

NORTHERN

# INSIGHT

JANUARY 2020



**IMPACT AND INNOVATION  
ON NORTH TYNESIDE**

business | property | media | technology | education | motors | fashion | arts | leisure

issue 55



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# WHAT HAS THE EU EVER DONE FOR THE NORTH EAST?

## Direct Funding

- ★ Portobello Trade Park in Durham was financed with £2.7m of European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) funding.
- ★ Consett Business Park received £1.1m in ERDF funding.
- ★ The Core Science Central in Newcastle received £5.6m in ERDF funding.
- ★ Refurbishment of Newcastle's Toffee Factory received \$4.4m in ERDF funding.
- ★ Sunderland Software Centre received £4.4m in ERDF funding.
- ★ Washington Business Centre received £3.4m in ERDF funding.
- ★ University of Sunderland received £1.3m to finance graduate placements in local business.
- ★ River Tyne Energy & Innovation Centre received £1m in ERDF funding.
- ★ £7.8m to fund a low carbon enterprise zone at Swan Hunter shipyard at Wallsend.

## Employment

- ★ 100,000 jobs in the region are linked to exports to the EU, which accounts for 58% of NE exports.
- ★ The NE has benefitted from £1.1bn of inward investment for EU members over the last 5 years.

## Tourism

- ★ In 2014, there were 274,000 inbound visits to the NE from EU countries. Tourism contributes £90m to the NE economy and employs around 117,000 people.

## Farming

- ★ From 2007 to 2013, the region received £800m in payments from the EU's Common Agricultural Policy.

## Health

- ★ In March 2019, nearly 1,400 NHS staff in the NE were from the EU, including 7% of hospital doctors, 5% of nurses and health visitors, 2% of clinical support staff and 4% of GP's

## Security

- ★ Through the European Arrest Warrant, 10 people have been brought back to the UK and 110 have been extradited to face justice since 2009.

## Research

- ★ Newcastle University leads a cross-European consortium of an EU funded £4.6m project into liver disease.

## Structural Funding 2007- 2013

- ★ The NE region received £73 per head in European Social Fund funding and £114 per head in European Regional Development Fund funding, more than any other English region.

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## FOREWORD

**Welcome to a fantastic first edition of 2020 of Northern Insight.**

Our cover stars are Barrier Ex who are continuing the North East's long held reputation for innovation in business.

We maintain our standing as the regional leader in event coverage. Amongst some great festive events, look out for the Bradley Lowery Foundation Ball and the Lord's Taverners Christmas lunch.

We also make a return to sample the new menu at the Marco Pierre White Steakhouse at Newcastle's Hotel Indigo.

Look out also for some 2020 fitness tips from our award-winning columnist David Fairlamb.

All in all, a perfect way to start the New Year. Lets hope it is a prosperous one for all of us.

Thank you to all concerned for your fantastic support. Till next month.

*M-J Grahamslaw*  
Michael Grahamslaw, Publisher  
mjgrahamslaw@outlook.com



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## NORTHERN GAS AND POWER SUPPORTS THE SUNSHINE FUND CHRISTMAS APPEAL

Northern Gas and Power has given back to its regional community charities following a record year of sales, including being ranked the North East company with the fastest growth in sales in the prestigious Sunday Times Fast Track 100.

Northern Gas and Power has dedicated significant

donations to several charities across the UK and will donate in excess of £15,000, prioritising those within the communities it works.

The Gateshead Quays based company, part of Global Procurement Group (GPG), has included The Newcastle Chronicle Sunshine Fund Christmas Appeal in its charity initiatives, helping children with disabilities across the North East by funding life-changing specialist equipment. The energy consultancy will donate £5,000.

Andrew Laird, Northern Gas and Power's UK Sales Director, said: "We already support several charities but we wanted to extend that support wider across the region. Supporting people less fortunate is a privileged position to be in. That is why we want to share some of that good fortune and the Sunshine Fund is a great charity to support."



## PRIVATE CLIENT SPECIALIST JOINS SINTONS

Further capability has been added to the specialist wills, trusts and probate team at law firm Sintons through the recruitment of another senior lawyer.

James McMillan becomes an associate at Sintons, having moved from another North East law firm where he built his reputation as a highly regarded specialist in private client work.

James, a member of the Society of Trust and Estate Practitioners (STEP) and a Dementia Friend, brings additional expertise to the Sintons team, which was named private client team of the year at the Northern Law Awards 2019.

James is experienced in all areas of wills, trust and estate work, with particular experience in advising on lifetime planning, tax planning structures and Lasting Powers of Attorney.

The addition of James strengthens the fast-growing department at Sintons even further, with further recruitment planned as the team continues to win new work across the UK.

## PILATES PILOTS THE WAY FORWARD FOR MENTAL HEALTH

A sports therapist has opened a new Pilates studio which is having a marked impact on the mindset and health of her clients.

At school, Beth Brougham was shy and was often bullied for being different. However, Beth's father encouraged her to apply herself to sports and physical exercise and so she studied sports therapy at Newcastle College where she obtained her Degree.

Anxiety and depression still lurked in Beth's life and she developed the eating disorder bulimia. However, she also found a keen interest in Pilates and personal training which helped her to fight her anxiety and depression.

Beth decided to start her own business and set up a small practice in Jesmond named A1 Infinite Performance. The firm took a new turn when an investor helped her to grow the business and find new, larger premises.

Beth's new space is found in the old Trewitt Road School in Heaton. The 5000 square feet building is big enough to carry out multiple classes and therapies and boasts the North East's first aerial Pilates class where participants use hammocks and silks attached to the ceiling.



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## WINNERS OF THE 2019 NORTH EAST BUSINESSWOMEN OF THE YEAR AWARDS ANNOUNCED

Women from across the North East have been celebrated as the winners of the 2019 North East Businesswomen of the Year Awards (WIN) 2019 were recently announced at a glittering dinner at the Grand Hotel, Gosforth Park in Newcastle.

Sophie Milliken, who runs Smart Resourcing Solutions, scooped the prestigious Susan Dobson Award for Entrepreneurship along with the prize for the Best Small Business.

Jill Hudson from Hudson Procurement won the innovation Award whilst WIN's Rising Star prize went to Laura Watson of Crystallised.

The WIN Awards, sponsored by Sage UK, are celebrating their 20th year of highlighting the vision, enterprise and inspirational spirit of women across the region.

Nickie Gott OBE, Chair of WIN Awards, said: "I want to congratulate all the winners of these awards. I am so proud of everyone who took part and are helping to inspire other women in the region."

## NORTH EAST EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR AWARDS 2019

The achievements of the North East's best employees have been royally celebrated at a glittering awards ceremony in Newcastle.

The fourth annual North East Employee of the Year Awards once again rewarded and recognised the hard work, talent and achievements of people working across a wide range of businesses from across the region.

Awards were given out across nine categories including Best Apprentice, Unsung Hero, Team of the Year, the Leadership Award and the new Workplace Wellbeing Award, sponsored by Myndr.

The big winner on the night was Anthony Hunter,



General Manager of Ellingham Hall, who was given the Outstanding Service Award as well as being named as the overall North East Employee of the Year.

Other winners at the celebratory evening included Olivia Prest from Hays Travel, who was named Best Apprentice, and the team at Marmax Products, who were given the Making a Difference award.

## NATIONAL AWARD WIN FOR BEAMISH MUSEUM



Delighted staff and volunteers at Beamish, The Living Museum of the North, are celebrating after winning the Customer Commitment Award

at the British Chambers of Commerce's annual Chamber Business Awards 2019 in London.

Beamish beat off competition from businesses and organisations across the country to win the prestigious award and was the only museum in the country to be shortlisted in any category. The judges praised Beamish for showing excellence and commitment in customer service.

Rhiannon Hiles, Beamish's Deputy Director, said: "We are absolutely delighted that Beamish has won this national award. It's fantastic to be recognised in this way and it's thanks to our amazing staff and volunteers. This success comes as the museum is heading towards a record year for visitor numbers and our £20million Remaking Beamish project is progressing very well, with the recent openings of our 1950s welfare hall and bus depot and lots more to come."

## INVESTMENT AND MAJOR EVENTS PLANNED FOR KARTING NORTH EAST

The new owner of one of the region's leading karting venues has pledged significant investment to make it into one of the best tracks in the UK.

Since recently acquiring Karting North East, Matthew Hunter has identified the sweeping changes he wants to make through his five-year plan for the site. He has already secured several major national events for the venue, predicted to generate in excess of £100,000 each for the local economy.

The 1,200m outdoor track, in Warden Law near Sunderland, is to play host to the British Championships in September 2020, which will attract some of the leading names in global karting.

Matthew, father of world-class karting stars Rhys and Kai Hunter, is planning significant investment in refurbishing the venue's fleet of karts, extending the clubhouse balcony to trackside and introducing new premium catering options. A new function room has also been created to help grow the firm's corporate event and private hire options.

A junior academy is also set to be launched in the near future, with Rhys and Kai playing a leading role in coaching children.



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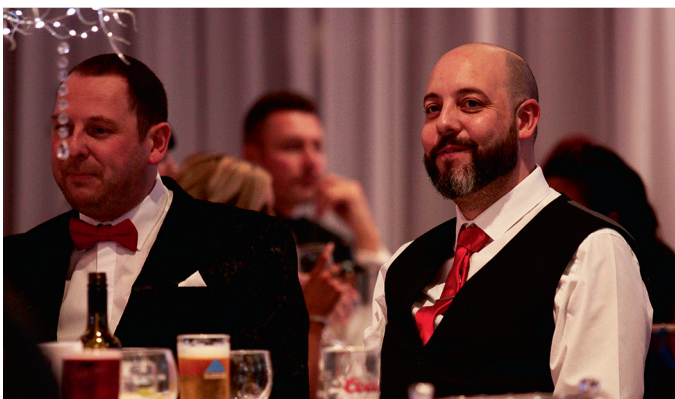
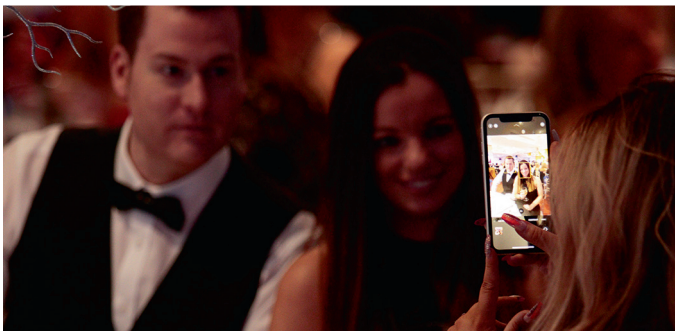




## THE BRADLEY LOWERY FOUNDATION GALA BALL

The Bradley Lowery Foundation would like to thank everyone for attending their 2nd Gala Ball, which was held recently at the Stadium of Light. A special thanks goes to UHY-Torgersens and Morton Group for sponsoring the evening. The event raised in excess of £15,000, which will help the charity support many children around England and Wales who are fundraising for treatment or equipment not readily available on the NHS.

Preparations for the next event are now well underway, and details will be published soon.





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L-R: Tony Oram (Technical Director) and Steven Lee (Managing Director)





Barrier Ex visit to Gulf Region

## IMPACT AND INNOVATION ON NORTH TYNESIDE

The North East has long held a reputation for innovation in business. Barrier Ex are continuing that tradition in a number of fields including with disruptive technologies in the hazardous area market.

Formed in 2016, the company began full trading condition the following year, gaining a global reputation in double quick time. The intervening period was taken up obtaining the relevant certification to enable manufacturing to take place for the highly regulated rail and hazardous area sectors.

The company has already secured some highly significant government grants for various innovation projects and achieved significant recognition for its progress to date. In 2017 the company was named in the prestigious London Stock Exchange publication "1000 Companies to Inspire Britain", in 2018 it won Manufacturer & Construction Business of the Year at the North Tyneside Business Awards and in 2019 it followed this up by winning Newcomer of the Year at the North East Business Awards.

North Tyneside Council has supported Barrier Ex in growing the business since 2016 with advice and funding brokerage.

Thanks to the council's help in developing their proposition, Barrier Ex were successful in receiving Innovate UK grant support.

One of the most recent grant awards came from Innovate UK with Barrier Ex's bid lead by Technical Director Tony Oram. The £700k grant will enable Barrier Ex to continue their work in developing a new floodlight which transmits wireless networking in hazardous areas without the use of Wi-fi, in conjunction with Pure Li-fi, Digital Catapult and Safecility UK. A 26 month project which is novel in design and creation, the system will revolutionise data communication and improve monitoring and efficiency.

The company was also recognised recently for its local community engagement at the 2019 North Tyneside Business Awards, for their work in developing a forward thinking apprenticeship scheme and their work with local causes.

Steve Lee, Managing Director and winner of "Best Boss" at the 2019 "Best Places to Work" Awards says "At Barrier we're conscious of the need to develop our existing team whilst also producing the next crop of talent. We have developed a bespoke apprenticeship programme in conjunction with

Newcastle College and Tyne North Training with a view to offering permanent jobs in the future. Supporting local charitable causes is also an important part of our strategy, and we try and give support wherever we can. We're a North Tyneside company and so it is important to us to give something back to the local community. Additionally, the intention is to donate a percentage of our profits from our hazardous area Quazr and Equinox products to Cancer Research which is a cause very close to our heart.

Barrier Ex came into being through investment from entrepreneur Robert Bowles, a man who is also passionate to give something back to North Tyneside and played the lead role in setting up the company apprenticeship programme. The apprentices are given the opportunity to work in an environment where they gain knowledge of each of the business divisions, cutting edge products and learning from the ground up, which provides them with the opportunity to find their own niche within the company. The input of Robert to the creation of the company, cannot be underestimated and the contribution he has made goes far beyond simple investment, seen by his desire to give back to the community.

To round off 2019, the company received a wonderful invitation to visit the Middle East in December amidst growing interest in their products and services in the Gulf region.

Steve says "It truly was an honour and a privilege to be given the opportunity to meet with His Royal Highness Sheikh Saeed bin Saqr bin Sultan Al-Qasimi, and respected businessman Mr Yahya Kirdi who has business interests and investments in the Gulf region and Canada. We hope that this meeting will mark the beginning of Barrier Ex forming new business links in the Gulf region."

North Tyneside's Elected Mayor Norma Redfearn CBE comments: "We are committed to doing all we can to help businesses in North Tyneside thrive for the benefit of the local economy.

"I am delighted that through our support and advice Barrier Ex continues to grow and go from strength to strength."



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...



## MIKE TULIP

Owner of Mike Tulip Photography

### What were your career ambitions growing up?

At Longbenton High School I loved art and decided to follow a creative path. After seeing a television documentary on graphic designers I decided I knew that was the sector I wanted to work in.

### Tell us about your current role?

I fully established Mike Tulip Photography in 2016. I work in businesses across the country focusing on corporate and lifestyle photography. This includes campaigns, colleagues at work, events and headshots. I use a combination of natural and studio lighting.

### What has been your proudest achievement?

Shooting the Invictus Games in Toronto gave me the opportunity to fly out to Canada and capture striking images of former military athletes in action as well as photographing Prince Harry.

### What are you currently working on?

A wide portfolio of projects with blue chip companies including case studies and events.

### What is your biggest ongoing challenge?

Creating new photography to fit social media as well as constantly adapting to today's ever changing market.

### How has your industry changed?

In the early 2000's photography was used predominantly on printed collateral and this has shifted over the past decade to digital platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook.

### What advice would you give to your 18 year old self?

Spend money wisely young man!

### Who are your heroes and mentors?

I have no particular business heroes but my father was an inspiration as he worked really hard to provide for a big family.

### How do you like to unwind?

A good Netflix film/series. Restaurants. Driving. Travelling new places.

### Favourite Book?

*Who Ate All the Pies* by Mick Quinn. A very funny read from a great character.

### Favourite CD?

*The Prodigy Experience*.

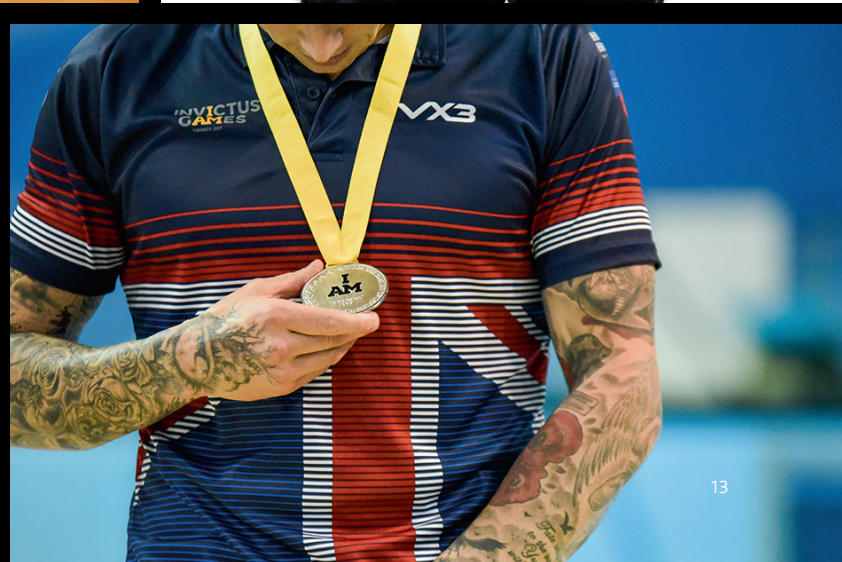
### Favourite DVD?

*Dirty Harry*. A Clint Eastwood classic. "Do you feel lucky punk?"

For further information see the website [www.miketulip.photography](http://www.miketulip.photography)











## PERCY HEDLEY SECRET GARDEN BALL

340 guests recently enjoyed a wonderful evening at The Percy Hedley Ball at Hilton Newcastle Gateshead, raising money to support disabled people across the North East.

With a flowery VIP reception, logs and fairies as centrepieces and vines suspended from the ceiling, there was no doubt about the theme of the event. Guests were treated to a sparkling reception and canapes before entering the Secret Garden to enjoy a sumptuous five course meal and dazzling entertainment which included The Alfie Joey show and the fantastic Hip Operation.

Auction lots ranged from a five star skiing holiday to tickets to Britain's Got Talent with over £86,000 raised.











## NORTH EAST SOLICITOR HELPS NEW LAW FIRM IN EAST TO WEST MOVE

A high-flying Tyneside solicitor is heading to the West coast to set up a new law firm and help it spread its wings into niche legal markets.

Litigation specialist Peter Maughan from Whickham, whose medical negligence expertise spans 40 years and the settlement of several multi-million-pound claims, has been recruited to lead the legal team at PMR Solicitors at its new headquarters on the site of Blackpool Airport.

Peter will take charge of an expert litigation team specialising in financial and medical claims, dispute resolution and mediation. The new law practice will focus primarily on the mis-selling of financial services, medical negligence and personal injury, as well as family law services such as wills and probate.

Qualified Chartered Accountant and Chairman Ian Gillings joins Peter as company directors, with GDPR legal expert James Grundill completing the senior team.



## GREAVES WEST & AYRE'S JOE O'BRIEN RECEIVES TOP AWARD

Joe O'Brien, an independent financial advisor at Greaves West & Ayre, has been awarded the Personal Finance Society's (PFS's) Fellowship status.

Fellowship of the PFS is the most prestigious qualification awarded to those working in the profession. The accolade shows commitment to self-improvement and is only awarded to individuals who consistently demonstrate high levels of ability, skills and knowledge.

Joe joined Greaves West & Ayre's wealth management team in January 2015 as an Independent Financial Advisor and achieved chartered status at the end of 2018.

Joe said: "I'm delighted that after 19 years in the financial services profession I am now Fellow of the PFS, the highest qualification awarded by the Chartered Insurance Institute. It has been a lot of work, but the recognition of that work has also made it really rewarding."



## MUCKLE LLP COMPLETE INTERNATIONAL DEAL FOR NOVELTEA

One of the region's leading law firms has advised Newcastle-based NOVELTEA on its €450,000 international deal on Germany's TV equivalent to Dragons' Den.

NOVELTEA, which manufactures and sells alcoholic tea blends, has recently toasted success after securing an investment with Lioness Dagmar Wöhrle on Die Höhle der Löwen, which translates as 'The Cave of Lions'. The trio shook hands on the deal on TV, although the transaction was far from complete.

Over the following two months, trusted advisers at Muckle LLP worked to cement the deal, having acted for the business since its early stages, previously helping to deliver two rounds of crowdfunding and an innovative Chinese distribution deal.

NOVELTEA was launched in 2016 by German former Newcastle University students Lukas Passia and Vincent Efferoth, who are the first to create cold-brewed tea and alcohol fusions.

## HELPING YOUR BUSINESS FLY HIGHER IN 2020



Happy New Year!



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# EXCLUSIVE BUSINESS & NORTHERN INSIGHT LUNCH CLUB



In December we welcomed Barry Speker OBE to Wynyard Hall. A full house enjoyed stories from a career in law spanning over 40 years. Our thanks to Barry.



