



# Women in Business Magazine



- The Business of Investing in Childcare
- Press Refresh Celebrates Success
- Power of Diversity in Centre of Learning

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**A**s we navigate our way through 2021, it has been great to see the continued growth of the Women in Business network and the resilience of our members during these really difficult times. The WIB community spirit was celebrated at the inaugural Inspiring Women Awards held virtually in March, as each nominee and category winner reflected on the great work that can be achieved together when we support one another. Read more on the Inspiring Women Awards on page 18.

In early 2021, Our Centre of Learning delivered its first Women Returners Programmes Press Refresh in partnership with Belfast Met and funded by the Department for Economy. This programme supported 18 women to gain the skills required to secure roles in NI's flourishing Tech Sector. This has helped women to gain new skills, change career, reach their career goals and has supported breaking down barriers to gender diversity in the workplace, creating more inclusive organisations.

In Spring, our membership reached 5000 members and we have welcome on board

a range of new Corporate and Group Members including; Derry Bros Custom Clearance, Slice Life, Collins Aerospace, Greiner Packaging, Utility Regulator, The Bar of Northern Ireland, Encirc, Neueda, Firmus Energy, ReGen Waste, Flogas, The HR Elephant, Northern Ireland Screen and Deli Lites.

In June 2021 we held our first All-Island Female Entrepreneurs Conference which brought together over 1000 women across the Island to experience our 2-day hybrid event which was filled with insights and inspiration from a varied range of speakers and panellists. The conference also included our final of the Yes You Can £20k Pitching Competition which was won by Laura Mulkeen of Hex Workwear, which specialises in creating purpose-built workwear for women within STEM Industries. With a full event round up on page 19, the conference demonstrated that female entrepreneurship has continued to thrive on the island of Ireland during this pandemic.

Women in Business continues to connect you, our members, with relevant networks at local, national and international levels

in order to help you realise your potential. In June, our Young Women's Network Committee and WIB Ambassadors had the privilege of attending the US Consul General's Belfast residence to inspire the next generation of female leaders. It was an amazing experience for all involved.

For Autumn 2021, we have a fabulous season of virtual and in-person events with a range of new innovative programmes scheduled in our Centre of Learning. We value the feedback we receive from you in our quarterly Your Voice survey and a result of the survey in March 2021, we are proud to have collaborated with the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) in the call for immediate action to address childcare issues with the aim of helping more women to join or re-join the workforce or to start a business.

We thank you, our members and partners, for your continued support during 2021. Please continue to take care of your own personal well-being as life begins to normalise once again, engage with the events and the network of fellow members for continued support, learning and growth during 2021.



*Nichola Robinson*

**Director Strategic Sourcing  
Spirit AeroSystems, Belfast**



**Women in  
Business**

**Key Partner**



**Partners**



**Educational Partners**



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# Women of the world should not have to wait until the year 2156 for true gender equality



## Roseann Kelly MBE

Chief Executive Officer  
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**I**t is 26 years since the eyes of the world fell upon the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing, where delegates declared action to achieve global gender equality in the aftermath of the Cold War.

Promises were made, policies were drafted and yet, by 2021, the UN road map that soon became known as the ‘most progressive blueprint for women’s rights’ feels distant at best. Can any country really claim that they’ve successfully eliminated gender inequalities?

The answer, sadly, is a resounding no. Rhetoric is one thing, action is another.

In fact, findings from the World Economic Forum’s (WEF) 2021 Global Gender Gap Report indicate that countries such as the United States and parts of Europe have actually regressed in their journey towards true gender parity, which itself is measured against four pillars: economic participation and opportunity, education attainment, health and survival and, finally, political empowerment.

All of which have been impacted substantially by Covid-19. But the really alarming, spit-your-coffee-out statistic from WEF’s report is that it will now take an estimated 135.6 years before the gender gap is closed worldwide. It is absolutely unacceptable that we will have to wait until the year 2156 before women and men are on equal footing when it comes to pay and leadership opportunities – none of us will be around to wait for it!

The top of my head is flat from all the patronising pats on my head and my forehead bruised from banging my head against a brick wall. Being mentioned in strategy documents is just deflating, I will only recognise the genuine possibility of change when I see substantial investment. Which is why my ears cocked to July’s Generation Equality Forum in Paris.

It was not so much a Fifth World Conference on Women as it was a five-year plan to accelerate global gender equality with a \$40 billion investment in resourcing for women’s and girls’ rights. A lack of financing has been a crushing obstacle for far too long. Women know that struggle. Many women have felt that struggle.

In Northern Ireland, we are used to struggle so why not show we can rise above it again and be an exemplar to the world. We should be bold and ambitious with all our plans and strategies. We need to unshackle ourselves from a heavy-handed government system and, from politicians that are of Olympic standard in arguing so that we get real actions.

We should demand investment so that we can build a new economy, one built on inclusive growth. Women must be at all places where decisions are being made not in 135 years, but today. The young women of the year 2156 need us to act now.

**Patience is no longer a virtue, it is an impediment.**

# The Business of Investing in Childcare

**W**omen in Business are proud to join with FSB to call for immediate action to address the issue of childcare.

As new Ministers take up their posts in the Department for the Economy and Department of Education, FSB Northern Ireland (FSB) and Women In Business NI (WIB) call on the Ministers to place the business of properly investing in childcare at the very top of their in-trays. As the lack of investment in a coherent childcare policy is now an emergency which must be addressed immediately.

Building on significant work of the All Party Group on Early Education and Childcare, the business groups have come together to develop proposals that can start to deliver in months - not years – helping to enable more women to join the workforce or to start a business.

**Commenting, CEO of Women in Business NI, Roseann Kelly, said:**

“According to the Competitiveness Scorecard Report by Ulster University, childcare costs are a major factor in a parent’s ability to work.

“Often, it can be unaffordable to return to work because of the lack of subsidy. Northern Ireland is still ranked 23rd out

of the 24 countries compared, as childcare costs account for 37% of the average wage of a two-parent family. This makes NI a relatively expensive location for childcare in comparison to other European countries who do more to assist parents.

“We need to adopt a more progressive approach to childcare, much as we do with health and education and accept that if we are to see the dividends of a post-pandemic economic growth, attracting more employers and investment.”

While FSB and WIB welcome the continued support from the Northern Ireland Executive for childcare providers to help to cover the additional costs, this does not address the widely accepted need for investment, and there is a need for government to step in and properly address this.

**Commenting, FSB NI Policy Chair, Tina McKenzie said:**

“When we look at our economic inactivity figures, caring for family or home is the most cited reason by women regarding why they are unable to work. Despite years of sustained campaigning, Northern Ireland continues to be without proper government support for flexible, affordable and sustainable childcare. Despite best efforts

by childcare providers, the cost of childcare remains prohibitive for many families, which therefore restricts choice in terms of the role parents can play in the economy.

“While the recent action to provide childcare grants for those on Universal Credit was a positive step, something much more comprehensive is required to fully address the issue. The pandemic has demonstrated that childcare is vital economic infrastructure so parents can go to work.

“Although a strategy and investment are essential, women should not have to wait for years while this is agreed and implemented. We will apply an entrepreneurial mindset to engage with the new Education Minister and Economy Minister, both of whom have responsibilities in this area, so we can finally deliver flexible, affordable and accessible childcare.”

**“According to the Competitiveness Scorecard Report by Ulster University, childcare costs are a major factor in a parent’s ability to work.”**

CEO of Women in Business NI, Roseann Kelly MBE



# Danske Bank takes action on race equality



**D**anske Bank is supporting a new Race at Work campaign launched by Business in the Community in partnership with the Equality Commission for Northern Ireland. The campaign aims to challenge businesses to proactively support the inclusion of people from ethnic minority backgrounds in the workplace.

As part of the campaign Danske Bank has signed the Race at Work Charter as a public commitment of action for race equality. The Race at Work Charter has more than 750 signatories across the UK and businesses in NI are being encouraged to get involved.

Vicky Davies, CEO designate at Danske Bank said: “Northern Ireland is becoming more diverse with people from different

backgrounds living and working here, and calling it home. Businesses need to reflect this change.

“Inclusivity and belonging are at the heart of what we do at Danske Bank. We’re an anti-racist organisation that has zero tolerance for discrimination of any kind. We’ve launched a race equality network, Origins to join our existing affinity networks and help ensure that all colleagues feel they belong. We’re listening to our colleagues, learning from the experts, and developing an action plan focused on achieving and monitoring tangible change in this area. Signing the Race at Work Charter is a significant next step in this journey.”

Business in the Community offers a range of resources and toolkits to help businesses achieve and amplify the commitments of the Charter. To find out more visit [www.bitcni.org.uk/RaceatWork](http://www.bitcni.org.uk/RaceatWork)

Visit: [danskebank.co.uk](http://danskebank.co.uk) for more information from Danske Bank

**“Northern Ireland is becoming more diverse with people from different backgrounds living and working here, and calling it home. Businesses need to reflect this change.”**

Vicky Davies, CEO designate at Danske Bank

Pictured at the launch of the Race at Work campaign are: (front row L-R) Geraldine McGahey, Equality Commission for NI and Stephanie Reid, Business in the Community and (back row L-R): Lori Gatsi-Barnett, JoinHer Network; Vicky Davis, Danske Bank; Israel Eguagie, Belfast City of Sanctuary and Alex Deonarine, Chair of Danske’s Origins network.





## Tanya McGeehan, MD of MCG Investments



### Tanya McGeehan

#### MCG Investments

Managing Director of MCG Investments, Tanya McGeehan, is increasingly being recognised as one of Belfast's top leading female property entrepreneurs. MCG Investments specialise in creating wealth for clients, through their bespoke property investment strategies, ensuring the highest level of client satisfaction is achieved.

Tanya highlights the importance of relationships at MCG, "We strive to share our passion with investors and focus on building long-term relationships. At MCG Investments we believe the best way to develop and grow our company is by building strong connections whether that be with our team, our supply chain or most importantly our clients. Relationships are key."

MCG Investments is more than just a business for Tanya. "I have grown up with property from I was a very young age. I always say it's in my DNA." Tanya inherited her passion for property investment from her dad Patsy Duffy who was a successful property developer.

During an exciting career, Tanya has operated in several different roles including a period on the foreign exchange dealing floor of Ulster Bank Dublin, before moving onto working in Sales and Marketing for the Hastings Hotel Group. In 2005, Tanya took the giant leap into self-employment having tasted a little flavour of the hospitality sector. Tanya opened a sandwich and coffee shop, Relish, in her hometown of Magherfelt. After a period of time, Tanya sold the business on and took up a role within Cookstown District Council that offered more favourable working hours. At that time Tanya had three young children and wanted a healthy work/life balance with her family.

