Networks Apprenticeship Programme offers a unique opportunity in Northern Ireland, in that it combines practical, hands-on experience with an academic qualification in Electrical Engineering, as well as a salary throughout the duration of the course.

"NIE Networks invests around £1million annually in numerous technical training initiatives which utilise the latest technologies and modern practices, in order to provide our trainees with a platform to launch their careers and develop the skills they need.

"The majority of our apprentices remain in the business long-term and add significant value, so I would urge anyone, from young students leaving school or further education, to people who are interested in a dynamic new career move, to apply to the NIE Networks Apprenticeship Programme."

NIE Networks was awarded Best Apprenticeship Scheme for 2019 at the national CIPD People Management Awards UK and it is the only Institute of Engineering and Technology accredited apprenticeship programme in Northern Ireland.



For further information or to apply to the NIE Networks Apprenticeship Programme, visit [www.nienetworks.co.uk/apprenticeships](http://www.nienetworks.co.uk/apprenticeships)

## MEMBER NEWS



## NIRPE Sisters are the first women in Ireland to achieve fit testing accreditation

**O**rla and Shauna Ryan are providing essential fit testing of face masks for frontline NHS staff and are the first women in Ireland to be accredited by the British Safety Industry Federation (BSIF) Fit2Fit scheme

The Ryan sisters of NIRPE (Northern Ireland Respiratory Protective Equipment) felt it was essential to gain the Fit2Fit accreditation to demonstrate the level of skill, knowledge and training needed to provide the safest possible service to NHS staff and other industries requiring fitted face masks.

RPE Specialist, Orla Ryan said: "Covid-19 has really emphasised the need for the highest standards of respiratory healthcare to protect frontline staff and the BSIF qualification is a marker of competency and professionalism. We want our key workers to feel safe when they are working daily to save the lives of infected patients."

HealthCare has been our main focus in 2020, going forward as a business in 2021 we are looking to grow the commercial and industrial sectors, as it is a legal requirement that all employees required to wear tight-fitting facepieces, in any industry, must be fit tested by a competent person before first initial use, as detailed in CoSHH (Control of Substances Hazardous to Health) regulations.

As well as conducting essential fit-testing we will be providing training programmes offering health and safety consultations.

Commercial Director Shauna Ryan added: "We are delighted to have achieved this accreditation for quantitative face fit testing. We invested in this division of the business 18 months ago, prior to the Covid pandemic, with a specific interest in healthcare. This qualification cements a lot of training and hard work and will assist

in further reinforcing the high standard of service we bring to our clients in respect of their employee respiratory care plans."

NIRPE is a wholly owned subsidiary of Healthcare Essentials Ltd, located at Ards Business Hub in Newtownards, which has been providing surgical and medical equipment to the local healthcare industry for the past 12 years.

For more information visit: [www.nirpe.com](http://www.nirpe.com)



## Sarah Stewart of Corvus is leading the way in Northern Ireland Marketing research

**S**arah Stewart, of Belfast based Corvus recruitment, recently partnered with Dr Andrea Reid, Marketing Programme Director at the Ulster Business School to create a comprehensive Marketing Skills and Salary Survey specific to Northern Ireland.

The survey is the first of its kind in NI and acts as a useful tool to define the impact that marketing professionals can make for businesses and examined the effects that COVID-19 has had on the industry.

A range of professionals from the Marketing industry completed the survey from Executive to Director level from client and agency side.

The survey covered questions on drivers and aspirations, specific skill sets, salaries and gave insight to employers in NI, including findings on who the most attractive employers are in the region.

In terms of outlook for the marketing industry in NI, things are looking bright: 51% of the respondents experienced growth in their team in the last 12 months with 36% predicting there will be growth in 2021 and encouragingly for the sector, 32% saw an increase in their workload in the pandemic.

95% felt that working from home was possible in their function, with over half (55%) of those felt it they could achieve their targets as well, if not better at home. 17% of participants were furloughed, just 8% were either laid off or made redundant at time of survey.

Sarah said: 'The marketing spectrum of functions and specialisms will always be complex to understand due to their ever-evolving nature, so we hope the findings are useful for employers locally, especially those who mightn't have a background in marketing themselves. It was really encouraging to see that 100% of those

who participated indicated their desire to continue upskilling and demonstrates how valuable Marketing resource is for competitive businesses'.