## E X C L U S I V E BUSINESS

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**Speaker -  
NEIL STEPHENSON**  
Entrepreneur

Neil Stephenson is a serial entrepreneur and former CEO of the Onyx Group, a key speaker delivering master-classes in sales and marketing focussed on B2B.



**Venue -** Jesmond Dene House, Newcastle upon Tyne  
**Date -** Monday 20th January, arrive 11.30 lunch at 12.15  
**Price -** £55pp to include a two-course lunch and coffee

**BOOKING NOW FOR  
MONDAY 10TH FEBRUARY 2020...**

**Speaker -  
JASON KNIGHTS**  
Blue Kangaroo

Jason is the Managing Director of Blue Kangaroo, Design. Based in Gateshead the companies global client list includes, Pixar, Warner Brothers and National Geographic.



**Venue -** Wynyard Hall, Stockton-on-Tees  
**Date -** Monday 10th February, arrive 11.30, lunch 12.15  
**Price -** £55pp to include a two-course lunch and coffee

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# SOPOST RANKED 37TH FASTEST GROWING TECHNOLOGY COMPANY IN THE UK IN THE 2019 DELOITTE TECHNOLOGY FAST 50



Deloitte recently announced the winners of the 2019 UK Technology Fast 50 awards. The awards recognise and rank the 50 fastest-growing technology companies in the UK, based on the last four years of revenue data.

The 2019 cohort of winners represent companies at the forefront of the sector, with more than 8,700 employees across the 50 companies, an impressive average growth rate of 3,878% and total revenues in 2019 of over £650m.

Newcastle-based SoPost ranks at number 37 on the list with a 900 per cent revenue growth over the past four years. SoPost, which helps some of the world's biggest brands run effective product sampling campaigns, appears in the ranking for the second consecutive year. Founded by Jonathan Grubin in 2012, it not only allows the likes of Mondelez, L'Oreal, Estee Lauder and Coty to get trial products in the right consumers' hands, it also harnesses data to help brands measure the precise impact of each campaign.

Over the past year, the Newcastle-based business

has almost doubled the size of its team to 34 people. It has also expanded its presence in the US, and a seven-strong team now operates from its New York office.

SoPost's founder, Jonathan Grubin, said: "We're over the moon to have been ranked as the North East's fastest growing tech company for the second year running. Our business has been going from strength to strength and recognition like this really prompts us to take a step back and reflect on all the successes we've experienced over the past year. Being in Newcastle gives us a real competitive edge, and my hope is that we see many more North East companies ranked in the years to come."

Stephen Hall, Office Senior Partner at Deloitte in the North East, said: "The Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 is internationally recognised as one of the

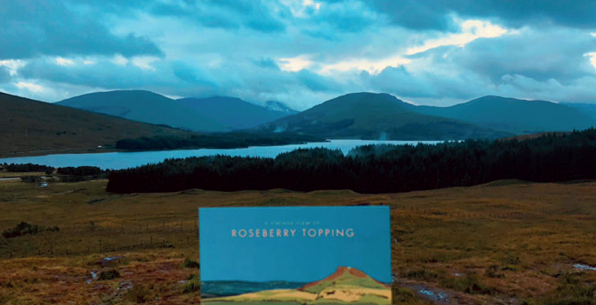
most important business awards in the industry.

"The 2019 Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 highlights the success being achieved within the sector today, with Fintech businesses showing significant growth in particular.

"The Deloitte UK Technology Fast 50 awards are an opportunity for businesses to gain recognition for their innovation and achievements over the last four years and it's fantastic to see Newcastle-based SoPost ranked.

"The 50 fastest growing UK technology companies, as ranked by Deloitte, generated around £650m in total annual revenues in the year 2018/19 and employed more than 8,700 people. The Deloitte UK technology Fast 50 recorded an average three-year growth rate of 3,878 per cent."





# WHEN TO TALK TO YOUR TEAM ABOUT FINANCIAL WELLBEING

We know that money is a taboo subject, particularly here in the UK. In fact, there's statistics to show that 28% of us find it difficult to talk about our financial situation.

This means it's highly unlikely an employee is going to come to your door asking you to help them with their financial wellbeing, but if there are concerns then they may be presenting other issues such as conflict with others or lack of motivation to mask the problem.

Despite our reluctance to talk, as an employer you are actually well placed to understand when an employee might need access to knowledge and advice. You can make it simple and straightforward for the employee to access the guidance they need, before it becomes a problem.

There are some significant milestones throughout one's career where access to financial information can have an impact on the direction of the rest of their lives.

## One: When a new employee joins the company.

A new employee may be earning more money, earning in a different way or at a different frequency than they have before. This means that information and guidance around how to manage their income effectively could be of benefit.

They may need to make decisions around their pension such as whether they want to contribute the minimum amount or more, find a level of risk they're comfortable with or whether they'd like a salary sacrifice style arrangement.

Without any context for these decisions, people are likely to opt for the default, rather than what might be best for their individual circumstances. Some guidance from a qualified professional at this point can hugely alter the outcome.

They may also be entitled to other benefits such as life insurance or private medical cover which will require

application forms completing. In an ideal world, they would have these benefits fully explained, including any limitations and how to access them should they need it.

This is also a great time to set off on the right foot as far as your new employee is concerned, demonstrating that you care about them beyond their life at work.

## Two: Mid-life.

The government encourages everyone to undertake a 'mid-life MOT' by reflecting on their health, wealth and career, which as an employer, you are well placed to support.

As well as their financial future, this is a great opportunity to check in with employees to find out their aspirations in terms of their career - making sure that you are both on the same page about their potential for progression within the company.

## Three: Retirement.

While active retirement planning may not start until later life, saving for retirement, whether through a pension or not, starts much earlier. If your employee has had access to guidance about their pensions from the start, then they're more likely to achieve the kind of retirement they want.

## In Summary

While these are some areas to consider, remember your team aren't likely to talk to you about their financial situation so there may be things going on which you are unaware of.

The best option is to make sure that employees can access the information that they need easily, without the need to ask you or explain their situation.

FIND OUT MORE ABOUT EMPLOYEE FINANCIAL WELLBEING FROM [VINTAGE-FP.COM](http://VINTAGE-FP.COM) OR CALL 01642 525050.

Vintage is a trading name of Vintage Investment Services who are authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Statistics taken from the Salary Finance '2019 Employers Guide to Financial Wellbeing' report.







## MOVING INTO 2020 WITH STRONG NEW FOCUS

Commerce House, a grade II listed building in the heart of Middlesbrough's TS1 postcode, has celebrated a hugely successful 2019 by setting its sights firmly on 2020.

Throughout 2020, the team will be focusing on hosting external business events in their boardroom and seminar space which hold up to 16 and 40 respectively. There is also the opportunity for those looking for hot desking to join the community, as well people interested in co-working space as well as virtual office facilities.

Due to the success of a number of the tenants growing and the welcoming of lots of new medium sized companies throughout 2019, the building is now at 95% capacity with only a couple of opportunities left to be a full time tenant.

All that is now available of the 18 offices are one two/three man office and one four/five man office, both of which are expected to fill within the first

month of this year.

The space comes complete with furniture, broadband and all hard and soft services including a manned reception.

The end of 2019 also saw the expansion of the Commerce House team with the addition of Selina Pyers as part time receptionist.

The building, which has become a thriving business community over the last year, is now home to a 25 thriving Teesside based businesses including to name just a few; MHomes, NEECC, DIT, HR Alchemy, Aero Commerce, Techquity and Cole Communications.

Commerce House's facilities manager, Christine Huntington, said: "2019 has been truly outstanding

with new tenants filling up our lovely space, and those already based here thriving, many moving into bigger offices within the same building. I am also delighted to have expanded the team, and as the services we offer externally have grown, Selina is a very much needed member of staff now!

"There is a rare opportunity for two small companies to be able to join our community of tenants and enjoy five-star, high end office space that impresses clients. They won't be available for long, so I would suggest if you are interested, get in touch very quickly!"

Commerce House has had £1.2 million spent on its stunning renovation and is leading the way in the redevelopment of the historic quarter.

More information on the services, including hot desking and virtual tenancy, are available at [www.commerce-house.co.uk](http://www.commerce-house.co.uk)



# READY FOR BUSINESS

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# CASH MANAGEMENT SAVINGS COMPANY EXPANDS BY INTERNALISING FINANCE FUNCTION

One of the UK's leading cash management savings services has expanded its team, in order to bring all finance provisions inhouse.

The decision by Cascade Cash Management Ltd has seen the creation of the role of Finance Manager, which has been filled by Anthony Tunmore, who brings with him over ten years of experience to the company in similar financial roles.

Anthony, from Newcastle upon Tyne, has joined the team from Inveniam Corporate Finance Ltd.

In his previous role he provided financial services to Cascade and developed a strong working relationship with the management team in doing so. It was clear to Anthony from an early stage that Cascade has huge potential and when the opportunity presented itself, he was keen to be a part of the project.

Anthony, 26, who already holds a Foundation Degree in Business Management, as well as his AAT qualification, is currently studying towards a BA Hons Degree in Finance Management with Derby University as well as progressing through his CIMA qualification to further extend his knowledge and capabilities in the business world. He said: "I have closely watched the progression of Cascade with keen interest over the past twelve months. As soon as I spoke to Emma regarding the Finance Manager opportunity, I knew it was the right move. It is an exciting time to join the company, as it is already a well-established entity. There are also ambitious plans in place for further expansions to the offerings



Anthony Tunmore

and capabilities of the service, which I am keen to help develop.

From a personal standpoint, the management team at Cascade are very keen to facilitate my personal development, be that through workflow opportunities or professional qualifications. I knew they would be supportive throughout the next year and beyond as I look to finish both my BA Hons Degree and my CIMA qualifications."

Cascade Cash Management Ltd is an independent and transparent service created to generate enhanced cash returns and increased protection on deposits through professional cash management.

The Cascade team of eleven administer cash savings on behalf of clients and depositors, who can also use the portal to administer their own savings. Partners including IFA's, solicitors, attorneys, accountants and many more can also self-brand the product for presentation to their own clients.

Managing director, Dr Emma Black, said: "We are delighted that Anthony has joined us and after three months he is already a valued member of the team. I am also very happy that he is keen to finish his Degree and his CIMA qualifications as his continued learning Cascade will be to our advantage, as his skills improve and grow. We seek to create a culture of opportunity for the team and Anthony was the ideal candidate and a good fit for the post."

Anthony's role involves controlling the internal finance processes such as invoicing and accounting, as well as elements of customer facing activity to ensure the general ongoing financial wellbeing of the company. Anthony concluded: "Now I have joined the company I am even more convinced that I have made the right choice. I can see Cascade growing stronger, expanding into new markets and creating new income streams. My aspiration will be to grow the finance function into an efficient team, creating opportunities for more financiers to join the Cascade service."

More information on Cascade Cash Management is available at [www.cascade.co.uk](http://www.cascade.co.uk)

## CASCADE CASH HIGHLY COMMENDED FOR PRODUCT AT NATIONAL LEVEL

Cascade Cash Management Ltd was crowned a winner of the best new savings or investment product award at this year's prestigious Financial Innovation Awards, hosted by The London Institute of Banking & Finance in London this month.



The company received the nomination for its high level of customer care, return on cash deposits for customers and for its growth over the last year in a tough market.

Dr Emma Black, managing director, was delighted to be shortlisted, but to come away with a highly commended accolade was the icing on the cake to what has been a fabulous year for the company.

She said: "The Financial Innovation Awards recognise some of the most innovative companies in the banking and finance sector. To be amongst those celebrated on the night for the second year running was spectacular but then to be spotlighted

as a winner as highly commended really has put us in a place to move into 2020 with even bigger plans!"

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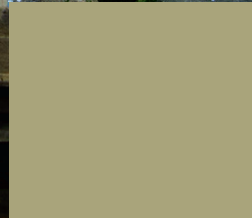
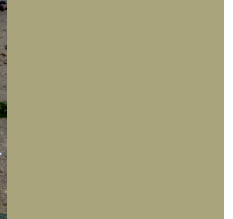
Alex Fraser, CEO at The London Institute of Banking & Finance, said: "As technology advances, the finance sector is often in the frontline of change. Organisations like the ones being recognised and celebrated in the Financial Innovation Awards, are vital in driving forward and progressing the future of the sector.

"These highly prestigious awards give companies the opportunity to demonstrate their ground-breaking and innovative approaches, which will go on to shape the future of the financial services industry and the value it provides. A huge congratulations to all the winners!"

This year 64 companies were shortlisted for awards in 22 categories covering: products and services; customer experience and delivery channels; responsibility and inclusion; and the future of financial services. 59% of the companies shortlisted were from the UK, while 41% were international including from the UAE, Canada, Bangladesh and Brazil.

More information on Cascade Cash Management is available at [www.cascade.co.uk](http://www.cascade.co.uk)





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# TRUST IN THE BOARDROOM: A MOVE TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE GOVERNANCE

Effective corporate governance is a passport to an organisation's success. It's the Board's responsibility to secure an ethical future for an organisation and effective corporate governance can provide a way for Boards to do this.



Claire Leece

There have been a number of high profile cases recently where organisations have fallen foul of greed, negligence or abuse of power and from which lessons can be learnt. Changes in market conditions have resulted in organisations collapsing, losing business, losing public trust, job losses and even fatalities, all of which can be viewed as failures of corporate governance, with leaders either not having the knowledge of what was going on or, even worse, knowing but failing to act with integrity.

## What is corporate governance?

It's the processes, rules and practices through which an organisation is controlled. In an RSM survey of over 200 middle market businesses in relation to corporate governance, it was found that only 24 per cent of businesses considered corporate governance to be critical to achieving strategic business objectives, with only 28 per cent saying that corporate governance was regularly on the Board agenda. This would prove grounds for concern, given that the Board's role is to govern.

## The context

Regulators and governments have introduced many new corporate governance codes in recent years, some of which have been specific to certain sectors, but they can also affect many other types of organisations. Regardless of the nature of the business, similarities can be found in the way that businesses are governed, including a compliance element which tries to hold organisations and Boards accountable for

their decisions and actions. These shouldn't be viewed as a tick box exercise, rather a way of putting measures in place and assessing and responding as to how effective those measures are.

In essence, the role of the Board is to set the tone by conducting themselves within the spirit of the code, whilst also monitoring whether the right behaviours are being displayed throughout the organisation. This 'tone at the top' should help the Board to understand real views of staff and develop methodology and incentives to maintain standards.

This can require a cultural and behavioural shift that helps to position tone at the top as more of a priority for Boards and senior leadership.

## Looking forward

All Boards are (or should be) in a position to challenge and should exercise that right, therefore, it's critical to equip them with the tools and the mindset to do so.

Without an effective corporate governance framework, people, as part of either a workforce or a Board, can be motivated to act for different reasons – sometimes without considering the ramifications. Establishing a clear, transparent and honest approach to conducting business and people management is critical to earning the respect and loyalty of stakeholders and employees alike.

RSM has been advising Boards and organisations on effective governance

and good decision making for many years. Working with the Governance Forum, RSM has contributed to a four-pronged methodology that focus on the main principles of good governance:

– **Compliance:** regulatory compliance represents an organisation's adherence to laws and guidelines relevant to its businesses;

– **Transparency:** a business must offer transparent ways of working to ensure that its approach, management of people and use of finances and other resources are clear;

– **Behaviour and skills:** organisations are run and maintained by people. Encouraging and rewarding the right behaviours is critical to ensure a sustainable and ethical future; and

– **Impact:** decisions have consequences and Board need to be equipped to make those consequences positive and sustainable

These are a reflection of the various corporate governance codes now in place that aim to help organisations to frame their thinking around effective governance.

With the start of the new year, it may be an opportune time to review the corporate governance within your organisation.



If you'd like more information on how to ensure you have effective corporate governance, please visit [rsmuk.com/ideas-and-insights/effective-corporate-governance](https://rsmuk.com/ideas-and-insights/effective-corporate-governance) or contact Claire Leece at [claire.leece@rsmuk.com](mailto:claire.leece@rsmuk.com).



# PRISMATIC WEALTH: SET FOR 2020!

2019 was a great year for Stockton based, independent financial advisers Prismatic Wealth.

It marked a year since purchasing new, larger premises which has proven to benefit their clients and staff. They now have the capacity to service their growing team with a modern, open plan work space, five meeting rooms, a boardroom, seminar room and ample parking. Given this they have been able to expand their team by employing another eight members of staff.

Prismatic Wealth are set to embed their new team members in the coming year and are sure their new recruits will follow in the footsteps of their colleagues, many of whom celebrated exam successes in 2019 as the team continued to develop their knowledge and expertise.

Managing Director, Graham Laverick says, "It is important to us as a business to nurture and guide the next generation of financial planners whilst continually upskilling our existing staff. We look forward to helping guide and support our new members of the team."

Given Prismatic Wealth's capacity of a seminar room and ample parking, they have previously hosted events by the Bank of England, Department of International Trade, Bupa, Unum, Westfield Health, LV and local charities Cash for Kids and Butterwick Hospice, amongst others. Event plans for 2020 look set to be equally as busy.



In addition to corporate events, the team also hold in-house 'Lunch with Prismatic Wealth' gatherings for their clients and to date have collaborated with local solicitors and national fund managers to deliver relevant, meaningful and relaxed lunch presentations which enhance their customer service offering. Given the great

feedback they have received, Prismatic Wealth are looking to increase them from being held bi-monthly to monthly throughout 2020.

2020 looks set to be another landmark year, Prismatic Wealth have provided independent financial advice for over 32 years and currently manage over £200 million in client funds.

To contact them for a free consultation call 01642 661600 or email [enquiries@prismaticwealth.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@prismaticwealth.co.uk)



## PRISMATIC WEALTH

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- Reaching Retirement
- Pensions and Divorce



### Investment Services:

- Investment Planning Advice
- Investment Review

To speak to us contact:

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# NORTH EAST PUBLISHER GOING GLOBAL WITH SEVEN-FIGURE CARLTON JAMES INVESTMENT



Simon Carlton (left) and Simon Johnson (right) of Carlton James with Rob Hewitt of the i2Media Group on the red carpet at the Fighters Only World MMA Awards in Las Vegas

The North East publishing company behind the first-ever mixed martial arts magazine is going global with the help of a seven-figure investment from a London-based investment group.

Fighters Only, part of the i2Media Group of companies, launched its first self-titled publication in 2005, and has since expanded on the back of the explosion in the sport's popularity to publish bespoke magazines in locations including the US, the Middle East, Ireland, Canada, South Africa and Germany.

i2Media Group is now planning to use the investment from Carlton James' Diversified Alpha Fund to establish new international distribution agreements with key partners in developing markets where the MMA and fitness industries are beginning to boom, including China, India, Eastern Europe and Australia, as well as expanding its overall digital presence.

Six new jobs have so far been created by the business's expansion plans, with more expected to follow.

Rob Hewitt, Founder and Group Chief Executive at i2Media Group, says: "Having trained in mixed martial arts from its earliest days as a sport in the UK, I had an inside view of how the MMA and fitness industries were evolving and started the business to capitalise on the phenomenal levels of interest and exposure that they now attract.

"Fighting and fitness have always gone hand in hand, so expanding our content and service delivery to help those wishing to live longer, healthier lives was a natural development.

"We are very much focussed on providing high quality and authoritative content around correct exercise, nutrition and personal well-being information to our communities and audiences which will keep our readers informed and motivated, and will help them live longer, healthier lives."

Originally founded in Gateshead, the company also now has offices in the United States and moved into the health and fitness arena with the launch of TRAIN Magazine in 2011, followed by TRAIN For Her two years later.

The business established unique distribution agreements by delivering magazines to the

customers of the world's largest ecommerce platforms, including bodybuilding.com, the world's largest online fitness community.

Over the years, i2media Group has also developed iPad and Kindle versions of its magazines, digital applications and successful ranges of branded clothing, leisurewear and technical equipment.

Their print, digital and social content is now read by millions of combat sports fans and health and fitness fanatics every month.

Rob Hewitt is also responsible for establishing the Fighters Only World MMA Awards, an annual event held in Las Vegas which has established itself as the 'Oscars' of the sport.

Televised live on US TV networks including ESPN, CBS and NBC and watched by over 11 million people, the show is attended by the stars of the MMA industry as well as celebrity fans. Now into its 12th year, the 2019 event was hosted by action movie star and lifelong martial artist Dolph Lundgren.

Simon Johnson of Loggia Capital Partners acted as investment lead manager on behalf of the Carlton James DAF Fund, and has known Rob Hewitt and his group of companies from its very early days.

Gosforth-based RMT Accountants & Business Advisors worked with the i2Media management team to carry out the due diligence and business planning work required to secure the investment.

Rob Hewitt continues: "With global enthusiasm for mixed martial arts and health and wellness building quickly in the new global markets that we're targeting, we are only going to become more resonant with the huge target audiences therein.

