

MAKING AN





The WiB Group in Numbers

4

social enterprises

120

events and programmes per year

7

conferences and awards per year

36,000

women supported in their business journeys

250,000

in the community

200

employers committed to EDI progress

15,000

hours of mentoring at Centre of Learning

£1m

per year in support of women entrepreneurs

1st

job board exclusively promoting fully flexible roles in NI

Roseann Kelly MBE

The WiB Group CEO



For 22 years and counting, The WiB Group has delivered for thousands of women through networking events, best-in-class conferences and bespoke training programmes. Today, the Group umbrella now spans the delivery of diversity accreditations across the UK and Ireland, not to mention support and training to better equip women returning to the workforce.

The numbers speak for themselves.

But the question which drives us is always: 'to what end?'. For The WiB Group, an inclusive, prosperous economy for Northern Ireland is our collective North Star – a guiding light with which to direct our day-to-day activity across all four social enterprises to ensure maximum impact. Impact in the form of positive change within our society and local economy.

A self-sustaining charity, The WiB Group has cemented a reputation of excellence over the past two decades, leading from the front on the issues of the day. As the figures demonstrate, we continue to contribute massively

to the Northern Ireland economy, empowered by an incredible roster of partners and sponsors who enable our teams to deliver the events, the programmes, the mentoring, the accreditation, and so much more.

The WiB Group: Making an Impact is the first report of its kind that will focus squarely on what our work has achieved for our women, for inclusion, for our economy and, ultimately, our society. Producing this report on an annual basis, we will paint a clear picture of The WiB Group's contribution in our collective quest to building an economy defined by inclusion and prosperity.

Plus, in documenting our impact, we are holding ourselves accountable to the goals we're working to achieve and hope to open the door for new partners wanting to get involved.

Collaboration is central to the Group's strategy. Across our four social enterprises, we are pushing forward on the frontiers of flexible working and EDI, helping to set a gold standard for companies wanting to transform their workplace for the better.

Our team is hard at work on maximising impact, as you'll see in the pages to follow.

With this being the first Impact Report, we very much welcome your thoughts and feedback.



Roseann Kelly MBE
The WiB Group CEO
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Lorraine Acheson

Managing Director of Women in Business and Deputy CEO of The WiB Group

Women in Business is a network like no other. Powered and inspired by its 10,000+ members, the founding arm of The WiB Group began 2024 on the front foot.

Impact in the form of industry-leading events that foster valuable connections all the while providing essential resources for personal and professional growth of women at all stages of their career.

We know full well the potential of enhancing women's contribution to the economy – £250 billion, in fact, according to the Women-Led High-Growth Enterprise Taskforce who highlight said economic boon can be uncovered if women started and scaled businesses to the same extent as men.

Of that £250 billion figure, it's **estimated £7bn would contribute directly to the economy here**, which

would further bolster Northern Ireland at a time when the local economy is expected to be the fastest growing UK region outside London for 2024, according to analysis by PwC.

Networking and connection remain key components of the Women in Business DNA. Back in January, for instance, we hosted the Multicultural Women's Network Event together with Diversity Mark to foster confidence across cultures, while our ongoing Young Women's Network is actively inspiring and equipping the women leaders of tomorrow.

Women in Business is doing all this with so much more planned for the future. Get involved today.



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Women in Business has given me a sense of self-identity regarding being a woman in business. For some time now, I have suffered from imposter syndrome regarding being a business owner and not feeling like it was truly part of my identity. I have felt included and empowered by Women in Business, from both the team and the other members. I love seeing how all of these women are so successful while holding other social titles (parent, wife, caretaker, etc.) and it has given me the confidence and reassurance that I belong with this group of women.

– Women in Business member



"I have gone from being a bit afraid of investment to actively seeking investment."

– Grow It All-Island participant



Connection & Networking

Delivered **35** events across Northern Ireland for over

3500 individuals



"I find the networking events really useful, no other organisation does built-in networking like Women in Business. As an introvert I have to be pushed out of my comfort zone to introduce and talk to new people and I've made so many great connections through Women in Business events."