To view the findings of the survey or for a free consultation on your Marketing talent requirements, contact: [sarah@corvus.jobs](mailto:sarah@corvus.jobs) or call 07812 052821





# Northern Ireland Quarterly Sectoral Forecasts 2020 Q4 from Chief Economist & Strategy Lead Conor Lambe of Danske Bank

**H**igher number of coronavirus cases and need for tighter restrictions slows Northern Ireland's economic recovery

The Northern Ireland economy continues to be heavily influenced by the coronavirus pandemic, with the tighter restrictions in both the final quarter of 2020 and the first quarter of 2021 stalling the recovery that had begun over the summer and the early autumn. The rollout of the vaccine programme will hopefully see the gradual economic recovery restart in the second quarter of 2021, however it is likely to be a number of years before output returns to its pre-coronavirus level and there is still a great deal of uncertainty and risk to the outlook.

We estimate that the Northern Ireland economy contracted by around 11% in 2020 and have revised our forecasts for 2021 downwards and now believe that the local economy will only expand by about 4% in 2021.

Government measures are continuing to provide some protection to jobs but, despite the policy support, the labour market has deteriorated due to the pandemic. The extension of the Furlough scheme until the end of April 2021 should continue to limit the number of job losses, but nevertheless, we still expect the labour market to weaken further in 2021.

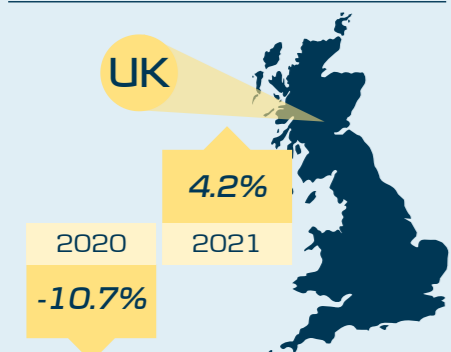
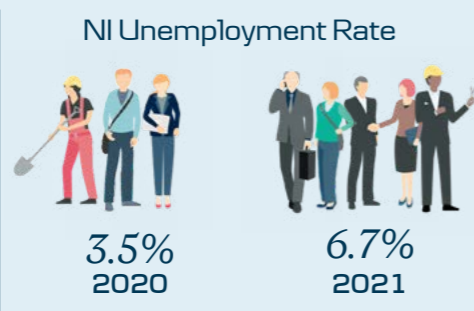
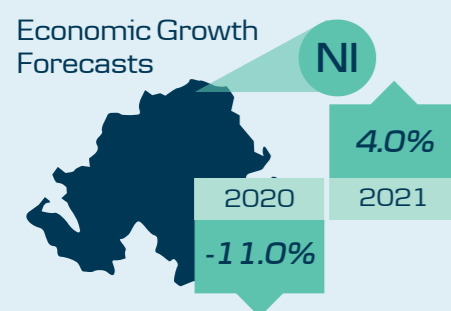
We are projecting that the annual average number of employee jobs fell by around 0.3% in 2020 with a larger decline of 3.0% expected in 2021, and that the annual average unemployment rate will increase from an estimated 3.5% in 2020 to 6.7% in 2021.



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SECTORAL FORECAST | Q4 2020



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## Content Marketing Strategy: How to Make Your Content Work Smarter

**O**ur member, Julietta Watson of JFW Marketing shares her tips on how content marketing can help increase your visibility, build your authority, and boost your performance. But it takes time and effort to create quality content, time that most business owners don't have.

If you are investing time in creating content, you don't want to post it and have it float about in the ether. You want your content to attract quality leads and build brand advocates. To do that your content needs to be well planned, well-executed, be engaging, and get good engagement.

### Planning

Conduct a thorough customer persona analysis. Find out where your customers go for information. What groups do they hang out in on LinkedIn? What do they say in competitor reviews? Once you know their key pain points and their goals you can start crafting content that answers these needs. Uncover their problem then show how you have the solution with your content

Create an Editorial Content Planner. Decide what are you going to say and how you are going to say it? The types of content you can create are endless, so don't limit yourself to just one format. Try video, graphics, animations, GIFs, slideshows, blogs, guest posts, promoted posts, lives

Pick the right social media channels. Where are your customers hanging out? Don't neglect channels like Pinterest, Twitter, and YouTube to drive visitors to your website

### Execution

Create branded assets. Use online graphics software tools like Canva to create graphics that are correctly sized for each of your social media channels

Schedule your content in advance. Use a social media scheduler to automate your posts and to help ensure you are posting at the right times

Make your content accessible. Use captions for videos, alt-text to describe images, multimedia elements on a blog to



hold people's attention. Provide content in as many formats as possible so you have versions that will suit your customers

Repurpose your content. Once your core content is posted, how can you repurpose it? Could your LinkedIn posts or blog posts become an eBook? Could your video be repurposed into a Podcast? Have a horizontal company video? Consider chopping it up into bite-sized sections for other channels and portrait format for IGTV and reels. Or why not post it to YouTube?