Sadly, at the tender age of 53, Tanya's father was diagnosed with the debilitating illness, Early Onset Dementia. Tanya, as the eldest of four girls, had no option but to step in and take over running the family's property business, whilst her mother cared for her dad before his untimely passing in March 2012. Tanya continues to manage the family's property portfolio, and it is

through this unplanned pathway and her childhood upbringing that Tanya has adept knowledge on property market today.

Over 2020 and into early 2021 Tanya has pivoted the business from solely working on properties and projects owned by the company, to partnering with private investors and joint venture collaborations. In the last six months MCG's success has resulted in the creation of two new jobs. "We have plans for further job creation in the months ahead as we prepare for continued growth."

"There is a perception that you have to be very wealthy to embark on an investment property journey. That is not true. With it being estimated that over £2bn has been accumulated in bank accounts in Northern Ireland over the pandemic due to many being able to save money, now could be the time to make an investment, the local property market is extremely buoyant with levels of activity not seen in almost 15 years. I would advise people to seek professional advice if this is something they are considering. Our success can become your success too."

For more information visit:  
[mcginvestments.co.uk](http://mcginvestments.co.uk)



## Queen's supports government commitment to boost economic recovery



**QUEEN'S  
UNIVERSITY  
BELFAST**

### Joanne Clague

**Registrar and Chief Operating  
Officer of Queen's University**

**Q**ueen's University Belfast has committed to support the delivery of the Department for the Economy's new economic vision focused on innovation, to benefit businesses, people and places in Northern Ireland.

Speaking after attending a Ministerial briefing on '10X Economy: An Economic Vision for a decade of innovation', Joanne Clague, Registrar and Chief Operating Officer of Queen's University, said:

"Innovation is the key to economic recovery following the pandemic and we welcome the government's commitment to a collaborative approach with universities at the very heart of its strategy to drive skills and research.

"Universities are key to supporting business growth through innovation in skills, in partnership with employers, the Department and the wider tertiary education sector.

"Innovation in research is a major driver of economic growth and we are proud that Queen's has been rated top in the UK for Entrepreneurial Impact by Octopus Ventures for the second year running, demonstrating the value we create through

commercialising our academic research. "The big challenges Northern Ireland faces require our collective capabilities to make a difference and Queen's is committed to continuing to work in partnership with business, government, other higher education institutions and civic leaders to deliver the 10X Economic Vision."

Ms Clague added that the 10X Economy aligns well with Queen's new strategic plan for the next decade and complements the University's work on the Belfast City Regional Deal.

She said: " 'Strategy 2030: Delivery for Our Future' sets out the key role Queen's will play in the social and economic recovery of Northern Ireland post-pandemic, focusing on four key priorities – education and skills, research and innovation, global reputation and partnerships, and social and civic responsibility and economic prosperity. "Furthermore, Queen's University, along with Ulster University, is developing the Innovation Strand of the £1bn Belfast Regional City Deal, which has the potential to deliver transformative change for the benefit of everyone in the region."

**Keep up to date on the Queen's  
University Belfast website: [qub.ac.uk](http://qub.ac.uk)**



# 60 Seconds with Louise Skeath, CEO of construction supply company SDG



## What was your first job?

Picking mushrooms at 13 years old for a local mushroom farmer. It gave me a true appreciate of the value of money.

## What qualifications do you have?

I am a qualified food technologist. In business terms I have undertaken an Emerging Leadership course with the William Clinton Institute, hold a Diploma from MIT Sloan School of Management in Interpersonal Communications, and recently participated in the Leader Program and Leader Team Program with Invest NI.

## What do you attribute your success to?

I have a strong value base, and believe in doing my best at all times, and staying positive regardless of the challenge. It's something I have taken through my life and career, and as a wife and mother. Being driven, team focused and wanting the best for the business and the employees has helped me get to this point.

## How would you describe yourself?

I am an optimistic pragmatist. My mother taught the value to be authentic-always, be honest in my dealings and don't burn your bridges as you may my need to travel back over them again!

## Who do you look up to in business?

When I was 21 my father took me to London to see Brian Tracey at a business event. That was the start of my love of business. During one of the seminars Brian spoke about mirroring - when you want to be the best in what you do.

His advice was to seek out people who are at the very top of their game and go and speak to them, ask them to tell you their story and learn from them. Mirror their success essentially.

Ever since I have sought out the best advice. I enjoy Warren Buffett for his simplicity of life and lack of regard for materialistic possessions - his unique attention to detail in his business world is unprecedented. And Christine Legarde is someone I admire, her decorum during the economic crash and her measured control calmed a very volatile economy.

## How do you get the best out of people who work for you?

Engaging with my team on a one-to-one level. Find out their pain points. What's going well for them and what's not going so well for them and helping them work through to getting a positive result.

## If you could change one thing about doing business in Northern Ireland, what would it be?

We need a much clearer identity for Northern Ireland within the GB umbrella. Sometimes I feel it can be difficult to trade as a Northern Ireland business sitting under the umbrella of the UK, it tends to overshadow the competencies and quality of the brilliant range of skills local business can bring to the marketplace.

## What's your greatest passion outside work and family?

For me being mentally and physically strong goes hand in glove, I enjoy keeping myself healthy, and use strength and conditioning training as part of my weekly routine. It makes me feel strong, and in many ways gives me the resolve and stamina to work through any issue.

## Keep up to date with the SDG team on

 [wearesdg.com](http://wearesdg.com)

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# Philippa McShane, Director of McShane Packaging



**T**he plastic packaging industry has quietly revolutionised the way we transport and deliver our everyday kitchen staples. Philippa McShane of McShane Packaging in Armagh has been working at the forefront of plastic packaging solutions for over 25 years and seen the industry adapt and grow, despite the many unique and challenging obstacles the company has faced.

As well as maintaining their rigorous Quality standards, the Owner and Director at Armagh-based McShane Packaging is responsible for the strategic direction of the company and is about to embark on a £2.3 million investment in a brand-new, state-of-the-art facility and ambitious growth plan.

Starting out with a £3,500 loan from his local credit union, Philippa's husband Paddy started selling chemicals and sundries to the Mushroom industry in 1996. Diversifying into second-hand plastic trays in 2000, they purchased their first site just outside Armagh. After building their factory in 2005 they started making new plastic trays.

After purchasing their second site in 2019, work commenced earlier this year on a new facility for McShane Packaging, which will give them the capacity to store up to 1,400 pallets and provide the team with a brand-new, two-story office block.

McShane Packaging now manufacture innovative packaging solutions for the food industry across Ireland, the UK, Europe and South America. And as they celebrate their 25th year in business, Philippa credits their success with their ability to quickly diversify their product range and make the right investments in technology.

When asked, Philippa says her mantra for life is 'very simple; work hard and be humble!'

As a mother of three teenage children, the former University of Ulster BA (Hons) Business Studies graduate has been keen to invest her time and energy in the local youth community and has been mentoring GCSE Business Studies students in Armagh over the last six years.

The mentorship includes an on-site student factory visit, face to face consultations and live seminars. The students have been able to tap into Philippa's invaluable insight and experience when completing their coursework and Philippa is delighted to be able to help them;

"I feel it's so important for young people to get real hands-on experience in business and speak to people like us; it really helps them formulate a true understanding of the unique daily challenges we face and how we adapt and overcome them. I really enjoy being able to help these young people, who are the next generation of business leaders"

Running McShane Packaging over the last 25 years has presented Philippa with many unique challenges, including huge changes in consumer behaviour and attitudes towards plastic; not to mention the global recession, supermarkets, Brexit and the pandemic.

Despite Covid-19 bringing about enormous challenges for McShane Packaging, it turned out to be one of the company's busiest years; as more people worked and cooked from home, instead of eating out.

As McShane Packaging continue work on their new facility, Philippa is excited to embark on an ambitious recruitment drive, aiming to grow the team by another twenty people in 2021; with opportunities in stores, marketing, HR and engineering.

**Visit [mcshanepackaging.com](https://www.mcshanepackaging.com) and don't forget that Philippa can share advice as a mentor!**

# Getting Ahead in the Workplace with Angela Keery



**A**ngela Keery is a Director within the Tax Department of Baker Tilly Mooney Moore and shares her advice on getting ahead in the workplace.

I always knew that I wanted to be an Accountant but also that university wasn't for me, so I left lower 6th at 17 and enrolled in an Accounting Technician course. I then did my Chartered Accountancy exam whilst working for a small firm in Lisburn. When they needed someone to set up a Tax department, I stepped forward and into my future as a Tax specialist.

There have been challenges along the way. At one of my very first job interviews, I was advised that, as a young woman in the industry, I was 'wasting my time.' I recognised that this was an organisation with a poor culture and since then, I have been interested in the ways in which a positive workplace culture is created.

Two of our senior partners at Baker Tilly Mooney Moore are female, which has helped to mould the inclusive culture of our firm, which, regardless of gender, truly values everyone's skills and contribution.

As a member firm of Baker Tilly International, we are committed to the network's core values of integrity, leadership, transparency, and ethics. A great leader has a vision and a desire to help other people and I would advise other women who wish to achieve a leadership position to believe in themselves, to set their own goals and to seize opportunities. It is also important to find an organisation with the right cultural fit, as this will allow your career to flourish.

At Baker Tilly Mooney Moore, we have worked to create a positive culture over the years. We encourage staff to challenge norms from the outset. This helps us to attract and retain talented people who are committed to supporting each other and our clients.

I began my journey with Baker Tilly Mooney Moore as a Tax Director in December 2019, a busy period in the Tax Calendar. I found myself juggling looming deadlines with looking after two young children and caring responsibilities, and then the pandemic struck, so I turned to

the firm for support. A flexible working arrangement was put in place, allowing me to balance the job with other elements of my life.

The firm's founding partners always believed that diversity in the workplace was a real benefit and these values have shaped our culture. Our staff footprint is 60% female, and the gender split is equal at director level.

We are committed to equal opportunities and many of our female employees participate in Women in Business groups and sit on the boards of local organisations. I think that our attractive working environment and healthy, supportive culture help us to attract and retain the best female talent. I am really enjoying my own journey with Baker Tilly Mooney Moore and look forward to what the future holds for the firm and our people.

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# Women in Business reach 5000th Member Milestone!

Since being founded in 2002, Women in Business NI has grown to become the leading network for Women in the workplace, with our membership numbers growing exponentially every year. We were delighted to mark another incredible milestone as we celebrated our 5,000th member in February 2021.

business and how it works. I understand the importance of building collaborative relationships that are based on trust, which can really add value to your business – letting you get on with what you do best!” says Muriel. Supporting HR projects from Maternity Cover to Performance Management Processes, Muriel looks forward to building her network and business connections within Women in Business.