– Women in Business member



Accelerating NI's Women in Tech

Inspired and empowered 600+ in the local tech sector since January through our 7th Women in Tech conference and 3rd Women in Tech Awards, two annual milestones which are critical in not only showcasing the contribution that women make to the NI economy, but propelling their impact. Our work in the tech field also comprises Women in Tech connect meet-ups, breaking down longstanding gender barriers that still exist within the sector.

Research stats:

15–20m

People working in the UK's technology sector in 2023

26%

are women (19% in 2019)

5%

of leadership positions are held by women, research by the Home Office DDaT Women in Tech has shown.



Supporting Women to Start and Grow Businesses

We have delivered the first All-Island Business Growth programme.

Over **90%** of businesses forecast growth in turnover in the next 12 months.

This programme aims to create cross-bordereconomic impact, increase sales, expand into new markets and create employment.

Over 90% of businesses forecast growth in turnover in the next 12 months.

154

We have supported 154 women across NI to start and grow their businesses through five tailored programmes, from pre-start to growth. This comprehensive support empowers women to achieve their business goals.

Christine White

Director, Diversity Mark



When I look back to 2018 when I first joined Diversity Mark, we had four independent assessors and a handful of pioneering signatory organisations. Fast forward nearly seven years, we now have a robust and dedicated team, and a **valued group of 17 independent assessors** – each bringing a wealth of expertise to ensure the high standards of our assessment processes.

With 200 organisations representing over 200,000 employees, Diversity Mark proudly represents 25% of Northern Ireland’s workforce – this means that **1 in 4 people work for an employer** that has joined us in building a diverse and inclusive workforce to benefit everyone.

The bottom-line benefits have long been proven, too. In its EDI study, McKinsey found that companies with the most diverse executive teams are **39% more likely to outperform their peers on profitability**.

It’s also become something of a deciding factor for employees, with Glassdoor reporting that **76% of job**

seekers noting a diverse workforce as a critical element when evaluating their prospects.

Which is why we’re continuing to push forward the EDI agenda – from action to impact. Across Diversity Mark and the wider WiB Group, we continue to work with and support workplaces across Northern Ireland to increase understanding within communities, as we collectively work to create an inclusive society where all cultures and identities are not only supported, but celebrated for who they are.

Looking to the months ahead and after October’s successful Annual Diversity Mark Summit EDI 2.0, our dedicated support sessions and EDI Leaders Forum are just a few highlights of Diversity Mark’s busy and exciting calendar for the remainder of the year.



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Impact Moments

Tailored EDI training delivered in partnership with the Centre of Learning

BITC NI Partnership – EDI Leaders Forum and recent launch of monthly ‘Inclusive Insights’ virtual events

Danske Bank recently became the second company ever to be awarded the Gold Diversity Mark



“The impact that the Diversity Mark accreditation has had on our organisation has been truly transformational.”

– Fiona McGilly, Chief People Officer, First Derivative

200

employers engaged

17

Independent Assessors

1 in 4
people in NI

Over 25% of Northern Ireland’s workforce employed by organisations committed to Diversity Mark

Did you know?

the most diverse executive teams are

39%

more likely to outperform their peers on profitability.



“We have had it acknowledged that the Diversity Mark accreditation has been one of the things that candidates look for when applying for a job at Fscm”

– Jill Michael, HR Director, Fscm





a part of **W** The **WiB** Group

Laura Dowie

Director, Timely Careers



Timely Careers is not just a social enterprise; it's a movement. We are dedicated to empowering women returners and those in need of flexible working arrangements, offering not just viable career opportunities, but a supportive community, employability tools and dedicated resources to help them thrive in their professional lives.

Returning to work after a break can be daunting, laden with challenges and anxiety. We recognise that life is not linear, and nor are careers. It's our mission to support those who need flexibility, ensuring that the talented workforce of Northern Ireland can seamlessly reintegrate into careers tailored to their needs and aspirations.