"As pioneers in MMA promotion, we are building our awards show to create greater global awareness of the accomplishments of everyone involved via increased broadcast reach in domestic and international markets.

"We will now continue to innovate in the way we publish and distribute our content across diverse

forms of media platforms in order to build the most loyal communities of people based on authority and trust.

"We looked at a number of different investment options, but the enthusiasm shown by the Carlton James Group for what we offer, the positive relationship we have with the proactive team and their willingness to show such faith in a North East business like ours made them the right choice.

"Carlton James has access to global services and markets complimentary to our own, with particular focus on the United States and Middle East, and we have already established two very strategic partnerships in these territories with their support.

"Despite our increasingly-global outlook, we're committed to our regional roots and so chose to access the local knowledge and expertise of the RMT team to help bring this investment in."

Simon Johnson of Loggia Capital Partners says: "i2Media Group has made use of various regional funding programmes over the years and has established itself as a worthy investee capable of delivering good quality returns for its investors. On this occasion the business required financial assistance for the next phase in its continuing growth aspirations which were unable to be met by local funding or mainstream bank lending.

"Rob is very familiar with using investment capital to facilitate the growth and evolution of his businesses, and has built a fantastic platform from which to execute the next stages of his expansion plans."

Michael Cantwell, Head of Corporate Finance at RMT Accountants, adds: "i2Media is a North East business that is punching well above its weight on the international stage and now has the resources it needs in place to achieve even more.

"Being able to attract this investment into the North East shows the strength of its proposition and we're very pleased to have been able to support Rob and his team in taking the next steps on their exciting journey."





Nigel Devine MD of Orbis Support  
and Stephen Slater Director RMT  
Accountants & Business Advisors Ltd

## ORBIS OWNER AIMING TO BRING ON THE NEXT GENERATION OF SPECIALIST CARE PROVIDERS

A North Tyneside entrepreneur who has built a successful business helping to meet the support needs of people with learning disabilities and Autism is looking to pass his knowledge on to younger people who want to follow in his footsteps.

**Nigel Devine set up Orbis Support in Whitley Bay in 2016 to offer bespoke packages of support to people with learning disabilities and Autism who wish to live in the community in their own home.**

The business grew quickly on the back of referrals from the NHS, local authorities and the families of those who needed assistance, and now supports 18 people, each of whom receives support tailored to their specific needs.

Nigel remains personally involved with the support provided for each person connected to Orbis – and now, rather than continuing to grow the business to the point where this degree of involvement is no longer possible, he is looking to identify a number of younger people who he can help set up their own services which operate to the same standard and deliver the right kind of care.

Stephen Slater, commercial services director at RMT Accountants & Business Advisors, is working with Nigel on developing Orbis's business structure as part of the project.

Orbis supports adults and children facing a range of issues, including learning disabilities, autism, behavioural challenges, enduring mental health difficulties and physical disabilities.

Individual requirements are identified through interviews with families, NHS representatives and the person themselves.

A team is then recruited which can meet the person's personal objectives and support needs, with the individual having approval over the staff who form part of this team and the home in which they are being supported to live.

Nigel Devine says: "The people and families with whom we're working often face extremely complex and challenging situations, and our aim is to put measures in place which enables each person to live a fulfilling life in their local community.

"The support model that we've developed has been proven to work time and time again, and the positive, long-term impact that it makes on their lives has been recognised time and again by the people we support, as well as by families and the care commissioners with which we work.

"We're close to the number of people that we can support while retaining a meaningful personal relationship with them all, which is the fundamental principle on which the business's success has been based.

"Demand is continuing to increase for the type of support we offer, but instead of simply expanding indiscriminately and moving away from what we know works, I want to widen the range of service providers that work to the standards that we have set.

"We're encouraging our existing staff to go for

this opportunity themselves and would welcome interest from other people working in the health and social care. We want to support people with the same values and passion as we hold who are determined replicate the service standards we work to.

"We pride ourselves on paying some of the best wages in the sector, and also train our staff to the highest standard bringing in trainers from across the UK and North America.

"We continually strive towards improving the working conditions of our staff and have also recently benefitted from the support of RMT Accountants in implementing a sickness and life assurance scheme for all of our staff.

"RMT's support is giving us the confidence to develop and enhance our operational structures and we're seeing positive tangible outcomes resulting for our staff and the business in general."

Stephen Slater at RMT Accountants adds: "Nigel and his team take a hugely-detailed approach to meeting some extremely challenging situations and they are setting the industry standard for how these services can be devised and delivered.

"We're very pleased to be supporting Nigel's drive towards broadening the implementation of his successful ways of working and to helping Orbis evolve as a business."





## RMT - ANOTHER SUCCESSFUL YEAR

RMT Accountants & Business Advisors celebrated another successful year by holding their annual pre festive season drinks reception at Barluga in Newcastle. The event not only marks a very successful year for the firm but also recognises the achievements of its many clients and contacts with whom they have collaborated over the last 12 months.

Mike Pott, managing director at RMT, commented: "We have been extremely fortunate to work with the management teams of a wide variety of highly successful clients and fellow professionals from both within and outside the region. Each year our drinks reception becomes more popular and it was great to welcome over 250 guests to this year's event."

"The RMT team is constantly developing its services to ensure we meet the ever more complex business needs of our clients and we look forward to working with them to achieve even greater success in 2020."











Andrew Potts

## DON'T LEAVE YOURSELF WITH A FINANCIAL HANGOVER THIS NEW YEAR

As the saying goes; Remember, Remember the 5th of November, well, at KP Simpson, it's more like; Reminder, Reminder the end of January...Well the 31st to be precise, as this is the very latest date that your self-assessment tax deadline is due!

Whether you're an Ever-Organised-Elsie or a Leave-it-to-the-last-minute-Larry, the tax man doesn't pull any punches, and if you're late, you will be fined!

At KP Simpson, we give the best advice to ensure you're starting on the right foot in 2020 by being prepared.

Unsure as to whether or not you need to send in a self-assessment tax return? Well, let me clarify. You MUST send a tax return if, in the last tax year, you were A) self-employed as a sole-

trader and earned more than £1000 or B) If you're a partner in a business partnership. You will not usually need to send a return if your only income is from your wages or pension, but you may need to send one in, if you have any other un-taxed income, such as: **1)** Rent from a property you own, **2)** Tips and/or commission, **3)** Income from savings, dividends or investments or **4)** Foreign income.

If you're still unsure, there is a lot of information on the HMRC website, [www.gov.uk/self-assessment-tax-returns/who-must-send-a-tax-return](http://www.gov.uk/self-assessment-tax-returns/who-must-send-a-tax-return). Alternatively, if you'd like to give us a call at KP Simpson and we'd be happy to help keep you on the right track.

If you do qualify, but don't want to complete it yourself, then, we can help with that too, and do it all for you.

**So, Ever-Organised-Elsie or Leave-it-to-the-last-minute-Larry, if we can help, we will. Just drop us a line on 0191 420 0550 or email your enquiry to: [info@kpsimpson.co.uk](mailto:info@kpsimpson.co.uk), oh and Happy New Year!**

## FRESH START FOR #FULLYFUNCTIONAL - GIVING YOUR FUTURE WORKFORCE THE SKILLS THEY NEED

The start of a new year always seems like the best time to make resolutions and plans for your business.

For NCFE, the start of 2020, in the aftermath of the general election is the perfect time for us to re-centre our focus and hit the ground running again with our #FullyFunctional campaign.

Originally launched in April of last year, #FullyFunctional is our plea to the government to help create a level playing field for English and maths qualifications for learners aged 16-18.

At present, funding legislation dictates that any young person who achieves a grade 3 (grade D in the old system) in their GCSE English or maths exam has to resit the same exam until they pass. Research has shown however that of those who resit, only one in every four will achieve a higher grade, leading to a repetitive cycle of failure which is damaging to young people's confidence and in some cases, mental health.

Learners who achieve less than a grade 3 at GCSE by comparison are offered alternative routes to achieve these qualifications through programmes such as Functional Skills, which offer a more skills-led, practical approach to learning which might better suit a learner's individual learning style, as



David Gallagher, Chief Executive at NCFE.

well as suiting employer needs.

NCFE has always been a firm believer that there is no 'one size fits all' approach when it comes to education, which is why we believe that opening up these alternative options to all learners will help more young people to achieve their full

potential and go on to achieve great things on their chosen career paths.

We asked the opinion of 2,000 members of the general public and 68% agreed that young people should be given alternative options other than GCSEs with 71% also agreeing that students should also be allowed to learn in a style that suits them.

So, why are we telling you all this?

The truth is, we need your help!

The North East is home to some fantastic businesses and the young people of today are our region's workforce of the future, but their progression is being limited by their lack of access to the qualifications which connect with their way of learning.

That's why we're looking for as many people as possible, from learners to teachers, and educational institutions to employers to get behind our campaign to help make the government sit up and take note so changes to the funding legislation can be made.

**For more information and to join the #FullyFunctional movement, visit [www.ncfe.org.uk/fully-functional](http://www.ncfe.org.uk/fully-functional).**





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# MAVEN LEADS £600,000 FUNDING ROUND IN INDUSTRY LEADING PLATFORM INTELLIGENCE FUSION



Follow-on investment will enable technology business to further develop the platform and invest in the expansion of their technology team, supporting the creation of 10 jobs.

Maven Capital Partners has led a £600,000 investment in military grade security and intelligence platform, Intelligence Fusion. The funding has been provided by the Finance Durham Fund, established by Durham County Council and existing investors. The follow-on investment will support the business as it enters its next phase of development to further invest in an in-house technology team to make significant enhancements to its platform. The investment will also strengthen the sales and marketing and intelligence team to enhance the quantity and quality of reported incidents and add artificial intelligence tools to the collection of security information. The funding will create a total of 10 new jobs.

Intelligence Fusion deliver enhanced threat intelligence and situational awareness around the globe to help protect people, assets and reputation. The business provides military grade security and intelligence information to clients either displayed on an online platform, integrated into the client's own systems via a live data feed or from a bespoke white labelled offering.

The global Threat Intelligence market was valued at \$5.1bn in 2018 and is expected to reach \$17.9bn by 2025. According to Market Watch, the rising trend of digital transformation coupled with the growing number of internet and smart phone users across different regions is driving the growth of the global threat intelligence market.

Backed by a team of specialist experts with on-the-



ground experience of situational threat awareness, CEO, Michael McCabe, founded the business with over 15 years' experience in security intelligence as an intelligence operator with the British Army and in the private security industry. Michael is

supported by recently appointed Chairman, ex-Microsoft Director, Robert Hayes. Robert previously held a number of roles within cyber security, crisis management, and strategic risk assessment, and was a trusted and valued advisor to Ministers, senior leaders and the UK Ministry of Defence.

Michael Dickens, Investment Manager of Maven, said, "We're delighted to take part in this funding round as Intelligence Fusion invests in its team to meet growing demand for its product. Michael is hugely knowledgeable and has demonstrated that there's a real and growing need for the technology the business has developed across a wide range of business sectors."

Michael McCabe, CEO of Intelligence Fusion said "This investment will allow us to create our own internal technology team and work with experts in datamining, machine learning and artificial intelligence, so clients can expect the pace at which we develop new innovative tools and features to significantly increase. It also allows us to add to our team of intelligence analysts, taking us to 24/7 operational coverage as we challenge our domestic and foreign competitors for market share."

Sarah Slaven, Operations Director of Business Durham, said: "It's great Intelligence Fusion are continuing to grow and invest, they are a fantastic example of the kind of dynamic company Finance Durham was set up to help. The investment will create new jobs in this exciting growth sector in County Durham, supporting Business Durham's strategy to deliver business and economic growth."

**Contact Maven's local team today to access the finance or support your business needs to unlock its growth potential or visit [mavencp.com](http://mavencp.com) to find out more.**



# CREATING VALUE

The £20 million Finance Durham Fund, managed by Maven Capital Partners, provides flexible equity and loan packages to support a business at any stage of its growth cycle.



If your business is in need of finance to help unlock its growth potential, we may be able to help.

For more information please contact:

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**Business B**  
**Durham D**





## MHA TAIT WALKER EXPANDS DATA INSIGHT TEAM AS DEMAND FOR DATA SERVICES CONTINUE TO GROW

North East accountancy firm MHA Tait Walker is gearing up for further growth on the back of its specialist Data Insights team, which helps provide strategic growth and insight to businesses across the North East and the UK.

Since it was introduced in 2018, the team has seen workload increase – this growth increased by 150% in 2019, highlighting the demand from clients and new customers for data-driven insight and strategy.

The specialist team gather, analyse and breakdown financial and operational data, so that businesses can make fully informed, quick, intelligent and measurable decisions, with a focus on what really drives value and profitability in their business.

Headed up by associate partner Graham Dotchin and assisted by data insights manager, Richard Tate and data insight executive, Callum McLaren, the team all have a mix of practice and industry experience which gives them a unique and strategic view on how to help clients improve their business, as well as an understanding of what it is like to be on their side of the table and the challenges they face.

The volume of data within any business and available market insight is huge and so it is essential

that businesses are able to cut through the white noise and focus on what is really important to drive change or value. The team help businesses utilise the right data to support their strategy, business and market intelligence and financial modelling.

Graham said: "The service is proving to be a real benefit to clients. Quite often business owners know in their gut where their business is at – be it in a good or bad place – but they need that hard data to make it a reality for them. Using data allows them to see exactly what's going on, make informed choices and engage their staff and stakeholders."

Graham added: "We typically spend most of our time assessing, cleaning and connecting financial, operational and sales databases into one central version of the truth. Too many businesses have contradictory information sources than can be confusing to the user and for business plans. Once the single version of the truth is established and maintained with live data we overlay analytics and visuals to bring this data to life. I love presenting

information back to clients and seeing the lightbulb switch on."

The team are currently working with a range of SMEs across different sectors, typically helping businesses assess their strategy, grow profit through customer, product and efficiency analysis, benchmark against competitors, assess working capital needs and providing detailed scenario based forecast modelling to see how changes to the business could impact performance.

The team also work alongside the Corporate Finance team in helping prepare businesses for sale, using data to defend and promote value during company disposals and fundraising projects. Data analytics provides innovative ways to undertake due diligence for investors and acquirers.

Established in 1937, MHA Tait Walker is the largest independent accountancy practice in the North East of England. The firm offers large corporates, owner-managed businesses and individuals a complete set of accountancy and advisory services from taxation to corporate finance.



# HAVE YOU CONSIDERED THE VALUE OF YOUR DATA DURING A FINANCE RAISING OR DISPOSAL PROCESS?



The level of data and information businesses generate is increasing exponentially. This data can be valuable to businesses in terms of making informed decisions and driving value but it is also playing an increasing role in Corporate Finance Transactions.

Whether you are raising finance to fund your growth or to recapitalise your business or are working towards a disposal or merger of your business, your financial information will become extremely important and will be inevitably exposed to challenge from a range of parties.

Lee Humble, Associate Partner at MHA Tait Walker Corporate Finance said: "The well-known due diligence phase of any transaction will necessitate the opening of your books and records to third parties who are tasked with identifying and assessing the integrity and accuracy of the figures disclosed. But have you considered how to leverage value during this process?

"Our Data Insight team work in tandem with the Corporate Finance team, with the objective of elevating the standard of financial and non-financial data maintained by our clients. The retention and use of accurate and timely reporting can provide a significant advantage during any negotiation, and often can assist with swift decision making for all parties involved."

"Quite often a business may retain a host of databases to store information, from the obvious accounting package to sales and CRM tools and operational software. The integration of these data points can be extremely difficult and may also absorb significant amounts of time across your teams. That's why we aim to work with our clients

ahead of any transaction, to design a reporting template which is unique to their business."

He added: "The tracking of performance, KPIs and deviations from budget and previous performance can then be interrogated consistently with a view to managing change as and when the business circumstances require. The ability to do so, with an explanation of what is happening and why, can often feature during a finance raise or a disposal due to the time lag between data provision and the potential execution of the transaction."

"This allows a business to make fully informed, quick, intelligent and measurable decisions, with a focus on what really drives value and profitability."

For further information please contact Lee Humble, Associate Partner, Corporate Finance on 0191 285 0321 [lee.humble@taitwalker.co.uk](mailto:lee.humble@taitwalker.co.uk) or Graham Dotchin, Associate Partner, Data Insight [graham.dotchin@taitwalker.co.uk](mailto:graham.dotchin@taitwalker.co.uk)



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## PAUL GILSENNAN

MD of PSG Wealth Management Ltd

### Tell us about your current role?

I am a financial adviser. My aim is to create, review and maintain a lifetime financial plan for all of my clients. This plan allows them and their family to achieve their goals in life.

### How has your industry changed in the last decade?

My industry has changed significantly in the last decade. We have moved from an industry driven by sales and targets to one driven by providing the best client outcomes. This began when the Financial Conduct Authority introduced the Retail Distribution Review (RDR) in 2012. Since 2012, Financial Advisers are no longer paid by commission from product providers, we now agree ongoing advice fees with all clients. I agree an ongoing adviser fee for any assets I manage within a clients financial plan, in exchange for an agreement to provide a level of ongoing service to that client. This ongoing income allows me to build and expand my business, so everyone within my company is focused on the long term agreement we have with our clients.

### What challenges have you encountered on the path to success?

I had never ran a business until I set up my current company, so I have made my fair share of mistakes over the years! The key is to learn from each one, don't make it again and carry on.

As a wider challenge I think the industry is getting very difficult for new people to get into and this has a significant impact when it comes to recruiting new employees.

As I worked in banking before setting up my company, I was able to bring some former colleagues with me on the journey. Since then I have developed an internal training programme to create our own financial advisers and paraplanners. I currently have one employee studying to be a paraplanner and another to be a financial adviser. Assuming all goes



to plan, they will be the first in a long line of people who become the future of the company.

### What are you currently working on?

Creating the best financial planning company possible. We can do this by employing and training the best people, embracing technology, something this industry is traditionally pretty ittle slow to do, and delivering the best client outcomes on every occasion.

### What is your proudest business achievement?

I feel proud each day. I believe passionately that we can make a difference to all of our clients lives. Whether that is by developing a lifetime financial plan, protecting them against the unexpected or being there for them in a time of need. We get to know more about the people and families we look after than almost anyone else in their lives. I have built a team of people who genuinely care about our clients and so, we not only look to go the extra mile, we are delighted to do so.

### Tell us about your team...

We have two parts to the business. Within the financial planning team, Donna is our office manager and keeps all of us in line.

I have two financial advisers working alongside me, Paul and Ed. Both Paul and Ed are incredibly talented and highly qualified financial advisers. Ed has recently received his Fellow & Chartered Financial Planner status from the Chartered Institute of Insurance. This is the highest level of qualification an adviser can achieve in our industry. We are all very proud of him for this achievement.

Martin is our paraplanner, ensuring all of our advice

and reporting is first class. Nile is our administrator and is currently training to become a financial adviser of the future.

We have a mortgage company that runs alongside our financial planning business, run by my colleague, Jade. Jade has three mortgage advisers, Linda, Dave & John, working in her team, plus Sue, our administrator.

### What was your first job?

I worked in the kitchen at Darlington Golf Club from the age of 13. I was paid £3 per hour and felt like the richest kid in school! I realised from that point that I loved working and at 15, I started working front of house as a waiter. I genuinely believe that job gave me the confidence to deal with all different types of people, which is what I have built a business on.

### How do you unwind outside of work?

I love sport. I still play football and coach at my son's football club, Darlington Young Bulls. I play golf (badly!) at client golf days several times per year. I spend as much time with Tracy & Harrison as I can. We all have busy lives, so we make sure we spend quality time together. Tracy and I have become keen walkers all of a sudden, which I assume is something to do with age!

### Which fictional character do you most relate to?

Buzz Lightyear 'to infinity and beyond!'

### What advice would you give to your 18 year old self?

Think big, believe in yourself and change the world!



## Growing a business

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[info@fwcapital.co.uk](mailto:info@fwcapital.co.uk)





## UNW CHARITY BRIEFING: DIVERSIFYING YOUR INCOME STREAM

In recent years, many charity and not-for-profit organisations have seen their traditional trading source of grant and statutory funding reduce. On 21st November 2019, UNW's final Charity Briefing of the year brought together three experienced individuals to provide insight on how their organisations have utilised their assets, explored new opportunities, and innovated to boost income generation through sales or activities.

Over 70 representatives from charities and not-for-profit organisations attended the event at Heroes Suite in St. James' Park. They were joined by guest speakers Jane Hogan, Head of Fundraising at St. Oswald's Hospice, Mike Pratt, Chief Executive Officer at Northumberland Wildlife Trust, and Pauline Wonders, Strategic Director at Family Gateway. All three speakers shared the methods utilised by their organisations to diversify income streams and build support by engaging with wider audiences.

**For more information about UNW's event programme,  
please visit [www.unw.co.uk](http://www.unw.co.uk)**











The second event for JDM Earth Ltd and Mahouts Elephant Foundation enjoyed a fantastic turn out of corporate attendees.