With our membership now standing at over 6,000 members, Women in Business provides a valuable business network delivering for and giving a voice its members as charitable organisation. We strive to redress gender imbalance in the business community and promote equality to build a diverse and strong economy for everyone!

## Muriel McCullins

McCullins HR

The 5000th member was Muriel McCullins of McCullins HR, who took the plunge into self-employment in October 2019, having spent the last 20 years working in HR roles with successful commercial businesses, from Sole Trader to Plc. Muriel is a MCIPD qualified HR professional, who prides herself in adopting an inclusive and practical approach.

“I care deeply about people and the value they bring to your business. My focus is on providing flexible, affordable, and bespoke solutions based on understanding your

## Corporate Membership

We're delighted to welcome the following corporate members to Women in Business.

To learn find out more about Corporate Membership contact

**Lydia McClelland**  
Interim Head of Marketing and Membership:

[lydia@womeninbusinessni.com](mailto:lydia@womeninbusinessni.com)  
or visit [womeninbusinessni.com](http://womeninbusinessni.com)



# YOUR SKILLS ARE IN DEMAND

Our latest Hays Quarterly Insight report revealed that 72% of employers don't currently have access to the skills that they need; so over the past year, your skillset could have become more valuable than you realise. Our consultants can provide a confidential and commitment-free career consultation to help you get to grips with Northern Ireland's new job market and can give you an update on what's happening in your field right now.

## MEET SOME OF OUR EXPERT TEAM



**Christine Carrigan**  
Senior Recruitment Consultant,  
Specialising in Temporary  
Office Support

"I believe a compassionate approach is best when helping candidates find temporary employment. Whether it be a stop gap between roles or a contracting professional it is key to listen and place people into a role that they are excited about."



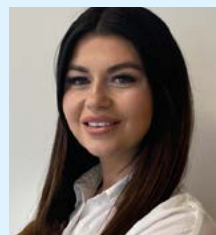
**Elaine McCullagh**  
Award-Winning Business Director,  
Specialising in Senior Finance

"It is essential to recognise that a contractor is a valuable and premium asset in the current market place and to businesses. Candidates that I work with are represented with the highest regard, respect and honesty."



**Rebecca Kinder**  
Senior Recruitment Consultant,  
Specialising in Business Support  
and HR within Public Services

"I take time to build strong relationships with both clients and candidates; trust and continuous communication are key when it comes to finding the right talent for the right role."



**Caitlan Murphy**  
Associate Consultant,  
Specialising in Marketing  
and Communications

"I provide a quality consultative service to candidates and clients to assist them on their entire recruitment journey. I also keep up-to-date on the marketing trends in Northern Ireland so that I have a deeper understanding of this fast-moving market."

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To speak to any of the above experts, or to find a consultant who specialises in your field, contact our Belfast team today on 028 9044 6900.



## Press Refresh celebrates success by supporting 18 participants into new jobs



### Nicola Marshall

#### Press Refresh Graduate

**T**he innovative female returners programme Press Refresh launched last year by Women in Business and Belfast Metropolitan College, has supported 18 women returners in securing new jobs across Northern Ireland. Press Refresh is a 17-week Data Analytics programme funded by the Department for the Economy to equip women returners with new skills necessary to build their careers within Northern Ireland's expanding IT sector.

One participant, Indhu Vishnu Das, secured a role within tech and operations across Citi. The global financial firm was one of several WIB forum members instrumental in developing the Press Refresh programme. A total of 2,195 digital tech firms are now in operation across NI, employing more than 20,000 people as of April 2021. Despite this, females are still largely under-represented within the sector, with just 17% of tech jobs currently held by women.

Graeme Wilkinson, Director of Skills in the Department for the Economy, said: "There is a diverse range of opportunities within the IT sector in Northern Ireland, and this programme has shown how collaboration between the organisations involved in Press Refresh and employers has helped inspire and motivate women returners into a career they may previously not have considered. The success of this programme will, I am sure, highlight to other women that there are options to consider in upskilling or reskilling in IT when returning to the workplace."

One of our graduates, Nicola Marshall shared her feedback on how the programme has helped to Press Refresh on her career. "Press Refresh will allow you to explore the opportunities that exist in the Tech sector and give you the confidence, skills and know-how to advance in this sector - These were the words that piqued my interest on social media last October for the programme and I decided to apply; not at all expecting to be one of the 20 lucky women successful in gaining a coveted place! In November 2020, I virtually met

the tutors and the other 19 ladies feeling very nervous about the unknown next few months. With a background in foreign languages within international sales and operations, what was I thinking?

What a worthwhile roller-coaster ride it turned out to be – a valuable opportunity to complete upskilling in four industry-relevant qualification areas whilst being supported by the reassuring framework of Advance Coaching's confidence and resilience building workshops. Belfast Met was fully committed to delivering exceptional teaching in technically challenging subjects to a group of women with no prior experience in data analytics.

Admittedly, home schooling during the 2021 lockdown alongside the demanding study almost pushed a few of us over the edge! However, the sheer power of female friendship has been the outstanding highlight of this adventure for me – what a fabulous and diverse support network (and some fun) we all provided for each other, despite having never met face-to-face!

I am now eager to employ my recently gained IT skills and add insightful value for clients in my new Project Management role with PwC. The additional assistance of continued Women in Business mentoring support will unquestionably aid my career transition. In reflection of the whole experience, it certainly pays off to be brave!"

**To find out more information on Press Refresh, please visit [pressrefresh.co.uk](https://pressrefresh.co.uk)**

# Sarah Thompson

## Director of Ted & Stitch Limited



### Sarah Thompson

Director of Ted & Stitch Limited

September 2019 after my son recovered from gruelling cancer treatment and was successfully into remission, I found myself as a mum and as an individual completely lost. I had given so much of myself to gluing our family together through my son's treatment that the thought of a career seemed completely out of reach, feeling constantly low and struggling through one day at a time had become the norm in our household. Until I decided to reach out for counselling where alongside my husband, we set a goal to buy our first embroidery machine. 5 months later after many trials and setbacks Ted & Stitch was born in our spare bedroom.

I worked night and day creating products, marketing them and managing my own social media with great success. We really did hit the ground running, I said I was going to make a change and I was going big. The best bit, I didn't even have to leave my kids. It was in no way easy - a mum of

3 with a flourishing business I had never felt under so much pressure, but I had also never felt so good. Even better, I felt like me again. We muddled our way happily through lockdown stitching and parenting but with increasing orders and waiting lists I knew that growth was going to be crucial to our success story.

The support I had been receiving was overwhelming, the local NI marketplace was incredible and in our first month we had surpassed 3000 followers on Instagram, and I had made a return on my first embroidery machine. It was time to upscale; my husband left his job and we invested in our first industrial machine. Fast forward one full year later we now have a team of 5 and have a brand-new workshop fully equipped. We have had the absolute joy of collaborating with other businesses on sell out products such as Zara Ceramics, Ooh & Aah Cookies as well as our most recent product launch with Dale Farm. Alongside these successful collaborations we have an ever-growing website selling our personalised products and own designs as well as and providing workwear for small and large corporate companies across the whole of the UK.

Instagram has been instrumental in building an amazing community and

customer base with over 22.6k followers and a high engagement. Every day is full of fun with plenty of stitching thrown in. I love what I do, and I am so proud of what we have achieved in such a short space of time. It isn't always easy, but I enjoy the challenges and we are so excited for the future of Ted & Stitch, we have exciting plans for growth and expansion within the next year.

We have two websites you can find us at [www.tedandstitch.co.uk](http://www.tedandstitch.co.uk) for our personalised products and own designs and for workwear [www.tedandstitch.yourwebshop.co.uk](http://www.tedandstitch.yourwebshop.co.uk), you can also find us on :

@tedandstitch

tedandstitch



# Centre of Learning

## Stay Curious, Keep Learning and Keep Growing

The Centre of Learning offers bespoke programmes to support your personal and professional life. Your energy is currency. Invest it wisely and discover your true potential by joining the Centre of Learning this Autumn – placing your growth and development at the heart of everything we do!

### What makes the Centre of Learning special?

- Female only programmes
- Tailored content on current and real working world topics; addressing barriers often faced by women by sharing insights, best practice, and key tools to overcome such barriers.
- Programmes delivered by industry leading facilitators
- External training with women from other organisations to network and learn from each other
- 4 modules with activities and recordings between each module for continued learning
- Only 15 places per programme across 1 month

<p><b>Back to Business</b> Marcomm Training</p> 	<p><b>23RD SEPT - 2ND DEC</b></p>	<p><b>£1,000 + VAT</b> Members</p> <p><b>£1,400 + VAT</b> Non-members</p>
<p><b>Powerful Resilience Skills</b> Bespoke Communications</p> 	<p><b>13TH OCT - 3RD NOV</b></p>	<p><b>£250 + VAT</b> Members</p> <p><b>£350 + VAT</b> Non-members</p>
<p><b>Digital Marketing &amp; Performance</b> Alchemy Digital Training</p> 	<p><b>14TH OCT - 16TH DEC</b></p>	<p><b>£120 + VAT</b> Members</p> <p><b>£170 + VAT</b> Non-members</p>

"This programme really helped me manage my expectations for returning to work. It has also given me determination and drive to consider my future career".

**Lisa, Belfast City Council**


"This course is wonderful for anyone at any level, it was great to be able to interact with other like-minded people without being criticised or discourage. There was only positivity on this course".

**Woodside Logistic Group LTD**

"I would really recommend anyone to take this course, whether like me you are fairly new to digital marketing or have been doing this for a while, I believe this programme has something to offer everyone".

**Refresh Property Solutions Ltd**



<p><b>Mentoring Programme</b> Sponsored by Advance Coaching</p> 	<p><b>14TH OCT</b></p>	<p><b>£50 + VAT</b> Mentees</p>
<p><b>Empowering Women in Leadership</b> Marcomm Training</p> 	<p><b>2ND NOV - 23RD NOV</b></p>	<p><b>£250 + VAT</b> Members</p> <p><b>£350 + VAT</b> Non- members</p>
<p><b>Brilliant Communication</b> Proclaim Consulting</p> 	<p><b>10TH NOV - 15TH DEC</b></p>	<p><b>£250 + VAT</b> Members</p> <p><b>£350 + VAT</b> Non- members</p>
<p><b>The Power of Diversity</b> Training and Learning Solutions</p> 	<p><b>11TH NOV - 21ST DEC</b></p>	<p><b>£250 + VAT</b> Members</p> <p><b>£350 + VAT</b> Non- members</p>

"I'm loving my mentoring sessions. My mentor is so insightful and to the point which is exactly what I need. I'm really enjoying the sessions, so much so that I'm recommending the next mentoring sessions to some of my friends and colleagues."