### Engagement

Diarise time for engagement. When are you going to connect with your customers or industry bodies? Are there any dedicated "hours" on Twitter where people in your industry get together? Do you have influencers or experts in your field that you can engage with their content?

Ask for Google reviews. Request customers post public reviews that display on Google My Business. Even better, ask for video testimonials!

Do PR for your content. Are there any podcasts or Vlogs you could go on? Can you syndicate your content to other blogs or guest post?

Content marketing can work for every business in every industry, but to make it effective, you need to answer your customer's core problems and ensure it is planned, executed and optimised to get the best engagement possible.

For more content marketing tips, follow @jfwmarketing or visit [www.jfw.marketing](http://www.jfw.marketing)



## Olivia Burns Founder of Olivia's Haven

**O**livia launched her luxury home fragrance company in February 2020 and the digitally native brand is already disrupting the traditional home fragrance sector.

The company was established on the North Coast when Olivia identified a gap in the market for a home fragrance collection with a luxury sophisticated scent profile that was visually stunning and at an attainable price point.

"As a lifelong candle lover I felt like there was space for luxury candles with fresh, sophisticated scents that weren't so expensive I was afraid to burn them".

This meant eschewing the traditional wholesale business model and instead Olivia launched an innovative direct-to-consumer (DTC) business. The entire range of products is hand made at the company's workshop and is sold exclusively through the brand's own website and social media channels. Word of mouth, social media and online collaborations are the main driver of new customers and sales, rather than the traditional combination of advertising and high street shops, and this direct relationship allows Olivia to maintain the highest standards of customer service and experience.

Olivia is using the skills developed in her professional marketing background to build a luxury modern brand with a focus on illustration and storytelling which is amplified through digital channels, particularly social media.

"Building an immersive and sensorial brand experience for Olivia's Haven is really important to me. Everything from the label design and the e-commerce site to the unboxing experience and the candle names and stories themselves speak to the sophistication and commitment to the detail".

The brand is supported by thousands of highly engaged followers and customers in multiple countries, and Olivia regularly collaborates with other independent online retailers and influencers, creating an ever-expanding social presence and leveraging the power of community.



Over the last 10 months Olivia's Haven has grown to more than 11,000 social media followers.

Olivia recently collaborated with the UK's leading candle subscription company and also opened a hugely successful Christmas pop-up store, the first event of the company's "offline" strategy. The brand was a finalist in the 2020 Irish Made Awards and has been featured in The Irish Times, Irish Country Magazine, her.ie and The Gloss Magazine, among others.