With Gary Lumby MBE as the host, The Elephant Ball guests enjoyed a "Touch of Thai" themed evening at the beautifully rustic Whinstone View in Great Ayton. Sustainability was the clear message of the evening and it was a pleasure to have Sarah Blaine, Co Founder and CEO of Mahouts Elephant Foundation talk about the importance of the foundation and it's impact on vulnerable communities, elephants and the forest.

The event was beautifully dressed and incorporated live music by The Hootones and mix and mingle entertainment from mind reader Ben Cardall.

Following it's success it is set to be an annual event to raise the profile of Mahouts Elephant Foundation here in the North East.





*CCBS Group would like to wish all of our clients  
and professional intermediaries a prosperous 2020*

Thank you for all the support you have given us over the past five years  
We look forward to catching up with you all in the near future



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Graeme Harrison



# IN CONVERSATION WITH...

## GRAEME HARRISON

Business Development Director at CCBS Group.

### **Tell us about your career path so far?**

I've spent my entire career working within financial institutions. Having started in banking I then secured a graduate scheme for an independent IF provider, working exclusively within the SME market. Following this, I spent five years working in corporate banking, initially as a Director of ABL in the North East and latterly heading up an International Trade team across the UK. The exposure to different business types and sectors throughout my career should stand me in great stead as I embark on my journey with CCBS.

### **What challenges have you encountered?**

Having witnessed both sides of the banking crisis, it's become clear that in recent times we've seen the funding landscape change dramatically, whether that be the credit appetite displayed from the mainstream banks or the emergence of independent and alternative forms of funding. What hasn't changed however, is the funding requirements of SME businesses. As traditional forms of finance become more difficult to obtain, clients are routinely frustrated with the lack of guidance as to what alternatives exist. I've now witnessed this from the side of both the funder and the customer whereby each position can be challenging.

### **What's attracted you to join the team at CCBS?**

I've maintained a close relationship with the team at CCBS over the past five years and watched on as they've worked to bridge the gap between the availability of traditional forms of funding and the needs of their clients. In recent years, as the funding landscape continues to evolve, it has become increasingly evident that clients require more support to help identify and navigate solutions for their specific set of circumstances. My experience over the past 12 years should stand me in good stead when helping clients in this regard.

### **What does 2020 have in store?**

2020 promises to be a very exciting year for us. On the back of two years of steady growth, we're looking to continue along the same lines, and with the additional

resource within company, we'll be aiming to add value to our clients at every opportunity. We are obtaining our FCA permissions whilst working to significantly enhance our marketing capability, allowing us to maintain regular contact with our existing intermediary and client base whilst reaching out to the wider SME and professional market alike. I'm very excited to be spearheading our business development strategy and working closely with businesses and intermediaries across the region.

### **What is your company's USP?**

CCBS is a unique, innovative commercial finance brokerage and business consultancy. We add value by engaging with our clients in the first instance and establishing an understanding of the key drivers and motivations behind their funding requirement. Often, when we have the complete picture, it becomes clear that the end solution may not be what was first thought.

### **What is the best advice you have been given?**

"There's no growth in your comfort zone and no comfort in your growth zone."

### **Where would you like to be in five years time?**

I think the next two or three years may well be turbulent and uncertain for the business community and I would like to be part of the CCBS team that has helped its clients through this difficult period and ultimately supported them to achieve their business aspirations. Hopefully, in five years, we'll be continuing to support our ever-expanding customer base and will have further strengthened our relationships across the professional network.

### **How do you like to unwind ?**

I still play a bit of football although I've definitely lost a yard of pace as I've hit my mid-thirties. I also spend a lot of time at gigs, buying records and generally being one of those annoying music types!

For any enquiries please call 07719560356 or email [graeme@ccbsg.co.uk](mailto:graeme@ccbsg.co.uk)





## SINTONS CHRISTMAS DRINKS

Over 100 professionals from the region's healthcare sector attended Sintons' much-anticipated annual Christmas drinks reception.

The event, held at the Baltic Centre for Contemporary Art, has become a staple in the healthcare calendar and sees senior figures from both NHS and private healthcare organisations in attendance.

The drinks were jointly hosted by Sintons' nationally-renowned healthcare and neurotrauma teams, both of which act across the UK in their specialist fields.

The annual event is always among Sintons' best-attended social gatherings, and guests also saw the Millennium Bridge lit up in the law firm's signature blue to mark the occasion.





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together.

## Using short-term lending to secure that can't-miss opportunity

Planning is everything in business. But every now and then, an opportunity you hadn't planned for comes out of the blue and it's just too good to miss. But how do you move fast on a great opportunity if you don't have the cash ready?

Specialist lender Together has spent the last four decades helping businesses grow and thrive, with commercial loans and short-term finance designed for the pace of modern commerce. They

particularly specialise in bridging loans – a great option if you can pay it back in the short-term – and use experienced underwriters, not tick boxes, to make a common-sense decision.

**Bob Stones**, Together's Regional Development Director for the North East, Lincolnshire and Humber, works with business professionals across the region to connect them – and their clients – to finance at various points of the business lifecycle, as he explains:

### At start-up

“Cash flow can be challenging when you're just starting out, so short-term finance could help you get out of the planning phase and up-and-running quicker. Bridging loans can help with stock, infrastructure costs and general trading costs until the cash starts rolling in. And because you can borrow over 12 months – and in some instance can choose to make no monthly payments at all – it could be the ideal option to give you some financial breathing space in those tricky early days.”

### In a cashflow crisis

“When you're waiting on a customer to pay their bill and you've got a big outlay on the horizon – like your tax bill – it can be incredibly stressful. Or perhaps you've landed a big order and need cash to buy raw materials or pay extra staff to get the job done. If you know the money's coming and just need cash to plug the gap, a bridging loan could be the answer.”

### To grow your business

“If you're converting a building, you can find yourself in funding limbo because it's part-way between residential and commercial, and if there's a spanner in the works you could run out of working cash. Short-term finance can help fund one-off costs and gaps between current and future value, and can be repaid when all that hard work pays off.”

## Got big plans for your business?

Give Bob a call on 0333 305 9732 or email [robert.stones@togethermoney.com](mailto:robert.stones@togethermoney.com)

Any property used as security, including your home, may be repossessed if you do not keep up repayments on your mortgage or any other debt secured on it. \*Includes unregulated and regulated bridging loan applications over 34 years.

45<sup>th</sup>  
Anniversary



# YOUR EYE ON THE REGION

## PETE CRAGGS

Building Technologies, Business Development Manager, Park Electrical Distributors.

### **Did you grow up in the North East or did you decide to relocate here in later life?**

I was born and bred in the North East, Stockton to be specific. I then moved to Newcastle to be closer to work before throwing all my possessions in a van and heading over to the North West. However, the North East pulled on the heartstrings and I came running back home in 2009 and have never looked back!

### **What do you think it means to be a business person in the North East of England?**

It's such a supportive region. I think there's a genuine desire for businesses and people to do well. I've always worked at building my contacts, people who understand what you do. This always makes it so much easier for them to get behind and support you. Use the region's friendly nature to your advantage.

### **What is your favourite aspect of life in the North East?**

The freedom! You could spend the morning by the coast in Northumberland, then drop into Newcastle or Durham for lunch before moving on to North Yorkshire or the Lakes in the afternoon. There is also so much variety in terms of places to eat, sights to see and things to do. Add to this the aspirational development happening on Gateshead quayside and Middlehaven in Middlesbrough. This is an exciting place to live.

### **Where do you like to eat out in the region?**

The Stables in Wynyard is right on my doorstep, so often gets a visit. We've had some stunning meals at The Bay Horse in Hurworth. Having a little girl means meals out are actually an occasion these days. However, next on our foodie hitlist is a steak from Tomahawk, they look amazing!

### **Are the people really friendlier?**

Oh, completely! You can guarantee that at the centre of any decent social event, party or get-together, you'll find someone from the North East making it special. We're such social animals with a great sense of friendship and family.

### **What do you think is the best view in the North East?**

Wow, what a tough question! Having lived in Tynemouth, I loved looking out across the river and coast. I've seen some fantastic storms. One secret and stunning vista is from the outskirts of Hartlepool where you can literally get a view of all of Teesside in one snap-shot view. Pretty special if you're near Elwick.

### **Do you think living and working in the North East offers the same opportunities as elsewhere in the UK?**

In terms of living, it's unbeatable for the beauty in our coast, countryside or the history of places like Durham, Yarm or Morpeth. I think the North East offers some unbelievable business prospects across a range of industries, specifically tech-based ones offering some genuinely game-changing opportunities.

### **Have you had any experience of working elsewhere and how did it compare?**

I've been lucky enough to live and work in a handful of places across the country. At the time of moving to Liverpool, it had just won European City of Culture and was in the process of undergoing an incredible and monumental transformation. For me, it stands out as somewhere that feels so close to living here in the North East. Friendly, passionate and proud.





Pete Craggs





## FOR THE TIMES, THEY ARE A-CHANGIN'?

Well it's 2020. We have a mixed blend of optimism and gloom ahead as we view a new year and new decade coming including the imponderables of post-election fall out, Brexit, climate change, the breakdown of our political systems, the list goes on.

Yes, we live in a fascinating age, where with populist politics and climate denial, we vacillate between incredulity and existential anxiety on almost a daily basis. That said, as hope springs eternal, people will start 2020 with the usual resolutions that most research suggests rarely lasts more than six weeks. New Year's resolutions are fascinating cultural behaviour. As a point of cultural celebration, we often collectively view the New Year as an opportunity for personal renewal however, this collective approach rarely achieves sustained change. Your resolution, for example, may be to do more exercise, another's perhaps to keep their desk tidier. One does not particularly support the other. The creation process for our resolutions themselves are suspect, typically shared with others towards the end of the year with copious amounts of alcohol late at night. Not a great foundation for sensible behavioural change!

To bring significant change in our life, we need to

do it thoughtfully, not at the stroke of midnight at December's end. Change comes by a balance of immediacy and personal resourcefulness and ensures planning, not procrastination. When we consider all of those factors, the arbitrary intention to change at the year's end, is usually unrealistic.

We also often mistakenly try to get rid of something such as a bad habit, a self-defeating pattern or something that is at odds with our health. This is too abstract to be effective; we have to choose something acquirable and move towards that goal. Stopping smoking is not going to be as effective a goal as being healthier. Watching less television is not going to be as effective as ensuring one gets out twice a week. Change needs to be concrete, measurable and achievable.

These factors contribute to our resolutions being replete with good intentions but are effectively a road to hell in the context of positive change.

We need to have a clear vision of the change we want, assess the resources we need to get to it,

look for the support we need to encourage us to get there and how we account to ourselves for progress. The timing of the change implementation must be considered too. Otherwise it's a bit like deciding to run a marathon, whilst you still have your leg in a plaster, have no trainers, no equipment and then your house was flooded yesterday!

Effective change is a thoughtful process that needs to be linked to our conscience and self-examination, not a simple arbitrary ritual born of culture and tradition in the festive season. So once again, the closing seconds of 2019, saw most resolutions doomed from their inception, often only to be revisited 12 months later.

Consider the change you want in your life and start now. Parts of that change may not be enacted for months to come, but it comes from planning and resolve, not a New Year's resolution.

May 2020 confer every blessing. I invite you however, to a personal change "revolution", rather than any "resolutions"!



## THE DOGS RAISING MONEY FOR CHARITY

Last month, a local, independent veterinary clinic in Winlaton organised and carried out a charity dog walk to raise money for the Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter.

Having just opened in Winlaton two months ago, following the success of their Newton Aycliffe branch, Sore Paws Veterinary Clinic have already made an impact on the local community, organising educational talks, community walks and offering a range of affordable services for pets in the region.

The charity walk, which took place on December 7th, successfully raised over £200 for the Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter charity, which helps thousands of lost, neglected, abused and abandoned animals find new homes, and keeps them sheltered until they do.



The charity receives no government funding and running costs are in excess of £1.5million each year.

With a group of 20 humans and 15 dogs, the Sore Paws walk headed down Winlaton's Black Path on the chilly Saturday afternoon. Every man, woman and their dog had a cold, but lovely time and,

thankfully, it was a crisp, dry day.

Due to the success, Sore Paws are already planning their next charity walk for February 2020, to keep updated follow them on Facebook @ SorePawsWinlaton.

For more information about the Newcastle Dog and Cat Shelter, please head to: [www.dogandcatshelter.com](http://www.dogandcatshelter.com) and to find out more about Sore Paws and their services, please visit: [www.sorepawsveterinaryclinic.co.uk](http://www.sorepawsveterinaryclinic.co.uk)



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## EXPERTS IN

## WINNING

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- North East Top 200 (Highest Increase in Turnover) **Lynemouth Power Limited**
- Insider Made in the North East Awards (Automotive) **AVID Technology**
- FSB - Small Business Awards North East (Innovation) **AVID Technology**
- North East Business Awards (Tourism & Hospitality) **Northumberland National Park**

Call: 01670 338390 | Visit: [www.fusionprcreative.com](http://www.fusionprcreative.com)





## KIM TELLS HER STORY ABOUT BALAMORY TO YOUNG FANS

Children at a South Tyneside school were overwhelmed when one of TV's heroes paid a visit and took part in an impromptu Q&A session with them in their library.

Staff at Keelman's Way School in Hebburn asked actress Kim Tserkezie, who is best known as Penny Pocket in the BAFTA winning CBeebies show Balamory, to pop in as their special guest at their coffee morning.

Keelman's Way School is a nurturing, educational and therapeutic community for pupils aged 2 to 19 and their families. The majority of pupils have severe learning difficulties and many have complex or profound needs.

Kim presented the library with signed copies of her semi-autobiographical children's book *The Wheelie Wonderful Life of Millie Monroe*.



## KATE HANDS OVER CHAIR TO ALEXANDROS

Healthwatch Newcastle has a new Chair after Kate Israel has stepped down after three years in the pivotal role.

During Kate's time, Healthwatch Newcastle has become an independent organisation under the auspices of Tell Us North, a community interest company set up to work with local communities to influence and improve the quality of health, wellbeing and social care services.

Kate has handed over the position to Alexandros Dearnley-Chantler. Alexandros has a diverse and international background, with over 25 years' experience in marketing and communications.

Alexandros said: "I'm delighted to be appointed as Chair of Healthwatch Newcastle. We have a simple vision - we want to make sure that health and social care works for the people who use it."

## IAN SCORES A WINNER WITH SHEARER SKETCH



A packed audience at The Exchange in North Shields spent a Sunday afternoon laughing and giggling at some of the region's finest comedy talent both established and brand new.

For the fifth year running, the team behind Sunday for Sammy hosted a competition to find a new comedy sketch writer with the winner receiving the coveted Dick Clement and Ian La Frenais Comedy Award 2019.

The six shortlisted original sketches were performed by South Tyneside's Laffalang Gang to a capacity audience. The event was hosted by Sunday for Sammy trustee and one-time previous recipient of a Sammy grant, Jason Cook.

The winner of the competition with his sketch entitled 'Tribulations' was civil servant Ian McCormick from Shiremoor. His winning sketch examined the hero worship of Alan Shearer by a fanatical Newcastle United supporter and the implications for his long-suffering wife.

## TEESSIDE CHARITY HAVING A BALL AFTER SURGE OF GENEROSITY

A Teesside charity has hailed the kindness of local businesses in the Tees Valley after donations at its recent Christmas Ball reached over £30,000.

The High Tide Foundation, which aims to raise career aspirations in young people through real life work experience programmes, held its annual ball to celebrate a fantastic year of experience delivery. The event at Wynyard Hall was attended by 170 guests, who raised a phenomenal £30,958 with the help of a nationwide initiative that doubles donations.

High Tide used The Big Give Christmas Challenge, the UK's biggest online match funding campaign which provides a platform for community champions to double donations made to their selected organisation within a week-long period.



## SEEDS OF NEW NATURE SANCTUARY PLANTED

An environmentally aware Northumberland farm is hoping that flocks of people will visit its proposed bird and nature reserve.

Stickley Farm, near Cramlington, has been in the Hogg family for more than 120 years. The arable farm produces corn, wheat and barley and for the last 25 years, bird and poultry foods produced under the Laverock Hall Bird Food brand.

The Hoggs have started to develop a large area of their land as a nature and bird reserve. With plans to build bird watching hides, a nature footpath and a number of wet fowl ponds, the work is expected to be ready for its first visitors by Spring 2020.

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Michelle Rainbow

## INTEGRATING MENTAL HEALTH AND EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT HAS HELPED HUNDREDS INTO WORK

Partners across the North East have been trialling a programme that helps unemployed people with anxiety or depression to move into work. Michelle Rainbow, Skills Director at the North East Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) describes what's been achieved across the region through partnership working and service integration.

**We know that many people deal with barriers to work that go beyond skills and experience, and these often relate to mental health. We also know that we need to support people with their mental health issues if we want to help them into sustainable employment.**

Working together as a region, we wanted to pioneer an approach that brought employment support and mental health services together to help jobseekers tackle the two issues in tandem.

### **Blazing a new trail**

The result was a two-year, £2.2m North East Mental Health Trailblazer project, jointly-funded by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and the European Social Fund.

Northumberland Country Council has been the lead authority, managing the project on behalf of the North East LEP and our seven regional local authorities.

The project would support jobseekers with conditions such as anxiety and depression, to find work at the same time as undergoing treatments

to improve their wellbeing.

The Trailblazer began in January 2017, integrating specialist employment coaches into Talking Therapies teams across the region, with referrals coming primarily from Jobcentre Plus. Two years on, and the impact of this partnership approach has been significant.

### **Making a very real difference**

At the point where the Trailblazer came to an end in December 2019, partners involved in the project had worked with almost 1,450 jobseekers, with at least 250 successfully supported into work.

The project has worked with hundreds of over 50s, many who were very long-term unemployed, and some inspiring success stories have emerged. One 52-year-old gentleman with social anxiety who hadn't worked for 20 years secured a job in retail. The success was made possible by a specialist employment coach and therapist working together to help him manage anxiety around change.

Another fantastic example was a young man with anxiety who found the transition into work

so difficult he walked out on the second day. His employment coach worked with his employer to deliver additional support at work, and he returned to his job. He has since been promoted to a managerial position. Partnership working helped a very anxious young man to flourish in a sustainable career.

### **Targeted support remains a priority**

Unemployment remains higher in the North East than in many other areas, and we know that this has an impact on demand for health services. Alongside this, we know that NHS mental health teams are stretched, with lengthy waiting times for support for those with depression or anxiety.

The positive outcomes that have emerged from the North East Mental Health Trailblazer tell us that this approach is an effective way to tackle mental health barriers and support more people into employment.

Our challenge now as a region is to continue to work together and find ways to deliver more integrated and targeted support.

**For more information, please visit [www.nelep.co.uk](http://www.nelep.co.uk)**



# STATE-OF-THE-ART ENERGY EDUCATION CENTRE OPEN TO NORTHUMBERLAND SCHOOLS

School teachers across Northumberland are being invited to take advantage of a new, state-of-the-art Energy Education Centre launched last year by the North Sea Link Interconnector project team in Cambois.

The North Sea Link is a joint venture between UK-based National Grid and Norwegian operator Statnett. The project will allow the two countries to actively share clean energy via the world's longest 1.4-gigawatt electricity interconnector, which will power up to 2.4 million homes across the two countries as of 2021.

With the current shift in attitude towards climate change, especially in young people due to influencers like Greta Thunberg, the energy education facility aims to continue strengthening school pupils' interest in clean energy, the planet's future, construction and careers in STEM subjects. This is delivered through interactive activities such as virtual reality headsets, power-generating pedal bikes and video showreels.

Located on the interconnector project's converter site in Cambois, the Centre will be open for pre-organised visits from Northumberland's 172 schools, as well as local community groups who'd like to learn more about clean energy and the North Sea Link.

North Sea Link Senior Project Manager, Steve Coxon, and his team are hoping to welcome more than 2,000 pupils through the doors over the coming years.

He said: "While the region's heritage may lie in coal mining, the future is looking green. With several on and offshore wind farms, two dedicated biomass power stations and now, the world's largest subsea interconnector, the North East is gaining a global reputation as a leading area in renewable energy.

"Interconnectors are the perfect tool to facilitate the growth in renewables and we hope that our Energy Education Centre will inspire the next generation to learn more about this kind of technology and the role interconnectors such as

the North Sea Link play in delivering a greener, cleaner future for the UK. We're therefore inviting teachers to get in touch and bring their pupils to the Centre as part of their studies."

The North Sea Link Energy Education Centre is open for organised tour groups and all visits must be pre-arranged.



(L to R) Steve Coxon, Senior Project Manager (background), Sallyanne Barson, Communications and Stakeholder Engagement Manager and Mike James, Site Manager (foreground), of North Sea Link with pupils from Cambois Primary School.

To arrange a visit call Freephone 0800 298 0405 between 9am-5pm Monday to Friday UK hours (an answer phone is available outside of these hours) or email: [nslinkinterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk](mailto:nslinkinterconnector@communitycomms.co.uk).