**WIB Mentee**

"Excellent course, well-structured short and sharp but full of really valuable takeaways. Una's delivery was excellent. Best course I have been on in a long time"

**Joanne Ramsay, NIFRS**

"I really enjoyed the programme and have really benefited from the tools and learning taken away from this course in terms of how to communicate effectively in a virtual world and how to approach difficult conversations and have a positive outcome to build stronger relationships".

**Anne McWhirter, NIE Networks**

**NEW PROGRAMME**

Facilitated by the incredible Sandra Lee! Become an agent of change, create a culture of trust through psychological safety, encourage open conversations, reveal unconscious bias, and take accountability to help lead inclusively for a more innovative and collaborative society. The Centre of Learning invites male and female leaders to join the conversation and become agents of change to lead the way for inclusive workplace cultures.

# Bringing women together from behind the screen!

Living in a virtual world, Women in Business has reached new audiences with the success of the early 2021 online events schedule. With insightful webinars to support the personal wellbeing and workplace development of our members, the WIB community spirit was kept alive throughout the lockdown months with online networking mornings and industry round tables – bringing women together from behind the screen!

From round table discussions with Women in Agriculture on the impacts of Brexit and Covid 19 to exclusive Q & A opportunities with members of The Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy in Westminster and Madeleine Alessandri, Permanent Secretary of Northern Ireland Office on what it takes to be a leading woman! With the perfect mix of wellbeing webinars to encourage our members Positive Thinking with Little Penny Thoughts and to Thrive in the Remote Working World with Virgin Media Business.



March was an action packed month for the network with the Annual Women in Tech Conference, live from Titanic Studios. With over 200 attendees, this empowering one-day virtual event gathered role models who innovate, challenge, and embrace technology. The event featured global and local speakers who provided delegates with industry-focused learning - a fantastic thought-provoking day!

In celebration of the remarkable efforts and achievements of all women since the beginning of the pandemic, we introduced the Inspiring Women Awards, in partnership with Virgin Media Business. With over 300 nominations, a judging panel whittled it down to 5 Inspiring Women from all walks of life who have gone above and beyond to unite, inspire, and who have changed the lives of others for the better.

- Innovator of the Year Award – **Sarah Scullion, Community Calling**
- Agent of Change Award **Martine Mulhern, St. Cecilia's College Derry**
- Person of Purpose Award – **Sinead Norton, Mums at Work**
- Mentor of the Year Award – **Carmel McKinney OBE, NI Fire & Rescue Service**
- Generosity of Spirit Award – **Caroline O'Neill, DIGG for Success**

With an interactive virtual awards ceremony on Sunday 7th March, our fabulous host, Pamela Ballantine listened to the stories of the inspirational category winners as Caroline O'Neill was announced as the Overall Inspirational Woman of the Year by public vote during the live event!



# WIB Events go All-Island

**N**orah Casey brought entrepreneurs from across the island together for chats with women transformers when it comes to business. As over 250 women tuned in to learn from the leading ladies in Social Enterprises, Business Growth and Lifestyle Businesses!

Norah then kept the entrepreneurial conversation going in June, along with Sarah Travers as they hosted the first ever All Island Female Entrepreneurs Virtual Conference, live from Belfast and Dublin. 1000 viewers joined us across the 2-day conference to tune into motivational discussions with keynote speakers Mary Portas and Orla Kiely. It was a fantastic opportunity for attendees to learn from sector wide panels on ambition, mindset, and growth from local to global entrepreneurs, the secrets to start-up success, and insights on changing consumer behaviours in a post-pandemic world. Including valuable all island networking opportunities and the chance to vote for the winner of the Yes You Can £20k Pitching Competition!

Thinking of joining us for the next conference? Have a look at the success of the conference for yourself...

**“Excellent conference! I gained so many valuable lessons and insights and made some amazing new contact”**

**“I hope you’re all exceptionally proud. Not only were the level of speakers amazing but the delivery was 1st class.”**

**“Overall a fantastic, inspiring event with a great range of speakers and subjects from a variety of sectors. It is great to have a network like this for women”**





CONFERENCE

ROUND TABLE  
(ZOOM)CHRISTMAS  
SOCIAL  
(IN PERSON)WEBINAR  
(ZOOM)LET'S TALK  
(HYBRID)

## SEPTEMBER



TUESDAY 7TH SEP 09.30 - 11.00

WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION



TUESDAY 7TH SEP 11.30 - 13.00

WOMEN IN ENERGY



TUESDAY 7TH SEP 14.00 - 15.30

WOMEN IN ENGINEERING



TUESDAY 14TH SEP 10.00 - 11.00

FEEL YOUR FEAR AND DO IT ANYWAY



FRIDAY 24TH SEP 09.30 - 13.30

LET'S TALK: THERE IS A SPECIAL  
PLACE IN HELL FOR WOMEN...

## OCTOBER



TUESDAY 5TH OCT 09.30 - 11.00

WOMEN IN FINANCE



TUESDAY 5TH OCT 11.30 - 13.00

WOMEN IN HR &  
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

TUESDAY 5TH OCT 14.00 - 15.30

WOMEN ENTREPRENEURS



TUESDAY 12TH OCT 19:00 - 20:00

WOMEN IN AGRICULTURE



THURSDAY 14TH OCT 10:00 - 11:00

DISCOVER YOUR BRAVE



FRIDAY 22ND OCT 09.30 - 13.30

LET'S TALK: FLEXIBLE WORKLIFE

## YOUR KEY EVENTS FOR 2022...

WOMEN IN TECH  
CONFERENCE  
FEBRUARYWOMEN IN  
BUSINESS  
AWARDS  
MARCHALL ISLAND FEMALE  
ENTREPRENEURS  
CONFERENCE  
JUNETO BOOK YOUR PLACE, VISIT [WOMENINBUSINESSNI.COM](https://www.womeninbusinessni.com)

# NOVEMBER



THURSDAY 4TH NOV

**ALL-ISLAND VOICES  
OF LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE**



TUESDAY 9TH NOV 09.30 - 11.00

**WOMEN IN MARKETING  
& COMMUNICATIONS**



TUESDAY 9TH NOV 11.30 - 13.00

**WOMEN IN TOURISM  
& HOSPITALITY**



TUESDAY 9TH NOV 14.00 - 15.30

**WOMEN IN TRANSPORT  
& LOGISTICS**



THURSDAY 18TH NOV 10.00 - 11.00

**FINANCING YOUR BUSINESS**



FRIDAY 26TH NOV 09.30 - 13.30

**LET'S TALK: WOMEN'S HEALTH**

# DECEMBER



THURSDAY 2ND DEC 09.30 - 11.00

**WOMEN IN MANUFACTURING**



THURSDAY 2ND DEC 11.30 - 13.00

**WOMEN IN LAW**



THURSDAY 2ND DEC 14.00 - 15.30

**WOMEN IN EDUCATION**



TUESDAY 7TH DEC 10.00 - 11.00

**BRAND PURPOSE**



FRIDAY 10TH DEC 09.30 - 13.30

**LET'S TALK: SETTING THE TABLE  
VS SITTING AT THE TABLE**



THURSDAY 16TH DEC - 16.30 - 18.30

**CHRISTMAS SOCIAL**

# JANUARY



TUESDAY 11TH JAN 09.30 - 11.00

**WOMEN IN CONSTRUCTION**



TUESDAY 11TH JAN 11.30 - 13.00

**WOMEN IN ENERGY**



TUESDAY 11TH JAN 14.00 - 15.30

**WOMEN IN ENGINEERING**



THURSDAY 20TH JAN 10.00 - 11.00

**SPARK YOUR POTENTIAL**



FRIDAY 28TH JAN 09.30 - 13.30

**LET'S TALK: FINDING YOUR VOICE**



## Una McSorley of Marcomm Training Supporting Maternity Returners

**B**ecoming a parent shouldn't be a barrier to success. Yet the stress of juggling parenting responsibilities with the demands of work often takes a toll on many parents' personal and professional lives.

Returning to work after a new baby represents a significant life changing event. When working mothers return to the workplace they can experience self-doubt, question their identity and feel overwhelmed with pressures of balancing home and work life.

Successfully managing individuals through this transition and preparing them for their return as a working mum benefits not only the employee but also the organisation. For the organisation it's about facilitating a faster return to productivity and increasing staff loyalty thus retaining your top talent. For the employee it's ensuring a smooth and effective transition back to work, maintaining self-confidence and engagement and minimising the impact on career profession.

I have been facilitating the Back to Business programme for several years now and it is undoubtedly a firm favourite for me. Getting to meet the new mums and their babies is rewarding in itself. But for me the real value is seeing the women grow in confidence and start to look forward to their return to work.

Maternity returners often experience a range of emotions both positive and negative. At a personal level dealing effectively with the guilt - guilt at leaving their baby, guilt at being at work, guilt at the extra burden that their colleagues had to carry when they were off and so much more. Other common concerns are adjusting to the demands of being a working parent, will my baby be happy in childcare? Will I get enough support from my partner? All natural emotions to have.

From a career perspective they worry about the fact that they have been away from the office environment for maybe 12 months and so much had changed particularly through a global pandemic. Common concerns are raised about the person who has been covering their role

and how they will break back in particularly when the other party may be a little reluctant to hand back the reins and a new working dynamic has been established.

The question of asking for flexible working or reduced hours is a frequent issue raised. How do I go about raising that? Will it impact on how I am perceived? What if I am turned down? Interestingly pre Covid, this topic came up in many of coaching conversations yet ironically, one of the few benefits of Covid is that the concept of home working is now the norm.

By supporting your employees reintegrate after parental leave they will gain the confidence to return to work in a way that they feel in control of and actually get excited about it.

**Find out more about the Back To Business Centre of Learning Programme on page 16 and visit [marcommtraining.com](http://marcommtraining.com)**

# Ruth Osborne Art



Ruth Osborne  
Art

[ruthosborneart.com](http://ruthosborneart.com)

[RuthOsborneArt](https://www.facebook.com/RuthOsborneArt)

[ruthosborne\\_art](https://www.instagram.com/ruthosborne_art)

Artist, Ruth Osborne, creates Irish Linen artworks from her home-studio in County Down. She began exhibiting and selling her work in 2018 while working in the heritage sector. In the midst of the pandemic, and following the birth of her second child in early 2020, Ruth dedicated resources and planning into growing her art business. This has flourished over the past 18 months allowing Ruth to embrace her passion and pursue a career as a fulltime artist.