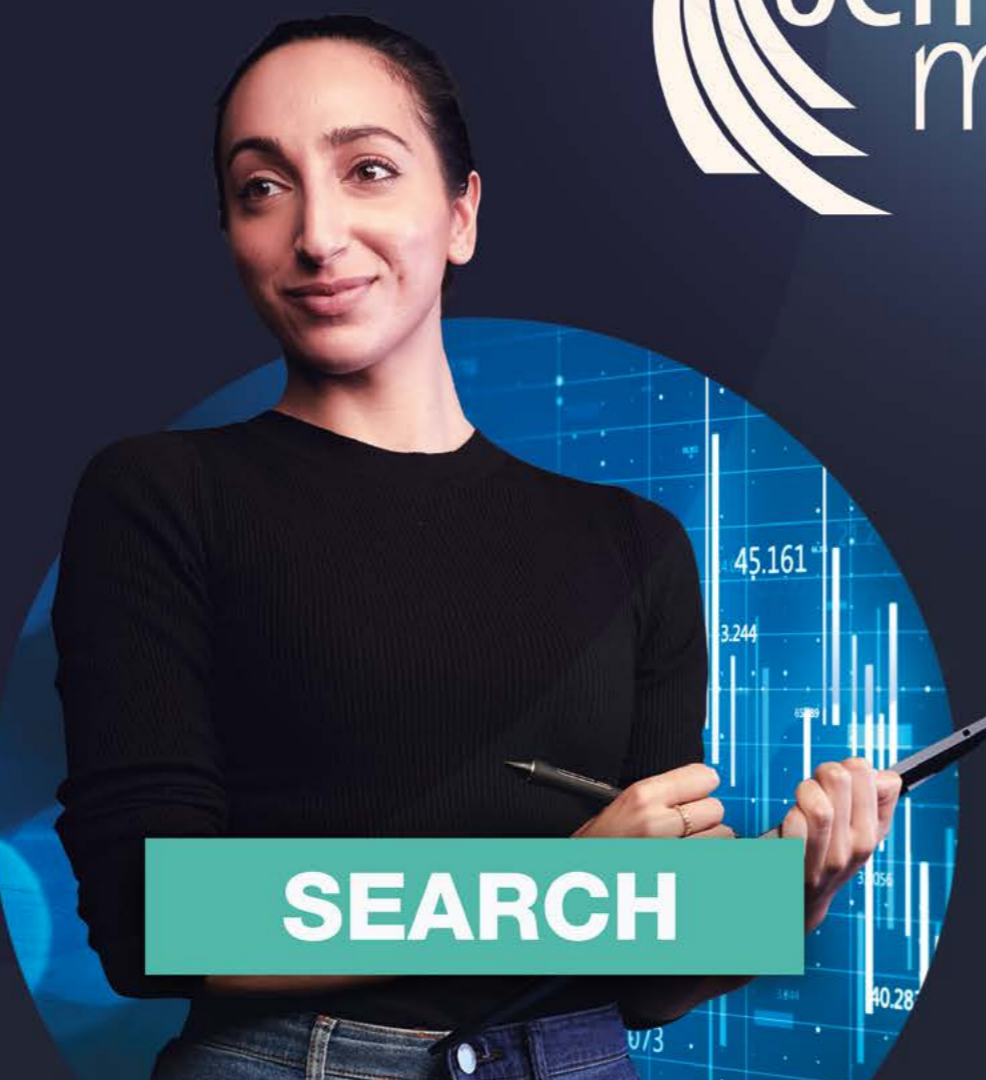
Olivia's home fragrance collection has expanded beyond hand made soy wax candles and now also includes reed diffusers, wax melts, gift boxes and gift bags. The business has already grown to a team of 5 and Olivia's ambition is to build a global brand while bringing employment to the North Coast.

"We have so many hopes and dreams for Olivia's Haven and are excited to grow our digital community and bring it to new followers in 2021 and beyond. We have several new collaborations, launches and events already in the works—stay tuned."

Follow the flame on Instagram  
@olivias\_haven or  
visit [www.olivias-haven.co.uk](http://www.olivias-haven.co.uk)

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## PARTNER NEWS



### Belfast Met is leading the city to work in 2021

Whether you are an established company or starting your own business for the first time Belfast Met is here to support you and help your business flourish in 2021. Now more than ever we are supporting businesses through upskilling and innovation.

We support local businesses and entrepreneurs with:

- Fully Funded Training for your Employees
- Fully Funded support to help your business to Innovate
- Fully Funded Product Development and Prototyping
- Fully Funded Online Short Courses for those whose job has been affected by Covid
- Webinars and networking

Our solutions are designed to fit your business and your learning needs.

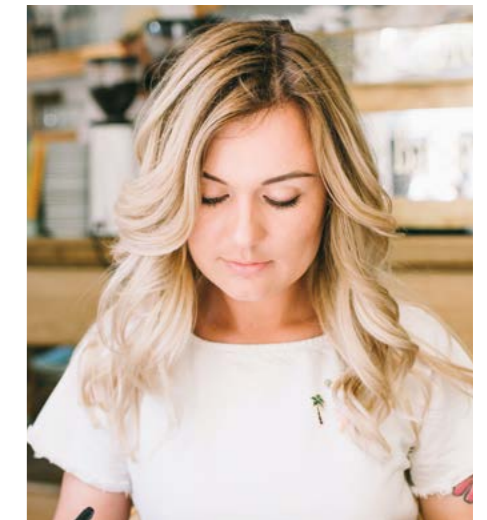
We offer mentoring, qualifications and all the encouragement to get your business thriving.

We have helped local businesses to develop new skills to create new software applications, design new products in CAD and prototype them using 3D printers, produce new food products and upscale them from home kitchen to commercial kitchens and construct new fashion and textile garments. Our business development team work directly with specialists in the heart of industry who will train you on cutting edge ideas and techniques.

As a response to Covid 19, Belfast Met has supported over 500 people to up-skill through the provision of a wide range of courses to support their needs. We still have spaces remaining on a range of IT courses including HTML5 App Development, Programming with Python, Power BI and Database Fundamentals running over

February and March, all delivered online in virtual classroom sessions.