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Nicola Cook



# DEFINING A SUCCESSFUL SALES GROWTH PLAN?

As we enter not just a new year, but a new decade, it's the perfect time to not only reflect on your past business performance, but on what you want to set as your growth metrics for the coming year. Obviously, these will dovetail into your three year business plan and may include one or more of the following;

---

What sales growth metric are you gunning for?

- More revenue?
- More profit?
- Larger headcount?
- More customers?
- New offices in multiple locations worldwide?

And how will you know when you're successful?

- When you achieve the plan?

Or better yet - smash the plan perhaps? Hummm. Actually, there are fundamental flaws in linking success to overachievement of plan. My definition of a successful sales strategy is NEVER by 'how much have we smashed the plan by' - it's by 'how closely we arrived to the original blueprint we devised'.

Why? Because then we can demonstrate we had a workable and predictable execution strategy behind the numbers. One that we can duplicate and scale and continue achieving within a margin of tolerance. It shows we knew what we were doing, what was within our control, what our uncontrollable variables were and how we were able to mitigate against those external market conditions, but regardless that we were able to consistently achieve the core KPIs that sit behind the sales plan. We did what we set out to do.

In my world, it's as bad a sign of poor performance to overachieve your plan, as it is to underachieve it.

Measuring sales performance is more analytical today than it's ever been, and I'm constantly spouting off to my client's that within their business lies an algorithm, a sales algorithm and it's my job to help them uncover it, so that they can measure it, improve it and scale it.

Once you've arrived at your target number, whether you're measuring that in revenue, margin or profit, you must understand how that breaks down into measurable sales outputs AND sales activity. What is it you need your people to be doing in order to deliver the number?

Incidentally, my advice, is to always focus on growing profit. Personally, I would much rather have a business half the size that is delivering the same or more profit - but I'm constantly amazed how many people wish to continue being 'busy fools'. Too many businesses don't know where they're profit is coming from (what product mix, client type and/or sector) but even when they do arrive at some meaningful analysis refuse to take the brave pill and cut off the non-profit making arm of their business. I once had a manufacturing client circa £2M turnover who had a £1M turnover product line, a legacy sector that was diminishing and had no growth potential, which made NO profit. They still couldn't see the value in letting that side of the business go. I would have much rather they diverted those resources elsewhere - but hey ho, sometimes you can take a horse to water ...

So, how do you decide what needs to go into the plan to get the output you want?

Simple. Behind every company sales target we should know the answer to the following three questions.

1. What AOV do we need in order to achieve plan?
2. What AOF do we need in order to achieve plan?
3. What NC do we need in order to achieve plan?

4. Yes - there is a 4th question! What combination of the first three do we need in order to achieve plan?

These three simple metrics are your ABCs, your daily vitamins or the daily music practise of your business's sales growth strategy, yet so many businesses have no idea what they are.

AOV, stands for Average Order Value. When a customer purchases from us, what is the average value of that transaction.

AOF, means Average Order Frequency. Some business models lend themselves to a naturally high market driven AOF. Subscription based business models, FMCG or consumable products for example. But even without this, how likely is it that your customer will re-purchase again within a 12month period, or even over the Lifetime of that customer relationship

(NOTE: in both these first two cases, you can choose to measure AOV and AOF as topline revenue, profit or percentage margin. It's what makes most sense for your type of business.)

NC, the final piece of the metric jigsaw stands for number of New Customers. The place where when most businesses are focused on growth they place the most attention. Yet we all know that New Customers are the most expensive to acquire, take the longest amount of time to convert and require the largest investment of time, energy and resource.

Recently one of my retained clients asked for a meeting as they were concerned that their numbers were down and they were in danger of 'losing the year'. We're talking hundreds of thousands of pounds behind target within a matter of months and they were down not only against their current plan, but also the same performance in the previous year. I should say they have a consumable product that drives a base amount of sales revenue, which they build upon with additional products and offers.

My first question was - 'Well what's changed?' After being met with some blank faces I continued, 'Is it AOV, AOF that has changed, or have we lost a chunk of customers for some reason?'

They didn't know the answers, (and I was secretly expecting it to be the first metric AOV) but after some quick analytics it turned out to be AOF. Their core business had reduced their ordering pattern from nine days to eleven, but because the transaction amounts were looking the same no one had spotted the difference.

Likewise, my favourite question to an ambitious entrepreneur who proudly shares with me their aggressive growth plan, citing their both top and bottom line predictions for the next three years. When I quiz them further and ask, 'and how are you going to achieve that?', if they can't articulate how that number breaks down into customer categories, with an AOV of 'X' and a repeat AOV of 'Y', leading to a LTV (Lifetime customer Value) of 'Z', then I know they haven't thought about what they actually need to deliver on in order to achieve their growth. They usually smile sweetly and answer, 'We'll just sell harder,' at which point I usually sigh, before grabbing my notebook and pen and start scribbling out some basic sales fundamentals to help them understand what they need to know behind the numbers.

Until you know these basic metrics in your type of Sales Engine, you cannot know what Key Objectives and sales activity metrics you need to set and measure to ensure your team are on track.

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To be on the advanced notification list for the upcoming release of the 2nd edition of Nicola's international bestselling book 'The Secrets of Success in Selling', go here; [www.companyshortcuts.com/SOS](http://www.companyshortcuts.com/SOS)





Ammar Mirza CBE

## SIGN OF THE CRIMES

Happy New Year! A very warm welcome to a new decade, may this be filled with joy, love and prosperity.

2020 an unimaginable date, which not only felt light years away as a child, but now that it is here does not seem real. There should be flying cars, people living on the moon and so much more by now. Whilst we have made blistering progress where technology is concerned, we seem almost to be going backwards as a civilisation. There appears to be more division, deprivation and discontent now than ever before.

At the end of December there were a couple of interesting experiences that highlighted how sad the times are we live in. The first was when parking my car on Waterloo Street in Newcastle. I was dressed casually as I was taking baby Zara to the Centre for Life Play Area and got out of the car and put on a back pack. Obvious shock horror, an Asian with a beard putting on a back pack!

Opposite the on-street parking is a Court Office with big windows looking out and I could see one of the workers staring at me, getting concerned as I then started to strap a baby carrier to me too. The distressed look was apparent to the point where

she was picking up the phone to call someone whilst sharing this concern with a colleague who equally looked shocked. I don't know if I was more relieved or them, when I pulled baby Zara out of the baby seat in the back and put her in the baby carrier. This episode got me thinking about how prejudicial our society has become.

The second incident was when I was attending a trustee meeting at the Shipley Art Gallery in Gateshead. I always find the parking around that area a challenge, so I drove into a car park, that didn't say private to turn the car around. When I drove in, I noticed a security guard but then the door from the building flew open and a 15-16 year old Jewish boy stood at the door with such venom and aggression and was ready to pounce on me should I have got out of the car. This really saddened me.

The point of sharing these two examples of very minor incidents is that the inherent prejudices that now appear to further divide us, clearly demonstrate that we are going backwards as a

community. Individuals that are clearly disturbed and are trying to terrorise our communities are one in a million, thank God. What we need to do is provide a mechanism of understanding and enable a society that appreciates one another.

As you kick off this wonderful New Year, start with a resolution of developing an attitude of gratitude, simply thanking and being grateful for those around us. Write down each day something that you are grateful for, and you will be surprised at the positive impact this has on you and those around you.

**Remember the three D's in any resolution you make Desire, Direction and Discipline – have a goal, develop a plan, and most importantly stick to it, you will undoubtedly reap positive results.**

(If you get stuck please check out [www.ammarmirza.co.uk](http://www.ammarmirza.co.uk) for some inspiration, advice and guidance, where I will be posting a whole host of useful information every week to access for free.)

Wishing you all the very best.

**Ammar Mirza CBE is the founder and chairman of Asian Business Connexions, Board member of North East LEP and holds various other positions across the private, public and third sectors.**





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# REDU AND SUNDERLAND BID CHAMPION LOCAL HIGH STREET



Jonathan Ward and Sharon Appleby

North East firm Redu has announced an ambitious new partnership with Sunderland's Business Improvement District (BID). BID Head of Business Operations Sharon Appleby explains more about the drive to encourage shoppers back onto the high street.

We know that Sunderland is a great place to shop. However, like the rest of the UK, our high street is facing challenges.

That's why the continued promotion of our city centre is really important to us. We need to attract visitors and also ensure our local residents have reasons to stay closer to home.

Sunderland BID has one clear vision – to create a vibrant city centre and opportunities for everyone.

With this in mind, we were delighted to team up with Redu to work together and take action to combat the changing habits of shoppers.

## FREE HIGH STREET SAVINGS THROUGH REWARD ME NOW

Redu offered us the opportunity to offer a way for city centre businesses to reward their employees while driving traffic to our local shops through its excellent Reward Me Now app.

As part of its free Reward Me Now for business service, Redu built us a Sunderland BID-branded app which allows us to pass on major discounts and savings to the businesses in our area and their employees.

We will be inviting over 800 businesses in the city centre to sign up to the app, as well as other companies in the Sunderland Business Group, including Gentoo, Nissan and Stagecoach.

I myself have started to use the app personally and

the thing I really like about the platform is it's so easy and simple to use and you can save money in a lot of major retailers including Debenhams, Primark, Footasylum and Costa to name a few. We're also hoping to get our independent businesses on the app too.

We want to thank our businesses and help them pass on these great perks to their employees with a rewards app that comes at no cost to them.

There are hundreds of brands in Reward Me Now's portfolio and many of them have stores in Sunderland so it's perfect for local workers to pop into the city centre for a bit of bargain shopping. It shows you don't always have to shop online to get discount. We're also looking to implement independent retailers into the branded app going forward into 2020.

## BUILDING A VIBRANT CITY CENTRE TOGETHER

Redu are doing something really useful with Reward Me Now. This app offers great discounts in a simple and transparent way both online and instore.

You can buy all the things you want and pay less for them. We are really excited to team up with Redu. Our partnership with Reward Me Now could potentially bring new customers into Sunderland to shop instore, which will in turn help us to create the vibrant city centre we are determined to build.

## How does Reward Me Now work?

Reward Me Now is an instant discount app offering shoppers exclusive high street savings of up to 18%.

Members receive discounts at high street stores and online brands. Shoppers in Sunderland City Centre, for example, could use the app at Argos, Debenhams, H&M, Primark, River Island, M&S, Tesco and Topshop, to name a few.

Working in partnership with over 100 brands and growing, Redu offers instant discounts all year round, allowing savings both online and in-store, with regular users saving over £500 per year.

The app includes on-the-go deals and offers, updates via app notifications and e-mails, personalised deals, and the ability to track savings.

The brand portfolio includes retailers across the high street, supermarket, entertainment, food and drink and travel.

Reward Me Now for business is available completely cost-free to companies that would like to offer their employees free perks through a specially-designed app branded to suit your corporate style.

For more information on Reward Me Now for business, email [j.ward@redu.co.uk](mailto:j.ward@redu.co.uk) or call 01915630995.



# THE IMPORTANCE OF BECOMING A 'TOP BOSS'

Being a 'top boss' is very important.

The literature of the day is strewn with research that highlights how good leadership is fundamental to the success of any business. Author John C Maxwell refers to leadership ability as dictating the heights we will rise to in 'The Law of the Lid' and in their book 'Mastering Leadership', Anderson and Adams correlate leadership directly to business performance.

So it is obvious that successful leadership is a skillset that all business owners, directors and leaders must master. However, this is often trickier than it sounds as the practice of leadership continues to change at an ever-accelerating pace.

This is because people and their expectations have changed. One of the greatest consequences of change in the modern world is choice. We can now choose where we are educated, where we live, what we eat, what we believe, who we pledge our allegiance to and how we lead our lives.

We have a high and instinctive expectation of choice. We will channel hop, tariff swap and switch allegiances in a heartbeat. If we can't get what we want in one or two mouse clicks then we will take our attention and custom elsewhere.

So, it is the same in the employment scenario. People have a choice - whether to work for you, to work for someone else, or not to work at all. They have that choice and they are used to exercising it. Consequently, if you are not a great leader and your organisation is not a great place to work, you can expect two things. You can expect word to spread and very quickly, you can expect to lose staff when you don't want to.

If you aren't the employer of choice you won't attract the top talent and, if you are not careful, you may even end up employing people who choose to take your wages but are disengaged from the business.

The good news is that effective leadership is something that can be learned. And the practice of leadership is something that can be developed over time and with coaching.

No elite athlete or performer ever reached true heights without a coach and I am convinced the same is true for a leader. A coach will help leaders find out



what works best for them and will provide honest and candid feedback so that they can develop the necessary skills to adapt to their changing workforce.

Being a good leader is about behaviour rather than knowledge. It's about performance rather than intellect. Coaching isn't about the transfer of knowledge; it is about transforming behaviour and as such it is the perfect method to transform a boss into a 'top boss'.

**For more information on leadership or business transformation, please visit [www.kinnery.co.uk](http://www.kinnery.co.uk) or call 03300538550.**

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Whether that's delivering proven business advice or providing guidance on a more personal level to help reignite the entrepreneurial spark, we genuinely care about improving businesses and improving leaders.

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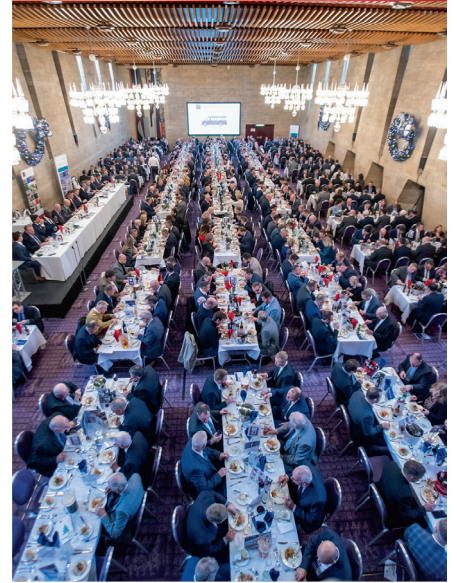
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## THE LORD'S TAVERNERS CHRISTMAS LUNCH

As always, it's held on the first Wednesday in December and signifies the start of the festive party season for the North East Business community. The 620 Guests at the Newcastle Civic Centre were treated to fantastic festive fayre and entertainment from Sir Alastair Cook, Matt Dawson and Steve Howey. Comedy for the day was provided by Simon Evans. The day was brilliantly compered by Pete Graves and Justin Lockwood. Regional Chairman, Jamie Graham commented "This year's lunch has as always been a fantastic event with a great crowd and brilliant speakers. The profit on the day for the charity has exceeded £41,000, which will be used in the region to provide disadvantaged and disabled young people with a sporting chance."







## TAKE CTRL OF YOUR STAFF THIS NEW YEAR

It's January, you've had some time off to rest and recuperate over Christmas, but also time to ponder the next financial year and how to get the best from your team.

At The CTRL Pad, Newcastle's very own premier video gaming lounge, we're professionals at making the day fun and what better way to motivate your staff with a fun-filled team building day to kick-start their year?

Having recently expanded due to huge successes in their first year of trading, The CTRL Pad's gaming lounge has brand new premises, kitted out with all the latest and greatest games and consoles.

Create some healthy competition and rally the troops for an action-packed afternoon of gaming, be it retro or modern, and whether you're a pro or haven't picked up a controller in your life, there's something for all ages and abilities at The CTRL Pad.

Get your staff together for some games that promote team work and encouragement for 1-1 games; they'll be sure to leave in high-spirits and you'll have definitely pressed the right buttons!

Why not top off the day with a team meal from their brand new menu? Whether it's a light bite or something a little more filling, The CTRL Pad have you and the gang sorted.

Follow them on Facebook, @The\_CTRL\_Pad or [www.thectrlpad.com](http://www.thectrlpad.com) or call 0191 250 52 64 to request a brochure.



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## COMEDY NIGHT - FUSION STREET FOOD AND REAL ALE

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Join the Northumberland and Durham Lord's & Lady Taverners for a unique comedy night with fusion street food and real ale at Wylam Brewery.

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To Book Tickets: Email: [Jan.mason@kpmg.co.uk](mailto:Jan.mason@kpmg.co.uk)

All funds raised will go towards the Lord's Taverners.  
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# WHY 2020 IS ACTION APLENTY FOR BMC RECRUITMENT GROUP

Following a hugely successful previous year in continuing to exceed client and candidate expectations, BMC Recruitment Group intend to repeat this in 2020 with the rapid expansion of their specialist teams in order to meet demand.

Chris Milnes, Managing Director, together with his various managing consultants within BMC, envisage doubling the amount of staff they have and plans are fast underway to do just that! There have been three more recent key appointments within the company with the addition of Nicola Reid, Dominic Gold and Connor Sheppard, each of them have some nuggets of wisdom to share with you about their predictions for the trends and activity in recruitment for the year ahead in their respective sectors.

Nicola has a 20 year track-record in tech recruitment, and, more recently has worked within international account management, recruitment supply chain management, inward investment and executive search. Currently running the Executive Search team within BMC, Nicola will be leveraging her skills in relationship building, networking and engagement to develop the current client base, working across all sectors on leadership, c-suite and non-exec roles. Nicola comments "I was drawn to BMC due to the entrepreneurial culture, energy and general good vibes along with the opportunity to make a real impact on the business".

In addition to the above, Nicola is passionate about mental well-being and hopes to add more value to conversation on this exceptionally important topic in 2020 as she is studying psychotherapy.

With 2020 looking to be an unpredictable year, Nicola is looking forward to the challenge of building her team as the market continues to be highly candidate-driven, with the war for talent (and retention!) set to intensify. In Nicola's own words, "bring it on"!

Dominic is now heading up the Finance and Accountancy team at BMC, and along with his specialised team of recruiters, he prides himself on being able to assist all manner of clients in recruitment search, whether it be for transactional, qualified, or practice candidates. With more than 10 years' of recruitment experience working across the



UK, Dominic has returned home to the North East and can offer a tailored and consultative approach for any client looking to add to their team. Bolstered by his dedicated and experienced team, Dominic has high hopes for 2020 and will be aiming to delight each and every client and candidate he works alongside. Dominic comments:

"Despite uncertainty across the political landscape, I have been pleasantly surprised with the buoyancy in the jobs markets across Accountancy and Finance since I returned to the North East last summer. Even compared to the South East and London, I have seen a strong flow of transactional and qualified finance roles to match a steady-flow of strong candidates. I expect to see a higher number of temporary and contract roles to begin 2020 as clients adapt to new market conditions and as a result, the market will be candidate-led with strong, available candidates having plenty of options as they look for new roles."

Business Studies Graduate Connor has worked within recruitment with a Global organisation since 2018. Connor mentions his reasons for joining BMC are "because of the creativity and autonomy the role offers and because I can recruit my own way within a growing business which gives me the opportunity to make an impact on the future growth of the BMC as a whole".

Connor's specialism area is Technology; he is experienced in working roles across a wide range in this sector from Cloud Computing and DevOps to typical Web/App Development on both a contract and perm basis. Connor is currently focussing on local technology businesses who value dedicated service.

Connor's outlook for 2020 is positive; he foresees that, despite political inertia and significant

change to the overall economy, due to the size and continued growth of the UK tech sector, recruitment in technology will continue to remain buoyant. He comments:

"We're working within a candidate-driven market and employment levels are highest on record since 1971. With an excess of jobs in the market, candidates are in the position to choose and will pick the best jobs for themselves on a personal level. Hopefully this means they'll be a lot happier in the role which they set their sights on based on suitability in relation to their particular circumstances and career aspirations, rather than necessity. For our clients, this should mean a happier workforce, higher retention and a healthy client-recruiter relationship, the only 'hhh' I want to hear going into 2020."

BMC Recruitment Group are delighted with the addition of yet more valuable members of the team who all work to deliver client and candidate recruitment needs locally, nationally and internationally. Each team member has in-depth knowledge and expertise across a range of sectors, throughout which they seamlessly provide tailored recruitment services. They pride themselves on consistently delivering highly specialist and comprehensive recruitment solutions spanning a wide range of disciplines including: Executive Search; Finance; Human Resources; Sales and Marketing; Construction; Risk and Compliance; Technology; and, Operations and Supply Chain. Please get in touch with Managing Director Chris Milnes if the team can be of any assistance to you or your business, Chris' email address is [chris.milnes@bmcrecruitmentgroup.com](mailto:chris.milnes@bmcrecruitmentgroup.com) and he'd love to hear from you.



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# RECRUITMENT TRENDS FOR 2020

Bryony Gibson, managing director of Bryony Gibson Consulting, shares the recruitment trends to look out for in 2020.



Bryony Gibson

Well, we've made it through another year where, yet again, political and economic uncertainty has created a difficult environment for many industries.

Brexit is still the most contentious topic, but it's certainly not the only item on business leaders' minds. Cybersecurity and keeping on top of innovation are also top priorities, as well as the ever-present challenge for businesses to recruit and retain the best people.