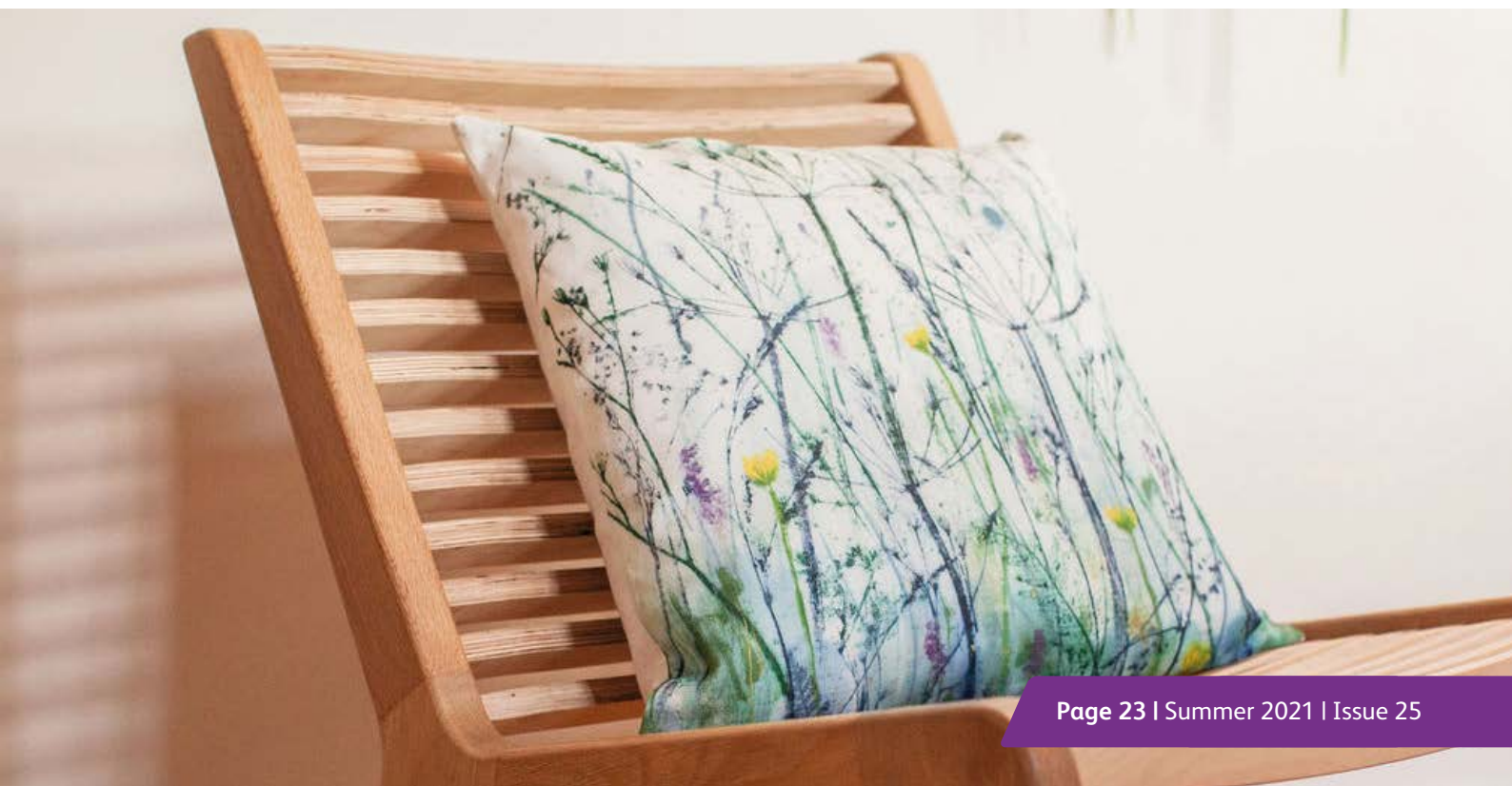
Ruth's artwork is a unique combination of printmaking and painting on Irish Linen, chosen for its sustainability and heritage in Ireland. Her work examines nature's details, textures, seasons, and celebrates landscapes from meadows and mountains to woodlands and shorelines.

Ruth works with both commercial and residential clients on commissioned artworks and wall panels. Her bespoke commission service has expanded, now including artworks based on bridal bouquets, loved ones' gardens and meaningful locations; a popular way enriching the connection between the client and artwork.

Ruth also creates widely affordable artwork with her range of smaller-scale Irish Linen original pieces, giclee art prints and frameable art cards.

The past 18 months have seen exciting growth and developments with Ruth launching her website, alongside exhibiting and selling her work in independent shops and galleries. In late 2020 she began facilitating a series of popular online workshops and will continue to offer these sessions in addition to re-commencing face-to-face workshops. 2021 has brought exhibition opportunities with Craft NI and the Creative Peninsula programme and saw Ruth's work acquired by National Museums Northern Ireland for the Folk Museum's Textile Collection, an important career milestone for Ruth.

Ruth has recently moved into creating homewares, including the SOLAS\Light range of unique hand-printed Irish Linen Votives, sets of made-to-order hand-printed Irish Linen Napkins, and a soon to launch range of luxury Linen-Cotton cushions produced from her artwork. This new range offers a new way to bring the beauty of Ruth's nature-inspired art into homes and businesses.





# A Year of the Young Women's Network

One year on since its launch, The Young Women's Network (YWN) in partnership with Ulster Bank has supported the personal and professional development of future female leaders in the early stages of their career. With over 100 members under 26 years of age, the growing network has gained valuable benefits in 2021 so far. Virtual Group Mentoring sessions between groups of YWN members and some of the leading senior female executives from across Northern Ireland kicked started

the year for the network and successfully continued in the Spring. To help work their way up the career ladder, the YWN learned from an exclusive, insightful webinar on interview success with WIB Corporate members Hays.

In June, The YWN Committee and WIB Ambassadors received an invitation to a Garden Party at the US Consul General's Residence in Belfast. It was an honour for Consul General, Elizabeth Kennedy

Trudeau to take the time to listen and offer advice on the great efforts of the YWN; with valuable encouragement that the Committee will take with them throughout 2021 while representing the network. From corporate to entrepreneurial backgrounds, read more on the wide variety of Young Women's Network members...



## Rebecca Reid, Global Marketing & Communications

[synechron.com](https://www.synechron.com)

'I graduated from Ulster University in 2018 and started working in Dubai for Synechron - a leading, digital, business consulting, and technology firm, with 11,000+ employees in 22 global locations. Throughout the past three years, I have been based in Dubai, New York City, Charlotte, NC and most recently, London. Since the beginning of the pandemic, I have been working from home in Northern Ireland where I have been leading Marketing for the UK and APAC.

At Synechron, I am a core member of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) global team and have introduced multiple initiatives to help move the needle for DEI. I was responsible for sparking global partnerships such as "Gender Networks", which provides a platform for women to network and further encourage females to uptake careers in STEM and "myGwork," a business community for LGBT+ professionals, students, inclusive employers and anyone who believes in workplace equality. The platform offers their members a safe space where they can connect with inclusive employers, find jobs, mentors, professional events and news.

I joined the Young Women's Network Committee because I want to make as much of an impact as I possibly can to help raise the voices of other young women. In the committee, we have had the opportunity to do lots of exciting work, such as being involved with the mentoring programme where exceptional NI female leaders mentored young women starting out in their careers, and recently we were invited by the US Counsel General to her Belfast residence to talk about our work.

Outside of my full-time job, I am the Head of Marketing at Northern Irish start-up, Caram, which elevates dynamic entrepreneurs to achieve more and create meaningful change. In the future I hope to start my own business and it's great to know that Women in Business will be there to support me with my endeavours.'







## Abbie Lawlor, Founder of AHL Apparel

[ahl-apparel.com](http://ahl-apparel.com)

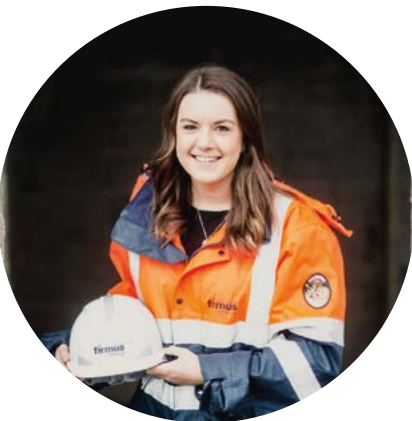
[ahl\\_apparel](https://www.instagram.com/ahl_apparel)

'After studying Textile Art, Design and Fashion at Ulster University, I decided to develop my studies in the business aspect of the fashion industry by studying a Master's Degree in Fashion Retail Management. Specialising in embroidery art throughout my degree, I decided to step out of my comfort zone and make a streetwear collection as part of my final Masters project. It was at this stage I realised my desire for designing and creating my own ideas, developing the confidence and knowledge to establish my own streetwear/loungewear brand in October 2020.

The pandemic gave me the time to develop further knowledge for my business by participating in Group Mentoring and a Digital Marketing Programme offered by Women in Business. I also signed up for a photography course and participated in the Go For It programme where I was offered beneficial business mentoring and guidance.

At AHL Apparel, it is a one woman show! I do everything from designing, making, marketing, posting and everything in between. The brands aim is one of connection. Fashion used as a tool to start a conversation through taste and ideologies. I want to offer a unisex garment that breaks boundaries and says more than just a trend. Specialising in embroidery and print, I embody these techniques into unique and original designs that can be restyled and worn over and over again.

The hope for AHL Apparel in the future is to build my presence and explore different avenues of designing. In the future I want to build a small team of like-minded and creative people that can join me along my journey and also express their passion for fashion design at AHL Apparel.



## Emma McQuiggan, Graduate Engineer

[firmusenergy.co.uk](http://firmusenergy.co.uk)

'I'm a Graduate Engineer at firmus energy, a Northern Ireland based Natural Gas Distribution and Supply company. I've always had an interest in technology and maths which led me to studying a degree in Mechanical Engineering at Queen's University, Belfast. Throughout my degree I completed a placement year at firmus energy, this provided me with so many great experiences and opportunities. It also increased my confidence and technical abilities, and as a result I was able to achieve an Engineering Leaders Scholarship with the Royal Academy of Engineering. This scholarship allowed me to avail of an amazing mentoring and training programme as well as funding to explore different skills and passions. After I graduated, I returned to firmus energy and joined the construction team. Where I am responsible for the design and build of natural gas mains and services for firmus' social housing programme and new build sites.

As a female in construction and energy it can seem quite overwhelming at times, being in such a male dominated field. It's been great to get involved with Women in

Business and connect with other females in similar positions. It's really inspiring to hear about other women's career paths and their successes. Through a recent YWN mentoring session I was able to ask so many questions and get good, open and honest answers from other women who had already faced the same challenges. Whether it's how to communicate effectively, climbing the career ladder or navigating specific situations, being able to chat things through and have others give advice was really helpful. Some of the best advice I was given was to be authentic and be you. As a female engineer sometimes, I think we can try so hard to fit in, but it's good to be reminded that we should celebrate our differences.