The statistics speak volumes: If women in Northern Ireland were engaged in the workforce at the same rate as their counterparts in London, it would contribute a staggering £1.7bn to our economy. Yet, an often rigid, outdated Monday-to-Friday model fails to accommodate the diverse needs of today's workforce. It's time for a paradigm shift.

Through Timely Careers we have supported 200 candidates through careers and employability coaching over the past six months. A further 1,700 candidates have been able to access online coaching, training and resources dedicated to supporting their return to work and to upskill.

With 87% of women leaving full-time roles within three years of having children, we cannot afford to overlook this immense talent pool. By embracing flexibility and valuing caregiving commitments, we can not only retain valuable talent but foster a more inclusive and prosperous economy for all.

Timely Careers isn't just about filling roles; it's about revolutionising the way businesses operate. We're unlocking a unique talent pool for employers, one that brings significant value and impact. Flexible working isn't just a perk; it's a strategic advantage. Studies show that it leads to higher engagement, greater diversity and increased productivity—all of which directly contribute to improved financial performance for businesses.

We invite you to join us on this journey for lasting change and impact.

L. Dowie

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Supported

200

candidates through careers and employability coaching



A further

1,700

candidates accessing online coaching and training

140

decision makers attended bespoke employer focused events

decision makers from a diverse range of organisations across Northern Ireland attended bespoke employer focused events facilitated by Timely Careers. This is helping to move the needle of what flexible working can look like, and an emergence of new ways of working across NI's organisations.



Over the same six months, **100%** of candidates who have attended Timely Careers' events, or have engaged with online coaching and training, have successfully:



updated their CV



increased professional confidence



lessened anxiety when applying for jobs



"I cannot recommend Timely Careers enough. The support, training, masterclasses, and work they do as a team is above and beyond. As a mother of two young children returning to work whilst seeking a greater work-life balance to care for my children, I have been fully supported with regular updates, training, support materials for interview, online career progression support and networking/connecting with the right people in order for me to return to work. The quality of training materials and employability tools is superb."

- Timely Careers Testimonial



Denise Black

Director, Centre of Learning



What attracted me to Centre of Learning and indeed the wider Group was its unapologetic focus on creating opportunities for women to optimise their talents. This culminated with real pride in us, as a team, formally launching Centre of Learning on 18th April of this year as the fourth social enterprise within The WiB Group.

A consistent theme in feedback we've received at Centre of Learning is that fostering gender equity requires collaborative efforts from all genders if we are to cultivate the inclusive prosperous economy that is in everyone's best interest. Because make no mistake, there is still work to be done.

While we have seen progress over the last number of years, we don't yet have a fully inclusive workforce driving the economy. In fact, a Chartered Management Institute report last year highlighted that **fewer than half (41%) of management roles in the UK workplace are held by women.**

For Centre of Learning, this is our north star. Our new and bespoke training programmes, workshops

and mentorship opportunities have since 2019 **empowered more than 4,000 women**, helping to upscale the number who go on to secure leadership roles.

Equally, we want to invite men to the table to both listen, enlighten and engage men as allies in this transformative journey. By promoting understanding, support and active participation from our male colleagues, we have developed programmes to help organisations break down longstanding barriers we know are still there.

Consistent feedback tells us that our Centre of Learning programmes empower delegates to develop their skills, build valuable networks and achieve professional and personal growth. We are proud to help create a dynamic, innovative workforce who in turn, will help drive economic growth and shared success for all.

Denise Black

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In the past six months we have delivered

14
programmes

245
delegates receiving opportunities to learn, connect and grow

200+
hours of mentoring

More than
4000
women supported to date

“It was fantastic! It was such a great opportunity to connect and build a supportive network with other females here in Northern Ireland. It was such a thought-provoking session where I have gained such an insight into so many areas and tips on how to improve. It has undoubtedly helped me to understand my own personal values and motivations. One of the best programmes I've had the pleasure of being involved in and would definitely recommend.”

- Centre of Learning Testimonial



“The mentoring programme is fantastic. My mentor has a mountain of invaluable knowledge and is great to bounce ideas off. I can't believe it has been 9 months already. I couldn't have been placed with a better mentor, definitely a great fit.”