As we head into a new decade, encouragingly UK employment is at its highest level since comparable records began in 1971. In recruitment terms, this means we're operating in a candidate-driven market and, if you're skilled in your profession and looking for a new job, the world is pretty much your oyster right now.

Skills shortages have been employers' biggest challenge for a number of years, particularly in the tax and accountancy sector, but they have been hampering more than just recruiters. Productivity and staff morale have also suffered as a result of businesses failing to find the right people with the right skills and character.

Technology, talent and new innovations all combine to make it an interesting time for staffing professionals and, with that in mind, here are five key trends to shape your 2020 recruitment strategy:

## 1. Flexibility

The majority of office-based workers value flexibility above all else, so, with a shortage of available talent, companies need to become more accommodating in their approach. Provided it's genuine, offering flexibility in the workplace will give you the competitive advantage you need when recruiting. A rising trend for home-working and terms and conditions that allow people to integrate their work and personal life are also critical given the rivalry to retain top talent.

## 2. Hiring for soft skills

With strong competition for skills, coupled with advances in technology suggesting a number of repetitive jobs are soon to be automated, companies should consider hiring on potential as well as experience in order to future proof your workforce. Focusing on soft skills like communication, collaboration and problem-solving, you should aim to hire people you can train and who possess the essential skills to work in positions that are unlikely to one day be replaced.

## 3. Improving the candidate experience

People expect cutting-edge technology-led experiences in all aspects of life, and it's no different for recruitment. The companies that attract the best talent are proficient at creating recruitment experiences that turn potential staff members into new recruits. As a skilled professional with the right attitude, in today's market, you shouldn't have to worry about whether you'll be able to find a new job. It's the companies competing for your signature that need to worry, which is why we will see a lot more personalised and engaging recruitment strategies in 2020.

## 4. Employer branding

When you're repeatedly battling with competitors

to recruit the same people, you need to differentiate yourself as an employer of choice. Like any brand, your employer brand is a mark of trust and the benefit of building a reputation as one of the most desirable companies to work for is enormous. The top brands stand out in their industries as leaders. They have simple and clearly defined visions and goals, meaning they can sell their organisation's aspiration to potential employees much easier than most.

## 5. Diversity

Increasingly a business issue, companies with greater racial and gender diversity are said to be 35% more likely to have higher financial returns than their respective industry average. Looking ahead, as the number of European candidates has reduced in the UK, the businesses who are able to attract a diverse workforce will reap the long-term benefits in an increasingly competitive market.

Ultimately, business is all about recruiting and retaining great people. In a rapidly changing environment, it's easy to become worried about what the future might hold and, while the scarcity of high-calibre people is nothing new, in times of uncertainty, attracting and retaining the very best can be the difference between success and failure, so try not to lose sight of the end goal.

For public practice advice and expertise, get in touch:  
[bryony@bryonygibson.com](mailto:bryony@bryonygibson.com) | (0191) 375 9983.



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Paul McEldon, Chief Executive  
at North East BIC

## BIC SUCCESS AT NATIONAL ENTERPRISE NETWORK AWARDS

The BIC is pleased to announce it has won the Enterprise Engagement Award at this year's National Enterprise Network Awards (NEN).

The awards, established over 10 years ago, recognise excellence in the delivery of enterprise support, encouraging the exchange of good practice and the development of improved services and organisations. The Enterprise Engagement Award, in particular, recognises excellence from NEN member organisations who engage with their clients, or stakeholders, or local community in a multitude of different ways and are truly effective.

Paul McEldon, chief executive of the North East BIC, said: "To win a national award from your peer group is fantastic and testament to the hard work and impact the BIC staff have delivered consistently over the last 25 years.

"Our mission is to accelerate innovation and entrepreneurship through the delivery of a comprehensive range of professional support alongside providing high quality business premises. Advice, events and a community spirit is at the heart of the BIC offer and we remain committed to providing services to meet the needs of new and thriving businesses. Here's to the next 25 years!"

The BIC has now established its own social enterprise start-up, SME support and business growth service to enhance its existing business support services. Over the past 24 months it has made significant investment in promoting social enterprise services and is now open for co-operative and social enterprise business in Sunderland, Tyne and Wear, and County Durham.



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Open to Sunderland based businesses and residents, you'll get the opportunity to discuss your plans in detail with a Creative Business Adviser.

To book call 0191 516 6111 or visit [ne-bic.co.uk/events](http://ne-bic.co.uk/events)

## BOTTLING UP THE REGION'S SPIRIT



A North East entrepreneur is proving he has the bottle to go it alone with the launch of a new micro-distillery in County Durham.

Scott Wilson-Laing, who received support from the BIC, was inspired to launch WL Distillery after developing a passion for sampling rare, local delicacies whilst volunteering as an archaeologist overseas.

Having spent three years studying and traveling in destinations such as Italy (Pompeii), Cyprus, Turkey and Germany, Scott returned to the North East.

After years working in a number of 9am-5pm roles, he soon yearned for a change and decided to take the brave step of setting up his own business, with the goal of fusing his love for the North East with his long-held passion for producing and sampling niche local drinks.

"Wherever you go, there always seems to be a regional drink or spirit that represents that area and

it's nice to be able to experience the local delicacies whenever you visit somewhere new, it was what I loved most about being in different countries.

"Now that I look back, I've always had an interest in how things are made," he said. "When I was in Malta, they made their own spirits from cactus plants. In Cyprus, I lived in a village where the local priest grew his own olives and made his own spirits and I loved watching people make it.

"A Spanish wine reminds you of a holiday or a Raki that reminds you of Turkey, I want to create something that bottles up and gives people a real flavour of the North East, something that is reminiscent and evocative. That's what inspired me to launch WL Distillery."

Initially producing a signature gin – which is set to be released early next year – WL's products will take inspiration from the regional landscape, using fresh, premium ingredients such as blackberries, pears and apples to produce handmade, small-batch gin.

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*Matfen Hall*

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Paul McGowan

## APPRAISING THE YEARLY APPRAISAL

As we enter the New Year, the annual performance appraisal/review may still be fresh in the minds of many, whether as the subject of a review or as a manager conducting them.

Annual performance appraisals are often used by employers, not just to evaluate the performance of their employees from the previous year, but to award bonuses, pay increases and promotions and to also set targets for improvement where employees may be underperforming.

However, the days of the annual appraisal may be numbered. Amongst other criticism of the practice, an article published in the Financial Times in November 2019 suggests that these types of reviews do a disservice to companies, citing a survey which suggests that 95% of employees are dissatisfied with their employers' appraisal process. The article suggests that younger generations, in particular, expect more regular feedback to make more frequent adjustments to their work.

But what should the annual appraisal be replaced with? What new system should employers use to

determine performance and provide a fair process for rewarding employees?

Although I don't think there is a straightforward solution to this, I think that employers could do more to ensure that their annual appraisals are as effective as they can be. Here are some tips on improving performance at performance reviews.

- 1) Discuss performance regularly with team members. If there is an open dialogue then the results of an annual appraisal are less likely to be surprising or come as a shock to employees. The review should then hopefully accurately summarise the employee's performance across the year;
- 2) Be transparent with how performance is measured;
- 3) Share any notes with employees prior to their

reviews to ensure the review is as productive as possible. Just as with any other type of meeting, both sides will be in the best position where they have a general idea of what will be discussed about the meeting and have had time to prepare for it;

- 4) Be clear when defining next steps. Identify employees' strengths and areas where they might be able to improve, along with a plan for how to address these; and finally...

- 5) The performance review doesn't stop at the meeting, so follow up after the review! Put the next meeting you will have with the employee in the diary so that you don't forget to action the points addressed. By doing this, you're also demonstrating that you intend on addressing any issues raised at the reviews and they aren't just a box ticking exercise.

If you need any employment law or HR advice contact me at [paul.mcgowan@collingwoodlegal.com](mailto:paul.mcgowan@collingwoodlegal.com) or at 0191 282 2882.



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## HOW TO HAVE A HEALTHY DIVORCE

Deciding to end a relationship is never easy as it's not just the emotional issues you need to worry about, it's the practical ones too. It can be a really upsetting time for everyone, particularly if there are children involved.

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**Mental health matters can make things even more complicated for families going through one of the most difficult life experiences they face.**

That's where family law experts who are collaboratively trained, such as Gordon Brown Law Firm's Naomi Potter, can offer support. Naomi can help advise clients on alternative routes to dealing with differences in a face-to-face setting.

Based in the Newcastle and Chester-le-Street offices, she helps people achieve a healthier divorce for all concerned through the collaborative law process.

Naomi is an accredited specialist with Resolution, a UK-wide group of family justice professionals who work with families and individuals to resolve issues in a constructive way. She works with the family law team at GBLF on matrimonial finance and divorce cases, as well as complex family and property matters.

Naomi said: "Mental health and wellbeing is becoming increasingly important in family law cases. A family breakdown or disagreements between parties can take their toll on mental health and combined with uncertainties around money, it can be a recipe for disaster, sometimes leading to dependence on alcohol, drugs or gambling.

"I've had clients who have expressed feelings of anxiety and mental health issues because of litigation proceedings. It is our role as solicitors and advisors to ensure that clients are able to understand the proceedings and advice and more importantly, that they are able to process the information we give to them."

"Sometimes clients give instructions based on their emotional feelings towards their former partner and these can sometimes be irrational or perplexing.



Naomi Potter

"As solicitors we need to be mindful as to someone's mental state when advising them. A better way of achieving an agreement could be via a collaborative process."

As part of this process, each party appoints their own collaboratively trained lawyer and they work things out together, face-to-face by way of four or five-way meetings. The method is client-focused and each person can set their own agenda on the issues they want to discuss at the meetings.

Naomi said: "The collaborative process means couples make a commitment not to go to Court and that can take some of the stress out of divorce. Each individual can make their own decisions and communicate better with each other as a result.

"It's better for the children if they can see their parents working together to achieve an outcome and that in turn is better for the family.

"As collaborative lawyers, we manage conflict and can involve others during the process as and when needed. This could be a family consultant, financial expert or collaborative counsel who make up the collaborative team."

Naomi added that the collaborative process can usually prove to be a quicker and cheaper option than going to Court.

She said: "Divorce is an extremely stressful time for clients and therefore it is vital that they take care of themselves and that we, as solicitors look out for them too in the best way possible."

**With offices located in Newcastle and Chester-le-Street, GBLF offers a range of legal services and advice across all areas of family, residential conveyancing, wills and probate, dispute resolution, corporate and commercial law. For more information on GBLF visit [www.gblf.co.uk](http://www.gblf.co.uk) or get in touch on 0191 388 1778.**





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Sue Shaw-Toomey

## A POSITIVE ACTION

**"When you get up in a morning – make your bed." This was the advice handed out at a dinner I was at recently.**

**The logic goes, if you have had a bad day, at least you have a nice comfy bed to get into when you get home. However, you will have achieved something before you even leave your bedroom, and this positive attitude means you are more likely to achieve other goals during the day.**

It is the same with all those things you know you should be doing (or not doing!). As soon as you can tick one off the list, even a mental note in your head, you feel that you have achieved something and you feel good. Probably like you, I will not be drinking this month, I will be trying to go to the gym four times a week and I will be making changes to my diet.

For an easier win for you – make a will.

You know you should. You know that you want to make it as easy as possible for those you love when the time comes. You know that it does not invite ill health upon you. It is not expensive, it is not difficult and it could save you quite a bit of tax. It gives you the control over what happens to your money, but much more than that. Who knew

that you wanted "I'm still standing" to play as the curtains close?

In modern blended families it becomes even more important as the intestacy rules may mean that you are not providing for those that you want to do. Anyone with children needs to consider who they would like looking after their children. As difficult as these decisions are for you to make and think about, imagine what your loved ones would struggle with if, having lost you suddenly, they have to make these decisions without knowing what you wanted.

You may think that you do not have any real assets, so you do not need a will. It is sad but true however that a lot of us are worth a lot more once we have died. Life policies, pensions or even compensation can all add to your worth when you have gone.

Do not feel that you have to have all the answers to make a will. You get as many chances as you want to make a will. As your circumstances change, or the people in your life that you care about changes, change your will. Do not put off making your will

until you have all the answers. You never will have all the answers. But talking to a caring, experienced professional at Toomey Legal, may help you fill in some of the blanks. Speaking to a solicitor also ensures that you get the best advice.

People often want to make a will with their partner, but a will is a personal document. You can put anything you want in your will and it does not have to be the same as your partner's. Do not regret making your wishes clear when it is too late to do so. And even worse, don't leave loved ones wishing you had.

So this year, have a resolution that you can achieve more easily than climbing Mount Kilmanjaro or riding the Coast to Coast – give Toomey Legal Limited a call on 0191 6053710. Come and have a coffee and a chat (and maybe a piece of cake). Then leave feeling satisfied that that one of those things you knew you "should" do is now one of those things you have achieved.



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Rebecca Cresswell

## ALL I WANT FOR CHRISTMAS IS...A DIVORCE

We find a high number of couples seek legal advice in relation to divorce and separation in the New Year. Statistics show divorce rates rise in the month of January and continue up until the end of March in what has become a recognised post-Christmas trend. Christmas adds strain and pressure to an already struggling relationship and often couples are at breaking point.

At Sweeney Miller, we see it as assisting clients by taking away some of that pressure and to help them start afresh in the New Year. Couples who divorce or separate need to try and make suitable arrangements as to where a child should live or any other special arrangements which are needed for their children. Couples also need to have arrangements in place with the wider complexities following a split such as dividing assets, the family home, or pensions.

Some couples are able to reach an agreement themselves, but it is sensible to have the agreement put into an order which is approved by the Court so that it can be made legally binding. This would be as effective as an order made by a judge following a full hearing. In this scenario, we can draft the court order and liaise with your ex-partner to have the agreement signed to formalise the settlement. We offer a fixed fee where an agreement has already been reached, therefore you will have certainty about your legal costs from the start of the process.

However, we understand that breaking up from your partner is one of the most difficult situations to deal with and often people need assistance and guidance in reaching an agreement and sometimes negotiation is required. Not everyone knows that pensions can also be divided in a divorce settlement and they are often one of the most valuable assets in a marriage. We can advise you on what would be a fair settlement and if necessary, we can obtain independent financial advice from experts such as actuaries, accountants or financial planners. Sweeney Miller are one of the few firms that are able to offer payment plans to help you fund your legal costs which are assessed on an individual basis, such as payments made upon the sale of a property.

Following separation, sometimes there is a breakdown in the relationship between parent and child which is extremely tough for all involved.

We encourage parents to work together to reach an agreement on their children's care as the parents often know what works well in their family dynamic. If the result is left up to the courts to decide, often both parents leave feeling like they did not achieve what they wanted or expected. The Family Courts always focus on the children's best interests, but parents find court hearings daunting and it often creates a further divide between the parents. We realise that after a breakdown of a relationship, it is not easy to talk to your ex-partner, but we work hard on ensuring the children do not suffer from that. If an agreement cannot be reached, then mediation may be a useful tool for your family as court should be the last resort.

Rebecca Cresswell, Sweeney Miller Law's divorce lawyer said: "We understand that family matters are extremely difficult topics to discuss and are personal to you, but couples should remember that we deal with these issues every day and we can guide you through the process taking away some of the strain."

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**For anyone who is considering divorce or separation, please call Sweeney Miller Law on 03459005401 for advice from our team of specialists who can guide you through the process.**



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# BUILDING AND BENEFITTING FROM A DIVERSE BUSINESS LEADERSHIP TEAM

By Sarah Furness, partner in the  
employment law team at  
Hay & Kilner in Newcastle.

Issues surrounding workplace diversity are high on the agenda for many business management and leadership teams, not least relating to how they can ensure appropriate diversity within their own number.

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Studies have proven that the more diverse a business' leadership team is, the easier it is to recruit and retain talent and attract a more diverse range of clients and customers.

Yet despite these facts, and the considerable efforts that have doubtless gone in to tackling diversity issues, progress has not been as fast as had been hoped.

For example, as part of setting up the Hamilton-Alexander review to examine the gender gap in the top tier of UK business, former prime minister Theresa May set a target of one third of board members at the 350 largest-listed firms to be women by the end of 2020 – but the most recent figures showed that women only made up 27.5 per cent of board members in the FTSE 250 by November last year.

Similarly, research carried out last year found that only 52 of the FTSE 100 firms had board or executive committee members with a black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background.

This isn't, of course, just an issue for the very biggest firms, but one for every business to carefully consider and act upon, not least for their own benefit.

So how can you look to achieve a diverse leadership team?

First of all, it's essential to acknowledge the difference between diversity and inclusion. Diversity focuses on the makeup of your workforce, while Inclusion is the creation of a culture that enables diversity to thrive.



Sarah Furness

Even if your recruitment strategy leads to the creation of a diverse workforce, your culture has to enable these recruits' retention and progression.

Adopting policies which aid the promotion of diversity is crucial, most especially a detailed equal opportunities policy and recruitment policy, and don't then fall into the trap of introducing policies as a tick box exercise – implement and communicate them.

Ensure relevant training is provided to management teams, not only on equal opportunities, but also on leadership and coaching skills which enable their staff to flourish, and communicate effectively with them on what changes they think could encourage diversity.

Look at the steps you can take to actively promote

diversity, perhaps by promoting relevant charities in line with your corporate social responsibility policy or highlighting specific topics through the many national awareness days that now exist, and model your own behaviours around what you expect from colleagues in terms of encouraging and facilitating diversity.

For example, when recruiting for senior roles, are you unconsciously appointing yourself – or someone very like you – or is there an opportunity for you to go down another road?

Encouraging diversity in a leadership team is a long-term evolutionary process, but the potential organisational benefits are clear to see of doing something different to what you've always done.

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**Sarah Furness is an Employment Partner at Hay & Kilner. Should you have any questions about this article, or any area of employment law, please feel free to contact Sarah on 0191 232 8345 or at [sarah.furness@hay-kilner.co.uk](mailto:sarah.furness@hay-kilner.co.uk)**





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## FIZZ IN THE CITY

New city centre venue Eden was host to a festive Fizz in the City ladies networking event, run by Mincoffs Solicitors, which raised almost £1,000 for Smart Works Newcastle.

The event saw around 100 local business women come together to form connections and relationships with likeminded business owners and professionals in a fantastic location. A business card draw and pop up sale by Smart Works raised almost £1,000 to support the charity's work helping women return to employment with confidence.

Fizz in the City is a quarterly event run by Mincoffs, and details of future events can be found on their website.

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# SPEED UP DEBT RECOVERY AND BOOST CASH FLOW



Muckle LLP debt recovery team (from left): Beverley Oliver, Anna Douglas, Kelly Jordan and Katie Barrett

Muckle LLP's debt recovery team, ranked top in the North by Legal 500 UK, has some New Year's resolutions that can help businesses get paid quicker and improve cash flow in 2020.

The gifts have long since been unwrapped. The stockings ransacked. The dinner dispensed. Now you're getting back down to business, but is your list of debtors larger than you'd like post-Christmas?

January is often a quieter month than many, so if your corporate customers owe you money, now is a great time to tighten up your debt recovery, call in your debts and start as you mean to go on in 2020.

## Why is debt recovery so important?

It probably comes as no surprise that most organisations hold onto payments longer than they should. In fact a recent study found that 92% of businesses admit to paying late. So whatever organisations you supply, chances are, some of them have aged debt that is seriously impacting your bottom line.

The sad fact is that an estimated 50,000 businesses per year collapse due to late payments in the UK, so debt really has a serious impact on your ability to function properly.

With over 25 years' experience, Beverley Oliver, debt recovery manager at Muckle LLP, has helped hundreds of businesses get paid. Legal 500 UK recently acknowledged her success in helping businesses recover debts by recognising her as one of the North's leading specialists in this field.

Beverley is also vice-chairman of the North East branch of the Chartered Institute of Credit Managers. Here she shares some golden advice that will help make sure your cash isn't languishing in your customers' coffers for much longer than it should.

## New Year's resolutions for recovering cash quicker

### 1. Tighten up your terms

Make sure that your terms and conditions have a late payment clause and threaten to use it in your chasing letters.

### 2. Spot the signs

Look out for delaying tactics – excuses like "I never received your bill", "the company name is misspelt on the invoice" and "our director is away and she needs to sign-off payment". While these might be genuine, they are also a red flag.

### 3. Ensure your paperwork is right

If your customer has a purchase order number, ensure it is correct and on your invoices. Some businesses will delay payment because PO numbers aren't right.

### 4. Know who you are dealing with

Make sure you know the exact name and legal identity of your customer. You can also run a credit check on your client or customer before you start working with them and make sure that they have the means to pay. Failure to do so could result in late payments that damage your business.

### 5. Start early

Time is everything, so pursue the debt sooner than later. The older the debt, the more difficult it is to collect.

## What if the debt is old?

If you have a business-to-business debt that is over 90 days old, you can always send it to Muckle. They can recover your debt on a "no recovery, no fee" basis, and you will have one of the North's top

debt recovery team's supporting for your business. Alternatively, they offer to handle your case for a fixed fee of £50 (+ VAT) if that is easier and your debt is less than £15,000.