## Belfast: UK's most 'gigafit' city



**BUSINESS**

### Seamus McCorry

Regional Director Northern Ireland,  
Virgin Media Business

**A** digital revolution is transforming Belfast for businesses and residents. Years of technology investment has created exciting opportunities, which have become even more pertinent following the pandemic. From building a top tier, high-speed broadband infrastructure to developing STEM careers, Belfast has the capability to become a leading European destination in the eyes of global business leaders. And these efforts are being recognised. In June, Belfast was crowned UK's most 'gigafit' city, thanks to the government investment rapidly improving internet speeds. What could this mean?

Our recent study with the Centre for Economics and Business Research (Cebr) revealed that continued digital investment would boost the UK economy by £232bn. Seizing a part of this would be a major

boost for all areas of the city, from local business to global enterprises that base themselves in Belfast.

#### Levelling up broadband capabilities

This past year, we have seen the importance of connectivity. Improved connectivity solutions have been central to Belfast's growth and prosperity. Prior to the government's £8.5 million investment in Belfast's broadband infrastructure, the city's gigabit broadband coverage stood at 42%. This soared to 95% in just two years – more than £100m has been invested since 2015 to expand the network and bring ultrafast broadband to hundreds of thousands of homes, businesses and public sector buildings across Northern Ireland. Improved broadband coverage is the answer to unlocking new capabilities for Belfast businesses, according to the Northern Ireland Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Firstly, better connectivity brings flexibility. It allows employees to collaborate seamlessly and effectively, regardless of changing environments.

According to the Institute of Directors, flexible working in turn boosts staff productivity, reduces sick leave and creates a more efficient labour market where candidates are not limited by location. We've previously discussed the need to create a more equal workforce. Women make up just 24% of the STEM workforce in the UK. Creating more flexible, productive, and appealing workplaces will create new ways to bring women into STEM careers. And more high-level IT organisations will follow companies like Imperva and Kainos to Belfast.

#### A better-connected Belfast

As the UK's most gigafit city, Belfast has the opportunity to ensure a bright future for its residents and businesses. Digitisation brought us to this point, and digitisation can also be our way forward. By investing in connectivity, employees have the tools to do their best work. As we rebound from Covid, creating a flexible, more equal work environment will prove beneficial in the long-term for businesses. With gigabit speeds now available across Northern Ireland, Belfast has rocketed up the gigabit league tables and is supporting long-term economic growth. But the work is not done. With plans for further investment and expansion already underway, a better-connect Belfast for everyone is in sight.

# Liza Kennedy, Founder of Girls Who Cycle



## Liza Kennedy

[www.girlswhocycle.co.uk](http://www.girlswhocycle.co.uk)

[girlswhocycle](https://www.facebook.com/girlswhocycle)

[girls.who.cycle](https://www.instagram.com/girls.who.cycle)

**L**iza Kennedy is the Founder and Owner of Girls Who Cycle. She found a gap in the market for ladies cycling wear when the idea came to her in 2019. Liza is also an avid road cyclist. Her role within the company is that she runs it solely, has drawn up her own designs, sourced the manufacturer, and is in charge of her social media accounts, designed her own website and does everything business related!

“I found a gap in the market for ladies cycle wear. When I went to purchase a cycle kit for myself, nothing wowed me as most things were quite expensive. One day I decided to change that. I wanted to bring out a luxury but an affordable brand. It also had to be fun, funky and bright designs (that would also have built in safety features and compression fabric used in the bib shorts) for women of all ages and sizes. I want women to feel empowered and amazing wearing my brand as it is very important to me (I like to feel like this too wearing a cycling kit).”

“There are no Northern Irish brands that just sell women’s only kit. Being that 1st company really excites me. I knew I would be taking a risk starting this business. My motto in life is “you don’t know until you try, if you don’t try you’ll never know. My main competitor is Rapha. They’re a well known brand in the world of cycling. I’m incredibly determined to be a better brand than them. When I talk about my brand to other people and fellow cyclists, I get ridiculously excited. When I wear my prototype kit when out cycling the response I get is incredible. I feel so accomplished and incredibly proud. There were times

I wanted to get everything up because of things not going my way because of Covid but talked myself out of it (I was originally supposed to launch in April 2020).”

“I am always coming up with new designs of different products that no other cycling brands have (I always try to be one step ahead of them). I have plans to expand into a multi-million pound company and also launch a men’s range in early 2022 and also bring out my own sports nutrition range. I finally launched last month after the delay with Covid. I used that time wisely to make my brand more fabulous and work on my marketing strategy. It just isn’t any kit, it’s Girls Who Cycle kit!”



# YES YOU CAN DELIVERED BY Women in Business

Yes You Can in collaboration with Invest NI, 11 Councils and Women in Business, has had an incredible year, meeting outstanding businesswomen who are leading the way for others, shaping the future of entrepreneurship, and enhancing the local economy with their unique, impressive businesses. In what has been a testing 2 years, women have shown their

resilience, determination, and ability to adapt, with even more businesses coming forward. As a result we have seen an incredible number of applications across all Yes You Can strands, allowing us to introduce 2 additional 4-month Explore It programmes to support even more women, and a huge number of places already secured for the upcoming Yes You Can

Business webinars to support women to take the 'next steps' in business by increasing their knowledge on key entrepreneurial themes.

**If you have not yet registered your free place on our upcoming Yes You Can Next Steps webinars click here to find out more and secure your place.**



During the very first All Island Virtual Female Entrepreneur Conference, we had an opportunity celebrate the diversity of new businesses; from pet products to documentation management for construction, women in construction workwear to food products to benefit your health! Six impressive Regional Winners also took to the screen to pitch in the Yes You Can £20K Pitching Competition, with hundreds of viewers willing them on.

**Congratulations to the 6 regional winners and all the women who said 'Yes I can' by applying for the £20K Pitching Competition!**

- Rachael Coulter, Stable Manager
- Catherine Deegan, Doc Elite
- Michelle Donnelly, Fred Threads
- Jenny Gregg, Crafted Equestrian
- Lynette McHendry, Spear & Arrow Bone Broth
- Laura Mulkeen, Hex Workwear

In particular to our overall winner of this year's Pitching Competition - **Laura Mulkeen of Hex Workwear**, whose business will support tradeswomen throughout the world and light a spark for women within the STEM industries!

**Get in touch to find out more: [yyc@womeninbusinessni.com](mailto:yyc@womeninbusinessni.com) or join Women in Business to promote yourself and your business, access networking events, business support webinars and also meet other like-minded women!**

### The YYC stats over the past 12 months



# Cleaver Fulton Rankin appoints Director Kerry McCloy to lead a new Legal Technology Group



**C**leaver Fulton Rankin has announced the appointment of Director Kerry McCloy to lead a new Legal Technology Group. Cleaver Fulton Rankin has invested significantly in people, technology and training. They have embraced innovation and are the first Northern Ireland law firm to launch a Legal Technology Group, providing expert eDiscovery services.

Kerry McCloy and a team of eight project managers, solicitors and legal professionals, supported by cutting-edge legal technology, will provide large scale document review and expert eDiscovery services to nearshore law firms and support the specialist legal teams at the firm in the delivery of legal services to clients.

Kerry said, "I am pleased to join Cleaver Fulton Rankin and lead the new Legal Technology Group launch. The addition of this new service offering will add to the already strong reputation the company and its people have in the market."

Kerry is on the roll of solicitors in Northern Ireland, Ireland and England & Wales and joins the firm having worked previously

in an Alternative Legal Services Group of a large global law firm. She specialises in commercial litigation and legal technology. She explains: "Discovery is probably one of the most difficult, yet vitally important, aspects of litigation. It can be an onerous process. However, we can use the technology's advanced analytics and search filtering technology to conduct early case assessment, identify patterns and trends in the documents at the outset and reduce the document pool to a much smaller, more manageable set for review. This presents the client with a high quality, more efficient offering in terms of time and cost."

eDiscovery, in simple terms, is the process of legally reviewing and sharing electronically stored documents, traditionally in the context of litigation. Law firms have historically dealt with information management and document review using labour-intensive hard copy review solutions with paralegals and junior lawyers.

Cleaver Fulton Rankin is ahead of the curve when it comes to the employment of tech and the introduction of a dedicated

specialist team. Jonathan Forrester, Managing Director, said, "We saw an opportunity to create efficiencies and support the modernisation of legal services. After a great deal of hard work, we have set up our Legal Technology Group, headed by Kerry, our Innovation and Legal Technology Director. She has hit the ground running, and we are confident the Group will open up significant opportunities for us." Jonathan adds that "Innovation and legal tech have, undoubtedly, enabled us to streamline our services and grow our business. It is at the heart of our company."

Further information on the Legal Technology Group, including frequently asked questions, is available at: [cleaverfultonrankin.co.uk](http://cleaverfultonrankin.co.uk)

**Cleaver  
Fulton  
Rankin**



# Ulster University's Belfast Campus fosters Cross-Discipline Innovation



**U**lster University's Legal Innovation Centre, in partnership with NI's legal and tech leaders, is building the tech-savvy law graduate of the future that employers need through a first-of-its-kind programme in Ireland and the UK: LLM/MSc Corporate Law, Computing and Innovation.

This novel course, to be based at the enhanced Belfast Campus, is uniquely designed as 50% computer science and 50% corporate and tech law, with the Schools of Law and Computing, Engineering and Intelligent Systems collaborating under one umbrella, for the first time. This allows for the development of a truly multi skilled graduate: a tech-savvy lawyer or a computer science graduate who has a unique appreciation of legal and financial services.

This is a course which has truly been designed hand in glove with industry employers, including: Citi, Allen & Overy, Baker McKenzie and PWC among others. They are providing placements and ultimately, employment for programme graduates; sharing knowledge via international guest lectures; and recognition for outstanding performers.

The pioneering graduates are eminently employable across legal, banking, technology and financial services careers and in high demand in the burgeoning NI legal and tech sectors, home to large firms working on the global stage. Due to their unique combination of skills and knowledge, they stand out from other graduates and are not only prepared for today's technology-focused corporate world but can push it forward.

Jane Hollway, Director of the Ulster University Legal Innovation Centre, said: "AI-based disruptive technology is transforming legal services delivery. Lawyers are operating in this dramatically changed landscape and with that comes the demand for the multidisciplinary lawyer. Firms are seeking lawyers and professionals with computing skills or computing technologists with corporate skills - the 'unicorn' graduate. Aligned with this, tech graduates with an understanding of corporate and financial landscape are highly sought after. The input of our international leaders in industry makes the course highly practical and our graduates, highly employable and future-proofed in terms of their skillset."

**Find out more:**  
[www.ulster.ac.uk/clci](http://www.ulster.ac.uk/clci)

# Aine Crilly, Managing Director of The HR Elephant



**H**R is a service area which has really come to the fore during the pandemic. From furlough and redundancy to employee health and wellbeing, Aine Crilly is forging ahead in supporting organisations with these services.

