



Women in Business
Awards 2026



Gala Awards Programme

THURSDAY 12TH MARCH 2026

Message from our Chair



It is my great honour as the newly appointed Chair of The WiB Group to welcome you to the 2026 Women in Business Awards.

Firstly, let me begin by extending a warm congratulations to all our finalists joining us this evening at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. The team leaders and the business owners, the apprentices and the entrepreneurs. The innovation and resilience shown by each and every one of you has been nothing short of outstanding, and tonight we celebrate your positive impact on not just the local business ecosystem, but the wider Northern Ireland economy.

A sincere thank you to our Awards sponsors, in particular our title sponsor, Virgin Media O2 Business, whose long-running support makes tonight possible as this showpiece event enters its 14th year.

Now a fixture on the business calendar, the calibre of award entries remains as strong as ever, which left our eight-strong judging panel with some very difficult decisions to make when creating the exceptional shortlist that you see before you. It is a shortlist rich with diversity not just in the roles represented, but also the number of industries from right across the region ensuring this year's nominees represent the very best of local talent.

Stepping into this new role as Chair, I look forward to working closely with the Board and wider team to accelerate the Women in Business mission: create an inclusive, prosperous economy for Northern Ireland and, in so doing, enabling change that is long-lasting so the leadership of today inspires the success of tomorrow.

Here's to the 2026 Women in Business finalists. Congratulations on reaching this stage and on your remarkable achievements to date. On behalf of the Women in Business team, I hope you enjoy a memorable and inspiring evening of celebrating Northern Ireland's best in the business.



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'A. Moore'.

Angela Moore
Chair of The WiB Group

A Look at the Evening Ahead



18:30 Drinks Reception

19:20 Call to Dinner

19:40 Welcome from Awards Host | Pamela Ballantine MBE

Sponsor and Special Guests' Speeches

19:55 Entertainment | Kristine Mills & Band

20:10 Dinner Commences

21:55 Raffle Draw

22:00 Awards Ceremony

23:15 Post-Awards Entertainment

01:00 Carriages

Meet the Finalists



Each profile offers a glimpse into the dedication, ambition and achievements that define this year's exceptional finalists.

As you explore their stories, take note of the finalists you'd like to connect with throughout the evening. Check their table number on the seating plan and be sure to stop by to introduce yourself.

If you don't manage to catch them in the room, follow up online or arrange a conversation afterwards - every introduction opens a new door.

Capture your moments and tag @womeninbusinessni so we can celebrate with you online.



Advancing Diversity and Inclusion Champion | Individual

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Diane Davis | Minority Recognition Awards NI

A pioneering, fully volunteer-led platform dedicated to celebrating and elevating minority ethnic talent across Northern Ireland.

Emma Gilmour | Pathfinder Accessibility

Offering consultancy and training for both technical and non-technical teams, helping organisations understand accessibility, embed sustainable processes, carry out audits, run workshops and develop resource groups.

Jennifer Smyth | Jenn's Gym

A community-focused charity gym supporting people with neurological conditions and disabilities - the only one of its kind in Northern Ireland.

Ruth Maguire | The Nourish Consultancy

Supporting employers to better include and retain breastfeeding and infant-feeding parents by bridging the gap between public health knowledge, lived experience and workplace practice.



Advancing Diversity and Inclusion Champion | Corporate

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Adepta Partners | Claire Nixon

A boutique recruitment agency servicing the NI technology market, founded in June 2024 by Claire Nixon.

Aflac NI | Catherine McCourt

Catherine is Director of Engineering at Aflac NI and brings almost two decades of experience leading technical teams across diverse technologies and business areas.

Cleaver Fulton Rankin

A leading commercial law firm in Northern Ireland with over 130 years of heritage. As a responsible employer, the firm is committed to nurturing a culture that is diverse, inclusive and supportive.

Fujitsu | Liz Morrison

Liz has worked within the School Engagement team for three years while also serving as a Wellbeing Champion, going above and beyond to create a more inclusive, supportive workplace.

HSC BSO | Claire Hamilton

Claire has managed her team since 2015. Commissioned by the Department of Health, the service provides region-wide 24/7 interpreting support for HSC services and patients across Northern Ireland.

Apprentice of the Year

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VANRATH

Alannah Cunningham | MJM Marine

A Higher Level Apprenticeship Designer developing technical skills while contributing to live marine interior projects.

Eimear Morrison | Fujitsu Services Ltd

A standout Level 6 Software Development Apprentice who shows resilience in a male-dominated field.

Gizelle D'lima | Survitec Group Ltd

A graduate entrant taking on specialised, high-responsibility Treasury work within Survitec's global financial operations.

Katie McCosh | NIE Networks

A dedicated Planning Apprentice applying strong technical and practical skills to key energy sector projects.