Challenge yourself in 2021 to Make it at the Met head to our website: [www.belfastmet.ac.uk](http://www.belfastmet.ac.uk) or contact us: [cedsi@belfastmet.ac.uk](mailto:cedsi@belfastmet.ac.uk)



### Pinsent Masons launches digital cyber-attack response platform - Cyturion



**P**insent Masons has launched a ground-breaking digital platform to support organisations in preparing for and responding to cyber-attacks, following a recent surge in data security incidents.

Cyturion provides organisations with detailed response plans and advice for managing and recovering from various types and severity of cyber-attacks such as business email compromise, invoice diversion, malware, ransomware and cyber-extortion.

The tool provides detail on multi-jurisdictional regulatory obligations that arise in the event of a data security incident. It provides a single source of information to ensure that cyber-incidents are dealt with comprehensively, encompassing all legal, technical, crisis management, PR and compliance aspects.

Cyturion will form 'the backbone' to businesses' data breach strategies, on both a domestic and international basis as organisations are forced to grapple with increasingly sophisticated and global attacks. Collaborating with the firm's cyber-consultancy arm, the platform ensures clients are better prepared to deal with cyber incidents, both from an incident response perspective, and from a technology/systems perspective.

Research carried out by the firm found that nearly a third of cyber-related matters involve at least two jurisdictions. Cyber experts at Pinsent Masons say this signals a requirement for a coordinated multi-jurisdictional response.

David McIlwaine, head of Pinsent Masons' global cyber practice commented: "The pandemic has given cyber criminals

increased opportunity to gain unauthorised access to IT infrastructure. The sudden remote working of high volumes of employees prompted by the pandemic has seen many businesses becoming reliant upon potentially unsecure networks and personal devices, causing an increase in hackers infiltrating employee systems. Cyturion can provide a head start in responding to an incident, thereby mitigating the potential negative consequences of it.

"Having a plan in place for how to respond, which includes identifying the relevant individuals responsible for the different response workstreams, along with the required expert external advisers, and having all relevant contact details close at hand, is vital."

To learn more visit: [pinsentmasons.com](http://pinsentmasons.com)



## Diverse Talent Careers making waves across Northern Ireland

**D**iverse Talent Careers has recently launched in Northern Ireland and they are making waves across the employment sector. A new type of employment group that specifically focuses on connecting talented individuals with companies who are invested in Diversity, Inclusion and Equity.

Since launching in October 2020, the Diverse team has helped connect exceptional talent to companies in the Technology, Finance and FMCG industry and shows no sign of slowing down, and are set to increase their team by Q2 2021.

Founded by experienced recruitment professional Jemma Simpson, she discussed why Diverse Talent was established, "We believe that companies who are invested in their workplace & employees, should be highlighted, rewarded and encouraged to continue. Along with providing exceptional recruitment assistance, we support our client's initiatives by offering a fairer cost for recruitment, it's our hope that these savings will be used to further culture & people development and encourage other companies to invest in their workplace".

Diverse Talent Careers offers companies and job seekers complete recruitment support. Being members of the CIPD and powered by over 10 years of experience, they are well placed to help companies headhunt for niche skills, build recruitment processes and support candidates on their journey from CV reviews to interview preparation.

When speaking to their team you shouldn't be surprised if you're asked about your companies' diversity policies, gender pay equality or how you help neurodiverse employees.

They only work with companies that meet their values, and this is proving to be a core attraction for candidates, "We have noted an increase of people speaking openly about their neurodiverse needs and expectations of their next employer. The world of work is continuing to change, job seekers are no longer interested in office beer fridges or pool tables, first on their list is an employer who matches their needs and values as well as their skillset"



You can find out more about Diverse Talent Careers on [www.diversetalent.careers](http://www.diversetalent.careers) or contact their team directly on 028 9600 9618 or [hello@diversetalent.careers](mailto:hello@diversetalent.careers)



## Catriona Ward, The Money Mindset Coach

**C**atriona Jones is a proud Derry girl and lives on the Inishowen Peninsula, Donegal with her husband and 2 teenage children. She began her career as a primary school teacher in London and is well travelled. Catriona has also lived and worked in Abu Dhabi, Sydney and Wales. She has always been passionate about self-development and education, she loves to learn and grow all the time. Catriona pivoted in her career following the study of an MA in Education and began her personal research into the power of self-belief and importance of a positive mind-set. She trained as Life Coach in 2006 and built her own Coaching Company since then, claiming awards including Local Women Female Entrepreneur of the Year, Business of the Year and Business Women of the Year in the Derry People of the Year Awards

Today Catriona is The Money Mindset Coach, coaching online, empowering women globally to rock their brilliance out into the world and make more money in their business. She has integrated her talent for teaching with her passion for wealth consciousness and abundance. Catriona values money as a tool and challenges any misconceptions and old programming we might be holding on to, that is causing lack, struggle, or money blocks in our lives.