Partner Testimonials



Since we began working with Women in Business in 2014 we have been able to draw on their support, consultancy and advice in delivering on our growth strategy here in Northern Ireland. They have given us invaluable guidance and support across a wide range of business aspects such as growing diverse talent pools, networking opportunities and helping to develop our branding in the region.

Our collaboration with Women in Business spans the annual Women in Tech Awards which serve to recognise and indeed champion the incredible talent we have here within Northern Ireland's tech sector.

– Lorna McAdoo, Version 1



For over 7 years Danske Bank has been working with Women in Business NI. During that time The WiB Group has extended the range of expertise to include not only Gender but Diversity Mark and Timely Careers amongst initiatives and expertise. Working with them has helped give the Bank a strategic advantage by partnering with a respected organisation dedicated to advancing diversity, equality, and inclusion.

Partnering with them has accelerated our progress as an advocate for diversity, helped us attract diverse talent, and provided measurement, guidance, and accreditation around DEI. This collaboration has helped us foster an inclusive workplace, focussed on driving innovation and improving overall business performance and contributed to Danske Bank being a great place to work.

– Caroline Margaret van der Feltz
Danske Bank



Queen's University Belfast is proud to be an educational partner of Women in Business for over 12 years.

Higher education collaboration with Women in Business is vital for fostering an inclusive and dynamic entrepreneurial ecosystem in Northern Ireland. Such partnerships provide women with access to valuable academic resources, cutting-edge research, and mentorship opportunities.

The University, in turn, benefits from the real-world insights and experiences that these business women bring, enriching the academic environment and bridging the gap between academia and industry. Moreover, these collaborations promote diversity in leadership, inspire the next generation of female entrepreneurs, and help to dismantle systemic barriers in the workplace.

– Professor Sir Ian Greer, Vice
Chancellor at Queen's University
Belfast



The WiB Group have been a key partner of NIE Networks in supporting and developing our female talent for many years. Through the Centre for Learning the quality of training delivered has without doubt enriched our female employees and given them practical, relatable tools to develop themselves which in turn ensures they deliver for the business.

The breadth of networking and mentoring opportunities have helped develop our females confidence and opened many doors to be able to collaborate with others. Diversity Mark gave us the framework to really drive change and ensure D&I is at the core of who we are.

We would recommend any business looks at what The WiB Group offer in support of developing your female talent.

– Paula Leathem, NIE Networks



Nichola Robinson

The WiB Group Chair



Within each of these organisations are teams making tangible impact day in, day out.

Our pursuit of an economy built on the pillars of inclusion and prosperity is ingrained into the very DNA of our four social enterprises: Women in Business, Diversity Mark, Timely Careers and the Centre of Learning.

As you will have seen illustrated on previous pages, within each of these organisations are teams making tangible impact day in, day out. Their momentum inspires one and other, like four interlocking gears collectively powering The WiB Group.

Our leaders are well poised to navigate a business landscape where the pace of change has accelerated greatly, fuelled by emergent technologies in an increasingly complex world.

But in change lies opportunity. An opportunity to lead and to learn in new ways. To collaborate with like-minded organisations to further

bolster both the innovation and impact of The WiB Group and its work for all society.

That's what we mean when we say 'inclusive economy'. The opportunities we create, the stability we sow – it's for everyone. For people from all walks of life who can bring unique skills and lived experiences that ultimately promote a more equitable culture in which innovation can thrive.

The WiB Group: Making An Impact serves as an annual benchmark on this collective journey, as we set out to impact positive change within our society and local economy for 21 years more.

Nichola Robinson
The WiB Group Chair



The WiB Group Partners

Women in Business Partners:



Diversity Mark Founding Partners:



Timely Careers Founding Partners:



Centre of Learning Partners:





The **WiB** Group



Get Involved

Making an Impact

Women in Business

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Diversity Mark

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Timely Careers

Email: info@timelycareers.com



Centre of Learning

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