## 89% success rate on recovering debts

Based in Newcastle upon Tyne, the debt recovery team at Muckle LLP acts for businesses across the North East and beyond. They have an extensive range of clients, from individuals to large companies and public sector organisations.

Expect a hands on, personal approach to business-to-business debt collection, which is key to its 89% average success rate. As well as Beverley, the team includes restructuring and insolvency partner Kelly Jordan, who Legal 500 UK also ranks as one of the region's leading specialists.

The team also works closely with Muckle LLP's other experts and, with lawyers in virtually every area of commercial law, you can rely on getting the support you need if things get more complicated.

“

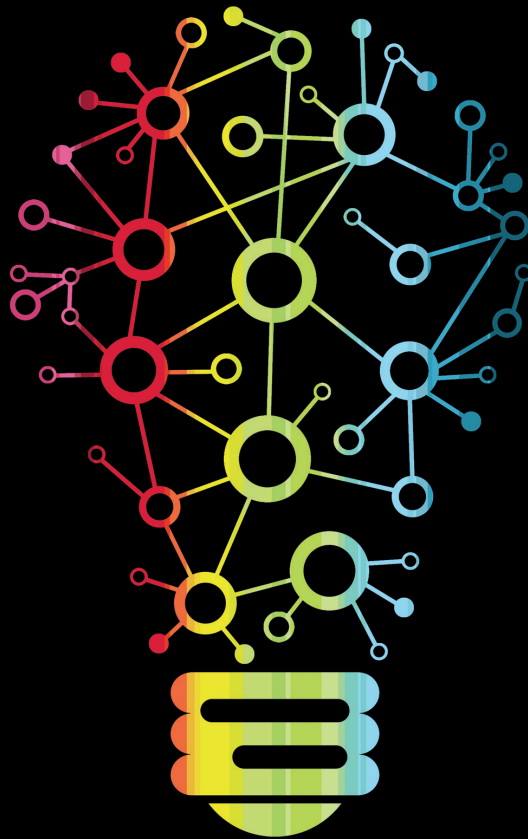
The team responds very quickly to queries and uses multiple methods of chasing the customer offering regular updates.

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”

To find out more or for a free consultation, please call Beverley Oliver, debt recovery manager, on 0191 211 7953 or email [beverley.oliver@muckle-llp.com](mailto:beverley.oliver@muckle-llp.com)





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## GREY STREET HOME FOR YOUNGSRPS

Chartered surveyors and property consultants youngsRPS have moved to 23 Grey Street, bolstering their presence in the city's property market.

In a strategic move to unite their growing commercial property and planning teams, youngsRPS requires a larger office space following its acquisition of Stanton Mortimer two years ago and an increased demand in services that's resulted in bringing on board more clients and expanding the team.

Director Michael Blake explained: "While our traditional rural and residential services remain extremely important to us, we have seen significant developments in our commercial work so our planning consultants are moving from Hexham to Newcastle to join our existing commercial property team. As well as bringing new clients on board, we've also welcomed new members of the team. Our new office space allows for further recruitment opportunities to support client growth both now and in the long term."

Tom Wills, Real Estate Partner at Sintons, supported youngsRPS in the acquisition of the Grey Street premises. The law firm is a longstanding adviser to the business.

## WORLD WHEEL COMPANY PARTNERS WITH BUILDING FUTURES EAST

Newcastle's East End is set to benefit from hundreds of new training and employment opportunities thanks to a new partnership announced by the developers of a £100m leisure, sport and food and drink development on the Quayside.

Developer World Wheel Company Newcastle was recently granted planning permission for its 344,445 sq ft Giants on the Quayside scheme in Byker. The initiative, which will feature a 460 ft tall giant observation wheel dubbed The Whey Aye, is expected to open to the public in 2023.

As part of its commitment to positively benefit and support the local community, the developer has teamed up with Walker-based Building Futures East, an organisation which encourages personal development and skills training in the city's East End.

The partnership between the two organisations will see the delivery of training and employment opportunities through the creation of the Giants on the Tyne Academy. It is hoped that many of those undergoing training will be able to fulfil the 800 or more jobs that the Giants on the Quayside development will create.



## WORK STARTS ON £1.2M REGENERATION OF FORMER GATESHEAD SCHOOL



The first steps in the £1.2m regeneration of a former Gateshead school have been taken as onsite construction work gets underway.

The green light has been given to ambitious plans that will see the redevelopment of the former 4,000 sq. ft. Marley Hill primary school house on the A692 outside Sunniside, which has been vacant for almost 10 years.

The move will see the old school buildings, which have been at the centre of the community for more than a century, convert into two luxury residential homes.

A number of new two, three and four-bedroomed properties have recently been completed on land to the rear of the school building whilst the former Victorian era classrooms are also being transformed into modern living accommodation.

Two five-bedroomed homes, which are expected to be worth in excess of £600,000 each, are being designed and project managed by Newcastle architectural technologists and design firm, Ergo Projects. Redevelopment will see the installation of a mezzanine floor whilst many of the former school's traditional features such as coat pegs and Victorian radiators will be retained.



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Contact rare! From Sanderson Young on 0191 2233500. [ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:ashleigh.sundin@sandersonyoung.co.uk) [www.sandersonyoung.co.uk](http://www.sandersonyoung.co.uk)





## OUTSTANDING NEW DEVELOPMENT SET TO FURTHER BOOST SALES FOR SANDERSON YOUNG

Sanderson Young's Alnwick branch are celebrating an exciting start to the New Year with the launch of an exclusive residential development in one of the country's most sought after coastal locations.

Coasthouses is the creation by Countylife Homes of four detached executive properties situated close to the centre of Beadnell village and just four hundred yards from one of the most beautiful stretches of coast to be found anywhere.

The office, led by branch manager Gillian Greaves, has recorded outstanding sales in 2019 and hopes to build further on this success moving into a new decade. Gillian commented "We were instructed in the sale of almost £20 Million worth of property on the North Northumberland Coast in 2019, which is outstanding and testament to the level of experience we have as a team operating in this location. Many of these properties have been snapped up by waiting buyers and have gone to best and final offers."

Largely due to the ongoing demand in the UK holiday home market, the Alnwick branch recorded turnover 25% higher than 2018. Over 60% of buyers currently registered with the team are in search of a coastal holiday home and the Coasthouses development will certainly attract many buyers looking for a stunning home for private or commercial holiday use in this charming village.

Amy Brice, Regional Residential Surveyor for Sanderson Young, commented "We are delighted to be, once again, partnering with Countylife Homes on bringing this outstanding residential scheme to the market. Countylife are very well known in the region as a trusted, independent developer with a focus on high quality, efficient homes that are extremely attractive in their design. Coasthouses is

a superb development of detached homes which have been very carefully designed to combine contemporary architecture and layout to maximise the benefits of its unique location."

If a Coasthouse is for you, you may need to be quick. With only four properties available, demand looks set to outstrip supply.

"These properties are in extremely high demand, with an active buyer database already indicating unprecedented levels of interest. I would strongly advise buyers to notify our team as soon as possible of their interest in the scheme. Following the recent election result, UK staycations are certainly poised to become even more popular and these stunning properties form a very sound investment", comments Gillian.

**Prices will be released on Saturday 4th January, when buyers can register their interest in off-plan reservations with Gillian directly at [gillian.greaves@sandersonyoung.co.uk](mailto:gillian.greaves@sandersonyoung.co.uk) or on 01665 600170.**



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## THE RICS MATRICS NORTH EAST BALL

The annual ball organised by the North East RICS Matrics committee, attended by firms across the property industry, took place at The Baltic at the end of November. Fun and games as well as a raffle were held to raise money for The Bradley Lowery Foundation. Lead sponsors, The Morton Group pledged to match all monies raised and Gemma Lowery and Lynn Murphy from the Foundation were delighted to attend.





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## KNIGHT FRANK'S 25TH ANNIVERSARY CHRISTMAS COCKTAIL PARTY

Around 300 guests joined Knight Frank's Newcastle team for cocktails and canapes to kick-off the festive season and celebrate their 25th anniversary.

The party, hosted at Barluga on Grey Street in Newcastle, was a chance for the Knight Frank team to thank all clients, colleagues and friends for their support throughout the year. Knight Frank Newcastle is celebrating 25 years in business - having grown from three to 76 employees to become the North East's largest commercial property agency.











Damiano Rea, Director, Heaton Property

## 2020 - AN END TO ANARCHY

I suspect the idea of a world without rules has been a daydream of children since the beginning of time. "I could live on sweets and milkshakes". "I could drive daddies' car". "I could go to bed when I want" and so on.

**With maturity comes the realisation that a world without rules would be a nightmare and that anarchy is nowhere near as much fun as the Sex Pistols song *Anarchy in the UK* tries to make it sound.**

When it comes to professional advice, we expect rules to be in place and those rules to be enforced. Nobody would expect their solicitor to have walked out of prison last week then setup in business. Equally, we can be sure our accountant was not a bus driver last week then decided upon a career change.

Yet astonishingly, either of those scenarios could apply to a newly launched lettings business. The release of the snappily titled Regulation of Property Agents Working Group (RoPA) report looks set to change that for the better. The report includes new licencing regulations for lettings and estate agents with a new regulator to police a code of practice.

Customer facing staff will be required to hold an NVQ Level 3 qualification, the equivalent of an A level, with company directors and managing agents required to hold an NVQ Level 4. Agents will be required to display a licence to practice issued by the regulator. Before granting this licence the regulator will check that the company meets its legal obligations and adheres to an industry approved code of practice.

Having spent most of last year railing against ill-thought out legislation in the lettings sector it might be imagined that I am about to have a major moan? Absolutely not. I am in full agreement with the Chief Executive of our professional body, the Association of Residential Lettings Agents (ARLA), David Cox, who said "This is a significant moment for those in the property sector and a huge leap forward in stamping out bad practice".

And I am delighted that the new regulations mean

absolutely no change to our business model or working practices. We have adopted the ARLA code of practice since 2012 and all our lettings and property managers hold professional qualifications. This is true of all reputable lettings agents who, like me, welcome the establishment and policing of professional standards. As for the small minority of disreputable agents who tend to give our sector a bad name, they may sign up for night classes or find a new business opportunity.

The new regulations are good news for both landlord and tenant since both can now be assured that their lettings agent is regulated, qualified and monitored in the same way as their financial adviser or accountant. Finally, the small number of rogue agents operating in our sector will be no more. Anarchy is only attractive to small children and as the ancient Greek philosopher Sophocles observed, "There is no greater evil than anarchy".





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## “The recent Rugby World Cup was fantastic but did the sponsors actually get any return on their investment?”

Firstly, who were the sponsors and can you name just three of the RWC's main sponsors?

They were:- Emirates (airline), Heineken (brewer), Land Rover (cars), Master Card (finance), DHL (logistics) and Toshiba (electronics). Secondary sponsors included Canon (cameras), Toto (bathroom fittings), Secom (security) and NEC (IT), all four highly developed Japanese companies, whilst 'Tournament Suppliers' included Tudor (watches), Toppan (print), Canterbury (rugby kit), Gilbert (rugby balls) and Ernst and Young (accountants).

The RWC is now the world's third largest event in the world (behind the Olympics and Football World Cup) and represents a huge sponsorship opportunity for organisations to associate with a growing global sport that is perceived to embody the very best aspects of diversity, equal opportunity, sporting skill, teamwork, sportsmanship, athletics, dedication and commitment to grass roots development – in short, a sponsor's dream with no negative connotations or links, no drug or sex scandals and, with the obvious exception of the recent Saracens wage cap debacle, few financial irregularities.

Link to this and you're saying to the world that your organisation believes in the same principles that saw the Canadian team this year quickly get over the disappointment of their final match against Namibia being cancelled due to Typhoon Hagibis and roll their sleeves up to help local people

at Kamaishi or saw legendary All Black, Sonny Bill Williams give away his RWC 2015 winner's medal to a young fan at Twickenham.

This is the elusive Corinthian spirit of sports but brought bang up to date with professional athletes dedicating their lives to excellence but never forgetting the humble grass roots that feeds the professional game. Its success has spawned the phenomenal growth of women's rugby whilst you just need to drop into your local amateur club on any Sunday morning to see how successful youth rugby has now become.

The economics and bottom line RoI (Return On Investment) are harder to calculate. Firstly because the actual sums paid by the sponsors are not public knowledge and, secondly, such sponsorships are complicated and for long term gain, not short term sales. I would hazard a guess, however, that due to the success of the competition – which saw a UK audience of 12.8m watching the Final – the sponsors will be regarding their investments as extremely good value.

The spiraling cost of TV broadcasting rights perhaps provides a yardstick to the increasing popularity of both rugby generally and the RWC in particular. The RWC only began in 1987 and was broadcast from Australia and New Zealand to the UK by the BBC. This was still in the amateur era of rugby and was, ironically, sponsored by a Japanese company, KDD.

In 1989, ITV won the exclusive UK TV rights for the 1991 competition for £3m, a bargain considering

the England-Australia final which paved the way for their continuing relationship. By 2002, however, ITV had to pay £40m for the rights to the 2003 and 2007 competitions which had increased by 2009 to £60m for the 2011 and 2015 competitions but the TV audience watching England's games in 2015 was estimated at 11.5m people. In 2017, ITV then secured the UK broadcasting rights to the Men's and Women's RWC competitions up to France 2023. The cost has not yet been disclosed but ITV has recorded 20 million users watching the live stream on ITV Hub, with the England vs Australia game attracting 11.5 million.

For commercial organisations, however, rugby attracts both ABC1 participants and an ABC1 broadcast audience that advertisers and sponsors fall over themselves to reach. The plethora of luxury goods, car, beer and razor adverts that punctuate the action demonstrates that advertisers have not missed the opportunity to capitalise, with the O2 network, for example, using the occasion to promote their sponsorship of England and the RFU, nor has the TV network, with a reportedly 10 fold increase from rate card for prominent slots.

So, just as the cost of broadcasting the competition has and will continue to increase with correspondingly larger audiences, so will the cost of sponsorship. For global brands like Land Rover, however, the sponsorship represents a superb opportunity to promote the brand, not solely in the UK but globally, particularly to the growing and lucrative Asian market.

**Do you need some assistance with your marketing, PR or design? Do you need to review your strategy or do you want to know how we can help your business? Talk to us. Email your questions anonymously to us today [hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk](mailto:hello@silverbulletmarketing.co.uk) or Tweet us (not so anonymously) @SilverBulletPR.**



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# NORTH TYNESIDE'S BEST BUSINESSES HONoured

The best of North Tyneside's businesses have been celebrated at the glittering North Tyneside Business Awards.

The annual awards, which are organised by the North Tyneside Business Forum, celebrate the huge contribution that businesses make to the local economy and how they make North Tyneside a great place to live, work and visit. They were organised by the North Tyneside Business Forum and sponsored by TEDCO, ENGIE, Capita and TyneMet College.

The winners were:

- **New Business – Little Acorns Childcare**
- **Leisure & Tourism – Little Bay**
- **Manufacturing & Construction – Blake Hopkinson Architecture**
- **Digital & Innovation – Clavis IDS**
- **Retail & Service Provider – The Printed Bag Shop**
- **Special Contribution Award – P&G**

The "North Tyneside Business of the Year" award for 2019 went to New York-based Clavis Integrated Display Systems (IDS) who are recognised as the industry leader for designing and manufacturing belt tension measurement equipment and automotive handbrake setting equipment worldwide.

The company has evolved over the years, initially producing LED displays primarily used in



airports. Over the years they have designed and manufactured a wide range of products from automated industrial refrigerator doors to bomb disposal robots for police forces and the military.

Mark Errington, Director said: "It's a pleasure to have been nominated and a great achievement to win this award. We've just moved to more modern facilities in the Cobalt Business Park and I can't wait to share this news with the team as it's their award. I'm very proud of everyone."

David W Bavaird, Chair of the North Tyneside Business Forum, said: "I'd like to say huge

congratulations to Clavis IDS on winning the award. To come on to win the Business of the Year award following their recent management buyout is a real testament to their success and commitment to North Tyneside."

There was also the Heart of the Community Award which was nominated and voted for by the public to recognise businesses which show that it is not just the cash flow of a business that counts; it is making a positive difference to the borough. The finalists were Morrisings's, Barrier Ex and Tynemouth Decorators. The winning company was Morrisings's from West Allotment.

Businesses who would like to know more about the business forum can contact [business.forum@northtyneside.gov.uk](mailto:business.forum@northtyneside.gov.uk)  
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# 2020 VISION FOR HIGHLIGHTS PR'S CLIENTS

New Year is a time for planning and changing things for the better. Here we meet some of Highlights PR's clients who tell us what their aspirations are for 2020.



"As I start to get busier and offer an increasing number of products and services, in 2020 I will make sure I share my information and news more regularly across social media so my potential and existing customers know how I can help them. Over this last year I started to work with a small accountability group, who have been invaluable in improving my productivity. In 2020, I will make sure I maintain regular contact with this group and be held accountable for taking steps everyday to move The Snowdrop Story forward." **Eleanor Baggaley Author, Educator, Coach, [www.thesnowdropstory.co.uk](http://www.thesnowdropstory.co.uk)**

"My personal business resolution for me is to get out and about again and attend at least one networking event per week. I miss them and I haven't been able to get out and about for two years and so 2020 is the year to change that." **Nicola Jayne, Little MINT Business Club.**



"To maintain market leadership, to develop the brand overseas and to develop two innovative new products for the healthcare market." **Paul Hobrough Physio and Therapy Hexham.**



"I'm looking to expand the business, take on a larger workforce and offer a relaxed and less pressure filled estate agency with the introduction of "Google" like office space. I'd also like to expand into Jesmond further and save vendors even more money." **Ross Parker Managing Director, Seven Keys**



"My 2020 vision is to lose the things I've gained that aren't working for me and take more targeted accountable actions to get my business fitter and sharper." **James Palmer, New Thinking.**

"To be more visible so that I can educate and assist more people to protect their inheritance" **Neil Fraser, Director Northumberland Wills and Probate**



"My business resolution for 2020 is to help more businesses in the North East fall in love with selling. In my first year I've helped 30 businesses and I'd like to double this to 60 in 2020." **Moirá Barnes - Moirá Barnes Sales Consultancy**



"Mine is to make more time to help and inspire others to do more and be more in life. So from the New Year I will be supporting my son's school as a School Governor and also working with a charity that helps girls aged 14-19 by aligning them with a female business person to help mentor them to do more in their life and grow and inspire them." **Nikki Masterman Managing Director Inspire HR**



**And finally, Keith Newman of Highlights PR.**

"To be the go to PR agency for value for money, expertise, imagination and the right mix of business and fun."







## UNDERSTANDING PR: WHY IS IT SO IMPORTANT?

Daniel O'Mahoney, managing director, Bradley O'Mahoney Public Relations.

PR is one of those things that everyone has heard of but many can't describe. Ask a student what they think PR is and they'd probably say handing out flyers on a street corner and even the savviest of businessmen who know that PR is a fantastic resource for their company struggle to explain why. They know that it generates results but how remains a mystery.

**At the core of PR is communications. In a crowded and competitive market place, having a PR team behind you that is persistently cutting through the noise of competitors will get your voice heard by the right people, ensuring that everybody knows your name.**

PR in a sales setting helps to build credibility and good will, creating a soft landing for companies in as much as when sales people are ringing up they are not making a cold call – you've already warmed the prospective client through a PR campaign that informs the market as to your products and services.

You know you've got a winning product but how do you get people to buy into you?

You can have the best product in the world but if people don't know who you are and what you are about then you're swimming against the tide. This is where PR comes in to play.

Your PR team will work alongside you to shape your brand proposition and put you on a pedestal as an industry expert that outshines your competitors in every way. By creating a compelling brand message that breeds trust and integrity you will remove any doubts that potential clients may have about working with your company.

Public relations is not only crucial in winning business but also in attracting the top level staff that every business needs in order to grow. Contrary to what many people may think, the employer does not choose the employee, it is the employee who chooses who they want to work with and in order to attract the best, you have to be seen as the best. The foremost way to do this is to create a culture within the business that encourages, nurtures and allows for personal development and then you need to promote this extensively.

PR people tell a great story. We do it at every opportunity and for good reason. Facts, figures and statistics, they're cold and uninspiring. You need people to like you and want to work with you and the best way to do this is by using a story-driven campaign that helps communicate the spirit of your brand in ways that engage and evoke an emotional response.

In a world where there are so many diluted messages going out you need to have clarity and simplicity in your communication. Working alongside a PR team you will pick out your key messages and values and not only will it help others to better understand what it is that is at the core of your business, you might be surprised to find out that you too will gain a clearer clarity on your mission and how to get there.

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





# MetroMail hosts IOSH Tyne and Wear Branch event

Last November, MetroMail hosted its own Health & Safety event with the Institution of Occupational Safety and Health (IOSH), the Chartered body for safety and health professionals.