Leah Rea | KPMG

An Audit apprentice recognised for her curiosity, motivation and growth mindset, quickly making a positive impact.

Sarah Lyle | Cleaver Fulton Rankin

A driven second-year trainee solicitor demonstrating ambition, professionalism and strong commitment to development.

Seánná Maginn | Water Solutions Ireland

A committed Site Engineer contributing to complex wastewater infrastructure projects in a multidisciplinary environment.



Best New Start Up

Sponsored by:



Aisling Brady | AB Mortgage & Protection Services

A client-focused mortgage and protection adviser offering clear, personalised guidance for buyers, homeowners and investors across NI and the UK.

Donna & Patrice Mackle | Twin Secret

Twin-founded beauty brand creating a clean-conscious, ammonia and PPD-free brow tint for sensitive skin, bringing professional, affordable brow care into the home.

Gliosa Moore | Glow Up NI Ltd

A women-only gym built to provide a safe, supportive and empowering fitness space, growing to 600 members in eight months and offering classes, training, wellbeing and holistic services.

Lee-Anne Schmitz | MyPromoPal Ltd

A free mobile app offering complimentary drinks to consumers while delivering data-driven sampling campaigns; launched in February 2025 with £100,000 revenue and 10,000 downloads.

Louise Keenan Clarke | Succeed with Confidence Limited

Supporting senior professionals and entrepreneurs to become confident communicators, drawing on 21 years in global banking and 25 years coaching to help women build strong communication and leadership presence.

Customer Excellence Award | Small Business

Sponsored by:



Clare McGoran | Used Cars NI

Clare is Dealer Success Manager at Northern Ireland's leading digital automotive marketplace. With over 15 years' experience in the motor trade, she drives improvements in customer satisfaction, retention and overall business performance.

Eimear Gourley | NI Property Girl

A woman-led property investment business offering a calm, transparent experience for investors. Eimear and her 8-person team manage the full journey - from sourcing to renovation to letting - delivering a seamless, clarity-driven service.

Ormeau Labs Team | Ormeau Labs

The Ormeau Labs team - Amy, Emma and Rosy - have built a customer-first organisation recognised for excellence, innovation and community impact. Their collaborative leadership ensures thoughtful, responsive and value-driven customer experiences, strengthening relationships and consistently elevating service quality.

Shannon McCloskey | One Step at a Time – Mental Health & Wellbeing

A former primary school teacher, Shannon founded a preventative mental health organisation for children, teenagers and parents. Her trauma-informed, evidence-based programmes equip young people with lifelong wellbeing skills, providing safe, supportive spaces for those not reached by traditional services.



Customer Excellence Award | Corporate

Sponsored by:



Brigid Derry | Derry Bros Shipping & Customs Clearance

CEO since 2005, Brigid has grown Derry Bros into a leading shipping and customs specialist across NI, GB, Ireland and the EU, driving innovation through technology and expert support for post-Brexit trade.

Ciara Connolly | Direct Medics

Ciara is a team leader at Direct Medics, a specialist healthcare recruitment agency, known for her strong operational expertise and people-centred approach that enhances client and candidate outcomes.

Maire Claire Reid | TST Group

As Managing Director, Maire Claire leads a multi-site logistics operation across the UK and Ireland, embedding customer excellence into systems and culture to strengthen reliability and long-term partnerships.

Marie Wilson | Wilson Nesbitt

Marie is a Solicitor in Wilson Nesbitt's Residential Property team. Since starting her legal career in 2021, she has specialised in sales and purchases and is recognised for exceptional client service.

Natasha Crooks | NIE Networks Limited

Natasha leads NIE Networks' vulnerable customer team and played a critical role during the organisation's worst storm, ensuring at-risk customers were supported through major outages and driving ongoing service improvements.

Innovation in Business Award

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Corporate Finalists

Anne-Marie Norton | Direct Medics

Co-founder of Direct Medics, leading with empathy and driving innovation in healthcare recruitment.

Nicola Magennis | First Derivative

Global Practice Lead driving financial-crime strategy and leading next-generation KYC innovation.

Small Business Finalists

Adrienne Hanna | Right Revenue

Founder of software for independent hotels that simplifies pricing, eases commercial decision-making and makes modern revenue technology accessible.

Bernadette Hagans | Wrapsthetic

Co-founder of Wrapsthetic, making customisable prosthetics and mobility aids accessible worldwide.

Juliet Bakovljević | The Arzen Collective

Founder of a growing wellness ecosystem blending medical and holistic care, supported by AI-powered guidance.

Lisa Smiton | Equine Safety Release

Founder developing technology and education to improve horse-transport and rescue safety.

Sarah Scullion | CAST Planning Ltd

Co-founder delivering a digital platform that automates and improves underground infrastructure risk management.