'I've always had an interest in people's issues and making sure people were treated fairly. Unsure about where to take this interest I studied Law at University of Ulster before getting the opportunity to work in a number of different roles in the Northern Ireland Civil Service. It was while working in the Equality and Strategy Directorate that I started to get a sense of People Management and the very many challenges and opportunities this presented. Seeing the impact that people's actions can have on others, it really affirmed my decision that I wanted to work in a job that helped people.

After three years in various roles, I spent 18 months working on the World Police and Fire Games project before moving to Canada to take up a role in Recruitment and HR. On my return home I joined

Deloitte in Dublin before commencing lecturing in Southern Regional College while studying for my Masters in HR over two years. This was one of my biggest challenges to date as I had two babies aged one month and eleven months. Yet my children made me more determined to push ahead and find a role that suited not only what I wanted to do in my career but my family life too.

Back in 2017, working from home was virtually non-existent. With that The HR Elephant was born. I knew that by setting up my own HR consultancy, I would be able to forge my own path. I can't say it is easy running your own business to get a good work life balance, but I know I will never miss the important things in my homelife.

People often ask me where the name 'The HR Elephant' came from - I love Elephants. They are amazing creatures and so much of the study of traits in elephants, I believe, resonates with people trying to manage and look after other people. The HR Elephant is built on the concept of the intelligent and in-tune Elephant leading its herd. I have built a 'HERD' around

me with a fantastic list of clients. We now have offices in Newry, Dundalk and Newtownhamilton to help deliver our vision of being a leading cross border HR Consultancy.

We are collectively working to try to make HR more about what you can do, using open communication and employer/team member relationships built on trust and mutual respect. The HR remit has changed dramatically during the pandemic. Mental Health and wellbeing have come to the fore and many organisations are relooking at their policies and culture. It is a challenging but exciting time to be involved in the HR Industry and we are looking forward to many more busy years ahead'.

**Get in touch with the Aine via email: [Aine@TheHRElephant.com](mailto:Aine@TheHRElephant.com)**



## NIE Networks increasing support for vulnerable customers

**N**IE Networks has launched a new **Vulnerable Customer Strategy** detailing how the organisation will provide the best possible support to its most vulnerable customers.

The plan defines how the company will ensure every customer needing extra support receives the help they need, including customers with additional communication needs, translation requirements, the elderly, those who are visually impaired or those reliant on life saving medical equipment.

Speaking at the launch of the strategy, Customer and Market Services Director for NIE Networks, Ronan McKeown, said;

“We are proud of the great service our employees provide to ensure the most vulnerable in society are cared for as customers of NIE Networks, but we always want to improve.

“Our new strategy aims to reach even more vulnerable customers and increase awareness of the 20 tailored services we offer, for example by increasing the number of customers on our Medical Customer Care Register by 25% by 2024.” Over 10,000 people are currently registered on the NIE Networks Medical Customer Care Register, which offers a telephone information support service to customers who are dependent on life supporting

medical equipment in the event of a power cut or planned interruption to supply. NIE Networks is also an accredited JAM Card friendly organisation, with over 90 per cent of staff trained to provide the highest standard of service to those customers with a learning difficulty, autism or communication barrier.

Under the new strategy NIE Networks is developing a specialist team so any vulnerable customer can choose to speak to specially-trained agents. Employees will be up-skilled to help them communicate with non-English speaking customers, improve their communications with those with hearing or speech difficulties by introducing the RNID-approved Relay UK service and improve employee ID cards to make them easier for customers to check when calling at properties.

“As a business, our customers, and particularly vulnerable customers, sit at the heart of everything we do and every decision we make. Each year we invest around £0.5 million on support services specifically for more vulnerable customers. We want every customer to feel seen and valued.

“We are a dementia friendly organisation, we have browse aloud on our website for those with visual impairment and our metering team can arrange an appointment for those customers who

need to be accompanied by a friend or family member.”

NIE Networks’ customer base includes almost every home, business and farm in Northern Ireland and the organisation is responsible for transporting electricity to over 895,000 customers.

With a new energy landscape ahead and electricity playing a fundamental role in a low-carbon future for Northern Ireland, it will be more important than ever for customers to be involved and feel there are no barriers to accessing the support and services of NIE Networks.

“We are moving into an era where customers will manage their own energy needs to a much greater extent and will be using the network to facilitate, not just how they control their electricity supply coming into their homes, but also how they control their heat and transport.

“As we go through the energy transition, we must ensure that it is a fair and just transition and that we don’t leave any customer, regardless of their individual needs or circumstances, behind.”

**To find out more about the NIE Networks Medical Customer Care Register or the other tailored support services for vulnerable customers visit:** [nienetworks.co.uk/vulnerablecustomers](http://nienetworks.co.uk/vulnerablecustomers)



# Leading Through the ‘Turnover Tsunami’



## Caroline Greenlee

Leadership Coaching & Training,  
Advance Coach Ltd.

**W**e've all felt the impact of the tumultuous change of the last eighteen months. Little wonder then that sometimes we might feel exhausted, depleted, or even, at times, socially inept.

This is only compounded for leaders who are managing their own, and their team's emotions. It's no coincidence that the WHO has included burnout in the International Classification of Diseases as an "occupational phenomenon." Your manager is the face of your organisation and your relationship with them is fundamental to your wellbeing.

The Edelman trust Barometer's (2021) study shows that "business is not only the most trusted institution among the four studied, but it is also the only trusted institution with a 61 % level globally, and the only institution seen as both ethical and competent." Why then if trust in business is so high is there what Forbes calls a "turnover tsunami" afoot?

As we start to navigate the return to offices, contemplate hybrid working, or continue to work from home, one thing is clear – the old way of doing things has gone. We don't need managers to

direct and control and people aren't another resource to be managed by HR. People want to be treated as individuals to build trusting relationships with, in an environment of psychological safety. This requires emotionally intelligent leaders – relationship builders high in empathy and resilience, who are not afraid to be vulnerable and be the learner, not the knower.

These aren't new leadership skills – in the past they were referred to disparagingly as 'soft skills' but which the World Economic Forum now refers to as 'power skills.' The need for these social and emotional skills has been identified by McKinsey as accelerating in 2030 and beyond. The ability to ask questions, to stay curious and actively listen, are crucial. Goleman refers to poor listening as the 'common cold of leadership'. Helping people to be resourceful, to find their own solutions, creating an environment of autonomy and ownership is what is needed, irrespective of where the work takes place. McKinsey data show that when employees are intrinsically motivated, they are 32% more committed to (and 46% more satisfied with) their jobs, suffer significantly less burnout than other employees do, and perform 16% better.

Thankfully, these are all skills which we can develop and grow and, at Advance Coach, we work with leaders to raise awareness of their own emotional and social intelligence, as well as resourcing the core mindset and tools to effectively coach individuals and teams.

Through robust EQI psychometric leadership profiling, and expert coach feedback, leaders get to deepen their understanding of self, and their impact on others. This has a crucial impact on identifying the behaviours that can be amplified, or modified, to create the optimal conditions for team success.

Place alongside this, the coaching know-how, through blended ILM Certified Leader as Coach training, and we equip leaders at all levels with the full suite of power skills to navigate whatever conditions are yet to come.

[Learn more at advancecoach.co.uk](https://advancecoach.co.uk)

# Practicing self-care for your physical and mental wellbeing



## Colette McCartney

Founder of Holistic Kidz and Holistic Retreatz

**I**n today's society 'me time' is usually the last thing on our mind. As a mum and business owner in the midst of an expanding company, self-care plays an important role in my everyday routine to help me remain confidently focused on my goals. Self-care should begin as a priority and then naturally become a habit. I want to empower others with easy to follow tips that will help to change lives for the better.

### 1. Pay attention to your thoughts

The first hour of your morning can determine your mood for the day ahead. Having a positive mindset must come first and everything else will follow. I wake up

every day by visualising how I would like my day to go – a simple and effective way to set you up for a positive day. If you have any negative or self-sabotaging thoughts during the day, make a conscious effort to replace those thoughts with positive ones or practice feeling grateful for the lessons learnt from challenging situations.

### 2. Surround yourself with positive like-minded people

You are the company that you keep - the people whom you spend the most time with will have a huge influence on your mood and future outcomes. When you surround yourself with driven, grounded like-minded people you are sure to share in their success and positivity.

### 3. Create healthy boundaries

Setting boundaries is an act of self-love and helps you establish a high sense of self-worth, healthy relationships, and improved physical and mental wellbeing. So, learn to say no, you won't make enemies - you will gain respect from others and yourself.

### 4. Step out of your comfort zone

Comfort zones are not about safety, they are about fear. For you to grow, it is important that you learn to push past any fears that are holding you back. A quote that I live by is "Take risks, if you win you will be happy, if you lose you will be wise"

### 5. Positive affirmations

Positive statements that we repeat to ourselves regularly, to help eliminate any negative or unhelpful thoughts from our mind. You can either think, speak, or journal your affirmations, to encourage positive changes in your life and boost self-esteem. It can feel strange when beginning this exercise but persevere with daily affirmations to help create lasting positive changes in your life. Mirror affirmations are also a very effective way of giving yourself a confidence boost. I look straight into my eyes in the mirror and give myself three compliments, beginning with 'I am...' It is important that you feel your words as feeling is believing!

### 6. Meditation

I often hear people say that they have tried meditation but couldn't do it - there is no right or wrong way to meditate. Our minds work very differently from person to person, so finding a style of meditation that suits you is key. I recommend the Hay House UK app, as it has an abundance of choice to suit everyone's specific preferences.

Learn more about Colette's work by visiting: [holistickidz.com](https://holistickidz.com)



## Workplace Diversity and Inclusivity continues to make a mark



Diversity Mark

**D**iversity Mark represents over 80,000 employees, with almost 40% of those companies based within the STEM sector. Four of NI's leading IT firms – Allstate, Learning Pool, Liberty IT and Outsource – have been accredited through Diversity Mark for over 2 years, and in that time have jointly increased their female workforce by 27% overall and by 30% specifically in senior management positions. All four companies have grown collectively by 401 employees since they joined Diversity Mark with 47% of all new hires being female, tipping the overall gender balance collectively in favour of women by 3%.

A McKinsey (2020) report found that companies in the top quartile of gender diversity on executive teams were 25 percent more likely to experience above-average profitability than peer companies. Christine White, Head of Business at Diversity Mark, said: "We are delighted to have reached this landmark milestone representing 80,000 employees. At Diversity Mark it is our mission to platform issues around inclusivity in the workplace and create equal opportunities for all. It is well known that having a diverse workforce can unlock greater innovation within a company, driving its performance and success. We look forward to further progressing in 2022 and are delighted to work with organisations new and old throughout the UK & Ireland as they continue their exciting journeys towards greater diversity."