She is unapologetic about taking women to the top of their game and leading their field. Catriona focusses on the inner game, encouraging women to build a and harness a more positive mindset and self-image, doing so from a place of calm and power within. She promotes meditation and mindfulness as cornerstones to personal mastery. Therefore, transforming women's lives by valuing their self-worth in the world, building unstoppable confidence, and raising their wealth consciousness. She is inspiring and motivating in her approach with authenticity and humour. Catriona is a motivational speaker, coaches groups and 1-2-1, offering practical tools to raise your vibration, achieve your goals and get results you want.



Catriona is a valued member of her community and has experience working in schools, organisations and in the corporate industry. She is lit up by women and girls claiming their space in the world and her moto is 'no women left behind'. Catriona is the upcoming author of the self-help book 'Bloom Girl' and offers signature coaching packages to support women in overcoming self-doubt, aligning with their purpose in the world and increasing their prosperity.

Download your complimentary Wealth Conscious Women's Planner at [www.catrionajones.com](http://www.catrionajones.com)

& keep up to date with The Money Mindset Coach on Instagram @[@catrionajonescoach](https://www.instagram.com/catrionajonescoach)



## Michelle Baird, Head of Marketing & Corporate Fundraising, Ulster Orchestra

**M**ichelle has recently been promoted to the role of Head of Marketing and Corporate Fundraising after joining the Ulster Orchestra five years ago as Director of Marketing and Communications. With over 20 years' experience in all fields of marketing, communications, events and strategic business development across the corporate, charity and public sectors, previous roles include Belfast Regional Marketing Manager for Danske Bank and Marketing Manager for Investment Belfast.

Michelle's team has an extensive remit covering all aspects of promoting the Orchestra globally, attracting audiences, managing Subscribers, Patrons, Donors and finding innovative ways to work with the business sector and funding partners. Innovation has certainly been at the forefront of the Orchestra's agenda over the last ten months with the impact of Covid-19 forcing the cancellation of all live performances. Michelle explains;

"Seven months into one of our most successful seasons to date, we, like all other arts organisations, were forced to cease audience-facing activity. However, instead of resting on our laurels, we looked to other ways to engage with audiences and partners and created our #UOLetsPlayAtHome online series. We produced over 140 videos with our musicians and staff from their homes, along with content for care homes, schools and sponsors. We also launched an exciting creative project for songwriters, #UOYourSongNow, which culminated in a special CD showcasing the work of the final nine selected songs, recorded with the Orchestra. In September we came back together as an orchestra with some amazing achievements including a collaboration with local artist Ryan McMullan for the NHS and our first-ever digital Christmas concert. It's definitely a new world for us and we're making the most of it in whatever way we can!"

The challenges of working virtually were also met personally by Michelle as she continued to work full-time from home, developing new skills such as



video production, whilst simultaneously parenting her four-year-old daughter. "I'll not deny, it was a challenging time and continues to be but what we have collectively managed to achieve for the Orchestra makes it all worthwhile!" Michelle adds.

Now, in her new role, Michelle is looking to extend the Orchestra's partnership portfolio and highlight to potential sponsors, the unique value in supporting Northern Ireland's only professional symphony orchestra. She explains;

"As a charity, we cannot solely rely on government funding and aspire to attract the same level of corporate support as our fellow orchestras across the UK. Our Corporate Membership Scheme is just one way to work with us but we have also created several bespoke projects for local

business partners which have proved highly valuable to all involved. Now that we have moved to a digital platform, one which will continue alongside our future audience-facing performances, there is much more we can offer, and so I sincerely hope businesses will afford the Ulster Orchestra consideration as a potential partner."

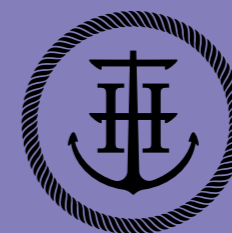
Contact Michelle at [michelle@ulsterorchestra.com](mailto:michelle@ulsterorchestra.com) to find out more about how working with the Ulster Orchestra can enhance your business



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