Mentor of the Year

Sponsored by:



Darragh Doherty | Encirc

Darragh champions equality in a traditionally male-dominated industry, mentoring and supporting female engineers and apprentices while helping build a more inclusive, progressive workplace at Encirc.

John Ferris | NatWest

John is an influential mentor whose support has transformed the journeys of hundreds of entrepreneurs. His guidance and connections have helped founders secure major investment, funding and commercial opportunities.

Kim Coulter | KPMG

Kim has spent 16 years mentoring early-career talent at KPMG, offering clarity, challenge and support to apprentices and graduates, strengthening both culture and client outcomes.

Maria McAllister | Bank of Ireland UK

With 25 years at BOI, Maria enables the UK CEO Office and supports colleagues across the business, known for her empathetic leadership and guidance through professional and personal challenges.

María Moreno Diez | Fibrus Group Ltd

María leads Talent & Development at Fibrus, designing mentoring programmes and driving people-focused growth, empowering staff to build confidence, capability and career progression.

Orla Lynch | Founders Lab

Orla leads Founders Lab with experience-driven, high-energy leadership, pushing founders to set goals and guiding them through the accelerator's first cohort.

Professional Services Excellence Award | Corporate

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Brigid Derry | Derry Bros Shipping & Customs Clearance

CEO since 2005, Brigid has grown Derry Bros into a leading shipping and customs specialist across NI, GB, Ireland and the EU, driving innovation through technology and expert support for post-Brexit trade.

Donna Vance | NUGENT Ltd

Donna, with 20+ years' engineering experience, is Specialist Works Business Unit Manager, delivering complex MEP projects and consistently exceeding client expectations.

Leah McFadden | First Derivative

Leah is a Delivery Manager known for outstanding client delivery, leadership and strategic impact across key First Derivative accounts.

Natasha Adamson | Adamson Rice Law (NI) Ltd

Natasha is an award-winning property solicitor and co-founder of Adamson Rice Law, known for her solicitor-led model, exceptional service and strong client trust.

Sinead Stewart | Cleaver Fulton Rankin

Sinead is a Banking & Finance Director with 19+ years' experience advising lenders on major finance transactions, also leading trainee recruitment and development.



Professional Services Excellence Award | Small Business

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April Rose | April Rose Marketing

Founded in 2024 during her placement year, supporting SMEs with social, SEO, content and web design, and already working with over 40 clients while studying full-time.

Kathleen Faloon | Curve Training & Consultancy

Kathleen leads business development and training at Curve, designing workforce, competency and apprenticeship programmes for NI's rail network and wider industry.

Katrina McCarthy | New Beginnings Scan

NI's first midwife-led diagnostic ultrasound service, offering pregnancy, women's health and fertility scans supported by secure digital imaging and fast lab results.

Mabel Higgins | MH Fire Safety Ltd

Mabel leads a rapidly growing, accredited fire engineering consultancy operating UK-wide, expanding services, team and project scope since 2018.

Maire Nawaz | Become More

Maire is Founder of Become More, delivering high-impact leadership and performance programmes for senior teams across multiple sectors.

Olga McAteer | McAteer Solutions Ltd

Olga leads one of NI's fastest-growing female-led estate agencies, now with five offices and rapid expansion into NI and London markets.

Small Business of the Year

Sponsored by:



Wilson Nesbitt



Caoimhe McGlade | C No Dirt Cleaning Services

Founder of C No Dirt Cleaning Services, growing a strong, reputation-led cleaning business built on quality and resilience.

Colette McNicholl | McNicholl Caravans

Leader of a multigenerational, women-led business operating seven award-winning holiday parks known for exceptional customer care.

Eimear Gourley | NI Property Girl

A fast-growing property brokerage offering sourcing, renovation and lettings, supported by an eight-person team and 75,000 followers.

Grace Smith | Forge Female Fitness

Named UK Ladies Gym of the Year 2025, transforming the lives of over 4,000 women through evidence-based coaching.

Lee-Anne Schmitz | MyPromoPal Ltd

A sampling app offering free drinks and data-driven brand campaigns, reaching £100k revenue and 10,000 downloads since 2025.

Olga McAteer | McAteer Solutions Ltd

One of NI's fastest-growing female-led estate agencies, expanding to five offices and ranking in the top 10% of listing agents in 2025.

Sarah Thompson | Tedberry Limited

Founder of Tedberry Market, now attracting 18,000 visitors annually and supporting 300 independent businesses with nearly £1m local economic impact.

Growth & Scaling Business of the Year

Sponsored by:

Danske Bank



Anne-Marie Norton | Direct Medics

A care-driven, high-quality healthcare recruitment agency with a strong culture and sustained growth.

Ashleigh Averell | Ibrand Everything

A scaling manufacturing and branding business exporting across the UK, Ireland and internationally, with a focus on innovation and sustainable growth.