The team at Diversity Mark are delighted to welcome multi award winning entrepreneur, Nuala Murphy as interim Head of Business on a 14 month maternity cover. Nuala has expertise in D&I issues and experience building communities that empower and connect people across differences. For more than 7 years, she has led a network of more than 3000 women through Lean In Belfast / Ireland—a grassroots community that supports women to achieve their ambitions. Through this experience, Nuala gained insights into the working culture of companies across many industries and developed her D&I skillset on a global scale.

In her new role, Nuala will be focused on expanding Diversity Mark's reach to include the rest of Ireland and the UK, helping the organisation achieve its objectives in 2021 and beyond. She will channel her passion and commitment to building a more equal society, working with companies from all sectors as they commit to advancing diversity and inclusion to benefit all employees. Nuala said: "It is an honour to carry on Christine's mantle as Head of Business at Diversity Mark, an organisation that has become such a vital proponent of workplace inclusivity across Northern Ireland. For years I've been an impassioned advocate for women's equality and have a deep commitment to creating workplaces where every person has a seat at the table and a chance to be heard. I am calling on companies and those I have worked with in the past to get in touch with Diversity Mark to begin their diversity journey."

Visit [diversity-mark-ni.co.uk](https://diversity-mark-ni.co.uk)



Photo caption: Terry Moore – CEO of Outsource, Nichola Robinson – Director of Strategic Sourcing at Spirit Aero systems and Diversity Mark Chair, Paul McElvaney – Group CEO of Learning Pool, John Healy OBE – Vice President of Allstate NI, Christine White – Head of Business at Diversity Mark and Willie Hamilton – Managing Director of Liberty IT

# Pinsent Masons launches Equality Law Practice



**M**ultinational law firm Pinsent Masons has announced a unique equality law specialism that supports clients in managing the cultural and legal aspects of discrimination and inclusion issues.

The new practice addresses a broader challenge facing organisations when equality issues arise; identifying and tackling the root cause as well as solving the legal matter. In doing so, businesses can seek to mitigate the likelihood of future problems and avoid a lasting impact on their culture.

For many organisations, drivers of structural inequality and unconscious bias are highly complex and can be impacted by a range of internal and external factors, which make positive change difficult to achieve. Pinsent Masons is uniquely placed to advise in this area, with longstanding expertise in inclusion and belonging. It remains the only law firm with a dedicated D&I consultancy, Brook Graham.

Co-leads of the new practice, Legal Directors Kate Dodd and Susannah Donaldson, have advised clients on both employment law matters and provided consultancy via Brook Graham. Kate has also led on Pinsent Masons' internal inclusion and belonging work for the past 5 years.

The team already has a strong track record of advising a number of clients on employment & diversity matters. Recent work includes providing support on pay gap reporting, strategies for achieving better diversity at senior levels, and the development of progressive family leave policies.

Learn more at [pinsentmasons.com](https://pinsentmasons.com)



## Susannah Donaldson, Legal Director

Susannah Donaldson, comments:

**“Diverse and inclusive businesses are more profitable, more innovative, and better placed to engage with their shareholders, clients, and incoming talent. Boardrooms are no longer discussing whether a change is needed, but how that change is achieved. As a professional services firm with law at the core, our new practice bridges a crucial gap in the process and helps organisations to become an employer of choice.”**



## Kate Dodd, Legal Director

Kate Dodd, adds:

**“Creating inclusive and equal workplaces is not a task that should fall to HR or D&I teams, nor are equality issues a legal problem to be solved and archived. Dealing with equality or discrimination matters in isolation fails to get to the root of the issue and left unmanaged, is highly damaging to culture. Our deep sectoral knowledge, and experience in helping multi-national businesses to navigate both jurisdictional laws and cultural sensitivities, means we are well placed to guide clients through challenges that are very specific to their industry and region.”**

# Gwyneth Compston, Corporate Social Responsibility Manager, Power NI



**G**wyneth Compston is the newly appointed Corporate Social Responsibility Manager at Power NI. The East Belfast mum of 2 tells us about her new role and what's coming up in the future at Power NI.

## 1. Tell us about Power NI and your role within!

Power NI is Northern Ireland's largest electricity supplier and I have recently taken up a newly created role as CSR Manager. I love working with people and communities in Northern Ireland and I'm very fortunate that, as a company, we have a heart to make a real difference to the communities where we work, live and operate.

## 2. What has been your career journey so far?

I studied Consumer Studies at Ulster University and as part of the course I had the chance to take a placement year to work in a local business. I secured a one year placement with NIE (before we were Power NI we were a part of NIE) in the Customer Relations team. I had a fantastic placement year and when I went back to university I continued to work with NIE for a couple of days each week doing some

admin work. I then successfully applied for a Graduate position and the rest as they say is history, I'm still here 19 years later!

## 3. Describe yourself in 3 words.

Organised, positive and compassionate

## 4. What is the 1 skill that helps you the most in your role?

I'm a good listener and I make time for people.

## 5. Do you have any advice for your fellow Women in Utilities?

Work hard, enjoy what you do and make time for yourself so that you get a chance to take a break and do things you enjoy. I'm a busy mum of two young children and they give me a really good reason to get out and about. With a clear head I'm much more productive at work but for me, it is really important to have some down time so that I keep the right balance between work and family.

## 6. Are there any exciting plans on the way for Power NI?

We reached out to more organisations and groups than ever during the COVID pandemic. We are looking at how we can continue these important conversations over the coming year.

## 7. Who is an inspiration in your career?

I have always admired my mum and her approach to work. She was a Home Economics teacher when I was growing up and worked in some very challenging schools. She was always very firm but fair with her most difficult pupils and earned their respect.... I know that mum also tried to make learning fun and even though she was strict in the classroom, she always tried her best to encourage learning and that is something I've always tried to do... work can be fun, and people feel more motivated when they are enjoying their work and their environment.

Stay tuned to all things CSR at Power NI at: [powerni.co.uk/community](https://powerni.co.uk/community)





## Aoife Clements, Founder of 50:50NI

 [5050ni.com](http://5050ni.com)

 [5050ni](https://www.facebook.com/5050ni)

 [5050.ni](https://www.instagram.com/5050.ni)

 [5050NI](https://twitter.com/5050NI)

After completing her BA in Anthropology and Law, Aoife Clements undertook an MA in Anthropology at Durham university. During this academic career Aoife developed a passion for women's rights and feminist approaches to politics and the Law. Following this passion Aoife completed a traineeship at the European Parliament and eventually joined the women's rights team at ActionAid Ireland.

In 2020 Aoife began working on 50:50 NI, a non-profit organisation that aims to get more women into politics in Northern Ireland. The 50:50 NI mission is to embrace gender equality in politics. The organisation aims to be a catalyst and an inspiration for women to get involved in politics, to equip them with valuable knowledge, skills, and confidence necessary to enter the political sphere. 50:50 NI aspires to connect and empower girls and women via support, advocacy, and workshops. Aoife believes that this will guide and inspire more women to stand for election and get involved in political democracy!

To kick start this mission 50:50 NI will be launching training workshops designed to encourage and empower women who want to get into politics in Northern Ireland this year – so keep an eye out for this on the 50:50 NI website: [www.5050ni.com](http://www.5050ni.com)! Alongside this great work, Aoife will soon begin her PhD at Queen's University School of Law while she continues to grow 50:50 NI and work towards gender parity in Northern Irish politics.



## Gillian McKee, Director of Giraffe Associates

 [giraffeassociates.com](http://giraffeassociates.com)

 [gillian@giraffeassociates.com](mailto:gillian@giraffeassociates.com)

Setting up her own business was a decision Gillian grappled with for a long time before taking the plunge. In January 2019, she promised herself she'd do it before the year was out and in November that year, she left her role as Deputy Managing Director at Business in the Community (BITC) to set up GIRAFFE Associates Ltd.

The company is designed around Gillian's extensive experience of helping companies understand and embrace CSR (corporate social responsibility) and sustainability as central to how they do business.

Gillian explains how the business has developed so far. "I'll be honest, when I left BITC after 20+ years, I didn't have a clear picture of what my business would look like. I knew what I wanted to do, but I didn't know if there was a market for the skills and experience I had to offer. When the pandemic kicked in after four months, I did worry that I'd made a mistake with my timing as businesses were initially focused on survival and getting through the crisis and not the bigger sustainability picture. Now, things are quite different. The drive for companies to embrace sustainability has increased substantially over the past year, exacerbated by Covid and the need to Build Back Better."

"So, after that initial blip, it seems my timing was spot on. I've built a strong client base supporting and advising companies large and small on anything from the basics of 'where do we start?' to developing a full sustainability strategy, to reporting to the GRI Sustainability Standard, to seeking B Corp accreditation. I've been taking every opportunity to improve my skills and gain professional qualifications that will help me stay a step ahead in what is a hugely dynamic marketplace."

"With COP 26 happening in the UK in November, the spotlight is firmly on sustainability and companies are eager to pledge to reduce their carbon emissions. We're on a hugely important journey which will see businesses having to transform to survive and GIRAFFE Associates is here to help them stand tall on that journey and do the right thing."



# Belfast Met Support for Business



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& Social Inclusion



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The innovation levels within my art practice are through the roof. I have been able to take a traditional artform and develop digital services, all whilst working remotely.”

Jamie Harper, Jamie Harper Art



By collaborating with Belfast Met we found support in multiple areas that has been able to build momentum and achieve results faster than we expected.”

Ian Richardson, Street Dock



The Skills Focus programme was an invaluable opportunity for our staff and for the business. The upskilling has led to increased confidence across the team.”

Laura Slevin, Flex Language Services

**Find out more about how Belfast Met can support your Business**



**cedsi@belfastmet.ac.uk**



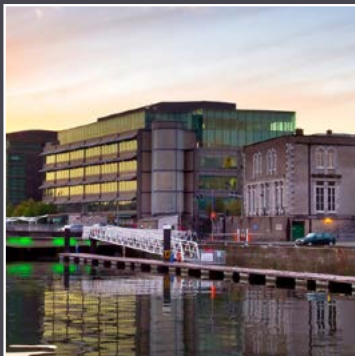
**028 9026 5069**

Eligibility criteria applies.\*



## Experience of the Past, Space for the Future

This year marks Glandore's 20<sup>th</sup> year in business as one of Ireland's leading providers of flexible workspace. Throughout this time, we have provided a space to land and expand in Dublin, Cork and Belfast for some of the most successful domestic and International businesses across the island of Ireland, and we are extremely proud to have been a part of their success. We sincerely thank our members, alumni, business partners and suppliers for supporting Glandore's growth over the past 20 years and look forward to prosperous times ahead for all.



📍 Cork



📍 Dublin



📍 Belfast

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