Helen Jameson | Express Merchants

A fast-growing NI procurement technology company transforming how FM organisations source materials.

Louise Doyle | needi

A tech-enabled corporate gifting platform serving 150+ major clients with sustainable, meaningful and waste-reducing gifting solutions.

Mabel Higgins | MH Fire Safety Ltd

An accredited fire engineering consultancy delivering compliant, innovative solutions across the UK and Ireland.

Maire Claire Reid | TST Group

Maire Claire scales the major logistics and supply chain business with 400+ staff and 1.5m sq ft of warehousing across NI, Ireland and the UK.

Marie Therese Connolly | Screen Clinical

Leads Screen Clinical's expansion from small NI contracts to a UK-wide clinical pharmacy provider, championing women's progression and delivering scalable healthcare solutions.

Transformational Leader of the Year | Small Business

Sponsored by:



Aislín Cathcart | Adoreboard Ltd

With a background in tech consulting and digital transformation, she champions people-first leadership and has helped position Adoreboard as a global EmotionAI innovator.

Diane Koplewsky | SHG NI Limited

Diane is Founder of Sleepy Hollow Group, one of NI's largest childcare providers with 180 staff across 38 settings. She champions workforce progression and advocates for childcare as essential economic infrastructure.

Joanne Harris | Knitted Knockers of NI

Providing free hand-knitted prosthetics and support for breast cancer survivors. She has since created multiple community initiatives supporting women's wellbeing and recovery.

Kathryn Donnelly | Clickclick Video Marketing Ltd

Kathryn leads Clickclick with a remote-first, neuro-inclusive model that boosts efficiency and creativity. Her systems-driven approach has enabled the small team to deliver for global brands and secure Invest NI growth funding.



Transformational Leader of the Year | Corporate

Sponsored by:

IO.&Co



Anne-Marie Norton | Direct Medics

A people-centred leader fostering innovation, collaboration and a culture grounded in care.

Bridgene Keeley | McKeever Hotels

Rising from housekeeping to senior leadership, she now drives innovation, sustainability and team development across the family hotel group.

Claire McBride | Fujitsu Services Ltd

Communications and Social Value Manager, central to securing the UK's first Level 3 Take 5 accreditation and delivering impactful community partnerships.

Elaine Toner | Eakin Healthcare

Head of Global Marketing, shaping international brand strategy and leading bold innovation to support ostomates worldwide.

Gráinne McCartan | NIFRS

Head of Organisational Development, leading leadership programmes, performance, coaching, e-learning, engagement and culture across 2,000 staff.

Loreen Nicholl | Nicholl Fuel Oils Ltd

Leader of a major independent fuel supplier expanding depots, forecourts and renewable offerings while upholding high service standards.

Melissa Cochrane | BSO (Business Services Organisation)

Head of Programme Delivery overseeing a £400m digital health portfolio and ensuring governance, standards and successful delivery of critical ICT services.

Young Businesswoman of the Year

Sponsored by:



Corporate

Abigail Duffy | Visiting Angels Northern Ireland

Leads Visiting Angels Belfast, delivering fair-pay, dignity-focused home care through one-hour visits.

Eimear Morrison | Fujitsu Services Ltd

High-performing Software Development Apprentice, achieving top results and championing women in tech.

Jessica Gibson | Reward Insight

Principal QA leading quality standards and delivery assurance across major global client programmes.

Jude Cameron | Blow Moulding Technologies

Supports strategy and partnerships at BMT, applying engineering expertise to turn advanced R&D into commercial solutions.

Entrepreneur

Aileen McGuire | Apiphany Jewellery

A jewellery and lifestyle brand that inspires confidence and everyday style.

April Rose | April Rose Marketing

Supporting 40+ small businesses with social media, photography, web design and SEO, while completing a BSc Marketing.

Claire Ford | Viral Muse

Scaling quickly in revenue and team growth, and creator of The Visit List hospitality platform.

Jennifer Smyth | Jenn's Gym

An accessible, charity-run gym offering adapted equipment and support for neurological conditions.

A Special Thank You To...

Aiken PR

Atmosphere Agency

Kristine Mills & Band

Corporate AV Hire

Crowne Plaza Belfast

Dream Media Ireland

Dunadry Hotel & Gardens

Oasis Travel

Pamela Ballantine MBE

plannd

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Menu

STARTER

Wild Mushroom, Leek & Kearney Blue Cheese Arancini

Served on a bed of rocket with a five-spice purée.

MAIN COURSE

Chicken Supreme

With Armagh apple & black pudding sausage stuffing,
apple confit and rock-salted Canarian potato.

Served with champ, carrots, bacon & sprouts, parsnip and
a dijon mustard cream.

DESSERT

Sicilian Lemon Cheesecake

Tea & Coffee

WINES

White | Almorano - Pinot Grigio

Red | Les Aventures - Merlot