The event showcased MetroMail's approach to health and safety in the workplace, highlighting the different controls, policies and measures that have been put in to place to ensure the safety of our employees and any visitors who come to our site.

We were also able to discuss how the mailing market is changing, and what MetroMail are doing to promote sustainable mail. For example, we have recently introduced a new fulfilment service with paperwrap enclosing, a sustainable alternative to polywrap for our customers.

One of the main aims for hosting our own IOSH event was to educate others on the importance of health and safety. This included showing all of those who attended real-life examples of any incidents or accidents that led to improvements in our health and safety through a site tour.


Our IOSH event was a huge success, with feedback from many of our attendees remarking just how valuable it was to see how safe working practices can be put into place.

*"We were delighted to host a site visit at MetroMail on behalf of the IOSH Tyne and Wear Branch and welcome a variety of local and important businesses to our company. This was a great opportunity to showcase our facilities and health and safety standards, as well as inspire other businesses through our own health and safety practices."* said Chris Pygall, Managing Director.




**MetroMail** IOSH Event  
Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> November

Name: \_\_\_\_\_



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🔍 DIGITAL MARKETING TRENDS 2020

Google Search

I'm Feeling Lucky

# DIGITAL MARKETING TRENDS 2020

Curtis Gabriel share their essential digital marketing trends for 2020.

**It is essential to stay ahead of the game in the fast-paced world of digital marketing, but with ever-changing trends and new technologies, this can be easier said than done.**

Here are our essential digital marketing trends that your business should consider when planning for 2020 and beyond.

## Voice Search

Marketers can no longer ignore voice search, with 55% of households expected to own a smart speaker device by 2022, meaning optimising your content for voice search therefore needs to be a priority in 2020. The way we talk is decidedly different to the way that we type, so your content should focus on phrases and longtail keywords and anticipate specific questions asked in a conversational tone.

## Personalisation

Consumers are increasingly more likely to buy from a company that offers personalised experiences and ad content. Consider how you can use the latest technology to target the right customer, with the right message at the right time.

## Social Messaging Apps

Social Messaging apps like Facebook Messenger and WhatsApp will become a key tool as part of your customer service and engagement strategy, offering

an alternative to online live chat functionality. Messaging apps also offer extremely personalised marketing via targeted ad campaigns.

## Interactive Content

In an increasingly competitive and noisy digital marketing place, new and original creative content can help your brand stand out from the crowd. Consider how your business could adopt shoppable posts on social media, simple AR/VR technology or established interactive content like 360-degree video, quizzes and polls to take your customer engagement to the next level.

## Google Smart Bidding

We've all heard of pay-per-click marketing and understand the basics, but automation and smart bidding on Google Ads is expected to become the norm during 2020. Smart bidding is a subset of automated bid strategies that use machine learning to optimise for conversions or conversion value. Smart bidding works for businesses both large and small and is optimised based on data from all of your previous campaigns.

## Content Lead SEO

Digital marketing demonstrates your expertise to potential clients, boosts your website's SEO and can help you create an captivating personality for your brand. In 2020, focus your efforts on creating interactive content and video - and remember, when it comes to video, quality over quantity is the answer.

For more information or to discuss your digital marketing visit [www.curtisgabriel.com](http://www.curtisgabriel.com)





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# SIGN UP TO SUCCESS WITH THE INSTITUTE OF DIRECTORS

Astute.Work provides management consultancy, PR and marketing to organisations wanting to articulate their purpose, manage change, engage with stakeholders and build profits both ethically and sustainably. Here managing director, Sarah Waddington looks at what it takes for directors to move from good to great with the help of the Institute of Directors (IoD).

Organisations need strong management teams to grow. Directors have to be able to draw on their extensive experience to deliver ambitious growth plans and deal with challenging situations, especially during times of uncertainty and turbulence.

As an IoD Ambassador working with the North East North branch, led by chair Ammar Mirza CBE, one of my responsibilities is to champion high standards and help directors secure the support they need to govern well.

Have you got the capabilities needed to build your business's resilience and ensure its sustainability throughout the UK's withdrawal from Europe?

If you're not sure, the IoD's Competency Framework is a great place to start. Whether you want to assess your development needs, set new goals, measure performance or succession plan, it's a great tool for checking your knowledge, skills and mindset.

## Knowledge

Not for the faint hearted, the Knowledge section of the IoD Competency Framework will test your expertise around corporate governance, ensuring you have the knowledge to steer your organisation towards achieving its objectives while operating effectively, responsibly, legally and sustainably.

It covers leadership and stakeholder relations to demonstrate how these, combined with a strategically aligned, values-based organisational culture, drive performance and growth.

The strategy element of the Knowledge section expects directors to demonstrate an understanding of vision and value creation and the ability to manage strategy implementation and change.

Directors are also expected to be able to assess their company's viability and steer its financial performance in order to stay solvent and develop sustainable plans.



Sarah Waddington

## Skills

There are six sections to the IoD's Competency Framework under Skills.

The IoD expects good directors to have the ability to think strategically so they can propose ideas, options and plans that take advantage of available opportunities while reflecting a broad and future-oriented perspective.

Data analysis is critical in order for directors to interpret information, simplify complexity and aid decision-making.

Decision-making doesn't come easily to everyone, so the Competency Framework tests the ability to evaluate proposals, handle uncertainty and take appropriate risks in the context of the organisation's strategy and the appetite of the board.

The remaining three skills pertain to communication, leadership and influence. The ability to communicate with disparate audiences, inspire others and build strong networks both within and outside the organisation all form part of the expertise that a director should be able to bring to the role.

## Mindset

Last but very much not least within the IoD's Competency Framework is the section on Mindset.

Directors must be ethical, professional, performance-oriented and independent. They also need an insight into their own emotions and behaviours.

Modelling organisation values and displaying high standards of conduct matters when you're in a leadership role. It's why the IoD expects its members to act with integrity, support a learning culture, encourage diverse views and recognise and limit bias.

Recognising that everyone has strengths and weaknesses, the IoD offers personal and professional development through nationally-recognised qualifications, e-learning and a local provision through partnerships with universities and training providers.

Everyone at Astute.Work commits to continuous professional development and in 2020 I have committed to work towards becoming a Chartered Director. How about you?

If you'd like help with any of the above, please contact Sarah Waddington at Astute.Work at [sarah@astute.work](mailto:sarah@astute.work) or on 07702 162704.



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# GETTING QRIOUS

They're a curious bunch at Qrious in Newcastle.

**Qrious is one of those firms that likes solving problems. In fact, innovation strategy is a growing and important part of what they do for their customers.**

Okay, they still design and build websites and mobile apps, just like a thousand other digital companies, but it's how they put the technology into practice that makes the difference.

"We don't start with the technology" said MD Nick Salloway.

"We start by helping our customers to understand who it is they're designing for and the real problem they're trying to solve. In the early stages, it's about asking lots of questions and pushing at boundaries. We love to challenge conventional thinking because we believe that's how new ideas and innovation really happen. We've learned to fall in love with problems, rather than solutions.

It's an approach our customers love because it gets results. They value the experience of working collaboratively with a small, agile multi-disciplinary team to get results quickly.

Instead of running long, drawn out and expensive pilots, we work with them to test ideas through rapid-prototypes, and either discard the idea quickly, and at minimal cost if it doesn't work, or if it does, to help them establish a business case for further investment and a plan to take the idea to market. The focus is on quick, lean and low cost, rather than slow and expensive".

Which brings us on to the core or what makes Qrious, curious. Nick and the team have developed what the firm is calling Q&A; a brand new service launching this year.

Q&A might sound like a fairly standard approach, but in this case, it really isn't. There are UX designers and software developers involved throughout – bringing an entirely different dimension to the 'blue sky thinking' approach favoured by stuffy grey men in suits. This is tech people solving business problems creatively – using design processes to drive innovation.

So how does it work in practice?

Nick describes Q+A as "a place to think...a mindset...an open and highly collaborative way of working that embraces intelligent failure as a mechanism to improve the process of generating and selecting which ideas to test, and which to run with or leave behind.

He goes on: "In practice it involves bringing people together to solve the right problems. We achieve that through design thinking and a structured innovation process that helps us prove an idea will make a difference and deliver new value for people.

It all stems from our own curiosity about how any business, no matter what size or sector, can be fundamentally transformed through digital technology and innovation. We believe passionately that every business needs to be thinking about this stuff, or risk being left behind by more digitally savvy competitors".

This is impressive, innovative stuff. The company has grown gradually and now have a core team of nineteen but when talking to Nick, it's obvious that simply growing headcount isn't his priority. "My priority is high quality ideas that our customers can afford to deliver, and which create value– that's ultimately what innovation is about, regardless of whether the end product is a new service, website, mobile app, or any other technology implementation".

And while Software technology is arguably their speciality, Qrious, crucially, have the skilled people who can show businesses how to use – and optimise - that technology.

And it works, for example, Qrious created and now manages the entire online presence for a highly respected international schools group which operates over 70 schools globally. Since they began working with them in 2014, the number of admission enquiries to these school has risen dramatically.

Also in the education space, the business works with several universities – including Newcastle University – helping them to improve the pre-application experience for students visiting their website.

The NHS is another valued client. The firm has been involved in developing mobile application software trials to help patients self-manage their condition more effectively.

They've also been involved with L'Oréal, Go Outdoors and Peacocks Medical Group.

"With all customers, our ambition is to come up with ideas to solve problems they may be experiencing. We work alongside our customers; we ask questions and we work together to create solutions. We, in effect, become their outsourced technology partner. We can provide a one-off solution or work long-term with their business.

So, here's an idea. Why not get in touch with Nick and his team at Qrious. Visit their website [www.qrious.co.uk](http://www.qrious.co.uk) to stay up to date with what they're up to.

Qrious. Curious by nature, innovative by design.





Nick Salloway





## IT FIRM GIVE TECH PLEDGE TO NEW CHARITY PARTNER

IT experts TruStack Ltd have pledged to fundraise over £7,000 to help parents with sick babies through special software that allows parents to track their young ones' progress.

The company, based in Cramlington, wants to raise £7,500 for new charity partner The Tiny Lives Trust, which supports the Neonatal Unit at Newcastle's RVI Hospital. This is the same amount that it costs annually to run vCreate, a secure video messaging service that allows clinical teams to send updates on children to their parents when they can't be together.

The partnership between TruStack and Tiny Lives came about after the charity helped two of the company's directors through difficult times. Both Paul Watson and Russell Henderson were supported by Tiny Lives and the pair have been wanting to pay the charity back ever since.

Paul and Russell make up two of the six directors of TruStack, which provides a range of IT services for businesses across the North East and beyond. These include cloud computing, infrastructure design and implementation, data centre services and managed services.

## FURTHER GROWTH FOR DURHAM IT PROFESSIONALS



Following a string of achievements and rising demand for its services, a Durham-based IT service provider is preparing for further growth.

After experiencing 25 per cent turnover increase during the last 12 months, Concept IT, which is based in Tanfield Lea Business Centre, is preparing to welcome new staff to the team following an office expansion. The firm, which works with well-known North East small and medium sized businesses in numerous industries such as third sector, healthcare and finance, is looking to appoint five new members to the team, including two technicians, an account manager, a community manager and a service dispatcher.

Speaking about the growth of the firm, Managing Director Kevin Embleton said: "At Concept IT we care about our clients, we get to know them and become part of their team. This is why we continually improve our services and growing the team will help us to do just that. It's been a fantastic year for Concept IT and I'm incredibly proud of the team and what we have managed to achieve, but the best is yet to come."



## NORTH EAST'S BIGGEST TECH CAREERS EVENT RETURNS FOR THE FOURTH YEAR

The North East's largest tech-specific careers and opportunities event is returning to the region in 2020 for the fourth time. Tech Talent 2020 will see over 70 leading North East businesses, universities, colleges and training providers gather to attract and retain talent in the region.

Tech Talent 2020 supports job creation and growth within the technical and digital industries. The one-day event is expected to attract over 1000 delegates and will take place on the 12th May at the Boiler Shop in Newcastle upon Tyne.

The event has already attracted the attention of some of the region's most exciting employers including Scott Logic, Enigma Interactive and PGL. In total, Tech Talent 2020 is expected to feature over 70 exhibitors who will be discussing the roles and opportunities on offer within the digital and tech ecosystem.

Tech Talent 2020 is managed by Sunderland Software City (SSC), an organisation enabling the growth of the technology sector in the North East of England. SSC is currently taking bookings for exhibition and is offering an early bird rate until 31st Jan.



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## CLOUD SECURITY – WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW ABOUT STAYING SAFE

The ease of accessing and consuming cloud services in both our professional and personal lives has led many organisations to neglect security issues in favour of focussing on the benefits.

While we are passionate advocates of the benefits of cloud and its ease of connectivity, we make no claims that it is the solution for every business. As technology experts with a 20-year pedigree, our mission is to help clients understand that the easier and more convenient the cloud service, the more open it is to risk, and that risk needs to be properly managed.

When it comes to public versus private cloud, some people will tell you one is more secure than the other. This is not inherently true – real security comes from your cloud strategy and how it is implemented and managed.

Complacency could be your downfall when it comes to cloud security. You may feel confident that your firewall and other perimeter security is in place, and – assuming you have chosen the right IT partners – you may also have the very latest in cloud access security brokers (CASB) placed between your cloud provider and your consumers.

But all of your state of the art security measures are compromised if you have failed to realise that

staff members who acquire new smartphones or tablets are happily connecting them to your networks without your IT department's agreement or knowledge.

Some experts say that employees cause more than 60% of security breaches, whether intentionally or not, and IT managers say that one of their biggest headaches is not having the opportunity to assess devices before they are connected.

Thanks to cloud services, staff can now connect to your systems from various devices without needing to use your virtual private network, and it follows that you are open to threat if they are using untrusted internet connections and platforms.

File sharing on public cloud platforms, which we are all very familiar with, can be a particular pitfall. Imagine that you have large files detailing sensitive client information, which need to be exchanged between your staff. Did you know that using popular public cloud-based file transfer platforms such as Dropbox or WeTransfer can lead to security breaches if not configured and

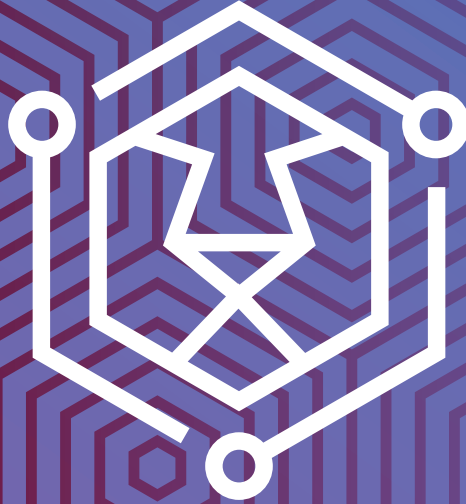
managed correctly?

The question about where their sensitive data is being physically stored is one that never arises in many organisations. The current position is that offshoring data outside of the UK can only be stored in countries which provide an adequate level of protection as set out by the European Commission.

With the 'will we won't we' Brexit situation rumbling on, we could see some major changes around data flow. If we leave without a deal, the UK's General Data Protection Regulation will not be considered 'adequate' by the EU, as the UK would be classed as a third country. If your data is stored in an overseas data centre you might want to review your data strategy sooner rather than later.

If you are talking about cloud don't forget to do your security homework before you make any decisions. Give our experts a call or come along to one of our regular security briefings and find out more about how to protect your business.





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Steven Symonds

## DIGITAL PRODUCTS AGENCY CONTINUES EXPANSION

The North East digital sector is flourishing. Two years in, and NE6 is 'exporting' its digital skills beyond the region to a national audience. We spoke to founder and director Steven Symonds about his current success and future plans.

### Why did you set up NE6?

After over a decade of working together, Steven Gibbons and I wanted to give focus to creating digital products and exploring new and exciting technologies within that space. I'd fronted somebody else's business for many years and wanted to run one myself. Websites will always be a passion, but solving problems for business by creating digital products is more rewarding. They can help transform a business to more efficient ways of working.

### What's different about your services and offer?

We are one of the few agencies across the North East focussed on JavaScript technologies, such as ReactJS, leading the way for building online platforms and products. This is a latest technology and is highly flexible for our clients.

### Tell us a little about you and your team

My background is creative. I actually thought I would work more in the offline creative sector

when studying; I trained in graphic design but have spent my entire career to date in the digital world! We have a brilliant team of skilled developers. Everyone brings their own high level of skill, but also enthusiasm and commitment. They are onboard with the vision for NE6 and where Steven and I want to get to over the next 12-18 months.

### Two years in, what's your biggest achievement to date?

Two things for me. Forming the team we now have and being able to expand out of the region. We have some wonderful regional clients – which include Northern Gas and Power, Sanderson Young, Ebac and Premier Medical. But, by not restricting ourselves geographically we can access more exciting projects for the business to work on. I'm on the train to London on a regular basis, meeting clients while also developing new contacts. We're really proud of our North East roots but we see our opportunity as national. I hope we can announce some exciting new business wins early in 2020.

### Your biggest challenge to date?

Starting your own business is always a little daunting. Steven and I felt reasonably confident but it's only until you do it and you have a few months trading under your belt that you believe you're on the right track. One of the other biggest challenges has been migrating into the digital products space – moving from relatively straightforward website builds to designing and building software, platforms and apps. This has been a steep a learning curve that has been invigorating to now understand and be part of.

### Focus/plans for 2020?

We're keen to maintain the strong growth we've enjoyed these last two years. We'll be looking to recruit more developers, perhaps an account handler or two and also find larger premises. On the new business front, I hope to find bigger and better projects to allow us to showcase the talent within the business and put NE6 on the map as a leading digital product agency, while providing some great employment opportunities for the region.

For more details about NE6 and their work visit [www.ne6.studio](http://www.ne6.studio)



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# WHAT IS THE COST OF A GOOD EDUCATION?

By Kieran McLaughlin,  
Headmaster at Durham School.

One interesting study recently looked at the highest performing state schools in the national league tables this year and analysed the cost of houses in the catchment areas of those schools.

What they found perhaps won't surprise you, but the full extent of the premium on living close to those schools was quite shocking. The average price for a detached house near one of those schools was over a million pounds. Whilst the education itself may be free, being in a position to access it came with a hefty price tag.

Nonetheless, independent schools are very conscious of the sacrifices parents make to send their children to our schools. However, it may not be as much as you think. We work hard to make our schools within the reach of as many parents as we can, and one of the ways in which we do this is through the award of scholarships and means tested-bursaries.

Most schools offer scholarships on entry to recognise excellence in a number of areas: academic ability, sport, art, music, drama and sometimes one or two others. These are usually awarded based on assessment according to various demanding criteria. Scholarships usually carry a fee remission, and it is here where we have seen a change over the years. Nowadays most schools have moved away from high value scholarships towards a much smaller basic fee reduction. However, the scholarship can be augmented by a means-tested bursary up to – in some cases – 100% of the fee. The crucial aspect though is the means-testing; the level of the award is related to parents' ability to pay rather than how well the pupil performed in the assessment.

Why have schools moved to this system? One answer for most independent schools lies in their charitable status. This is an aspect which has come under attack from politicians in recent times; how, they say can schools such as (inevitably) Eton call themselves charities when they educate



Kieran McLaughlin

the very rich? The very act of education itself is charitable, but even those of us at independent schools less well-resourced than Eton are obliged to give something back to those for whom access is difficult.

The second answer is that independent schools have long prided ourselves on the excellence not only of our academic provision but also in the areas of our sport, music and drama. Despite the sector educating an average of 7% of the UK population, a third of all British athletes who won medals in the 2016 Olympic games were educated at independent schools. Independent schools still send a disproportionately high number to Russell Group universities. We believe our schools, freed from overbearing accountability regimes and funded more appropriately, provide an environment

where opportunities abound for pupils to capitalise on their talents. Those pupils in our schools who have scholarships not only have the best teaching, coaching and mentoring possible to develop their talents, they also serve as inspiration to those around them

We can only achieve this aim in our schools by widening participation wherever we can. Most independent schools do not have large sources of funding separate from fee income so providing bursary support is not easy. However, through careful deployment of resources, and also through the generosity of those who have benefited from an independent education and want to enable others to do the same, we do try as hard as we can to allow talented pupils to join us. Contact your local independent school to find out more.

For further information about Durham School, or to arrange a visit, call 0191 731 9270, email [admissions@durhamschool.co.uk](mailto:admissions@durhamschool.co.uk) or visit [www.durhamschool.co.uk](http://www.durhamschool.co.uk)



# NEW YEAR, NEW YOU?

By Simone Niblock, Headteacher, Durham High School for Girls

I hope you had a fabulous Christmas and that New Year's Eve was a rewarding experience. As we settle into 2020, I wonder if you have already broken your New Year's resolutions, if you decided to make any? According to various sources, the ancient Babylonians were reputed to have been the first people to make New Year's resolutions, probably about 4,000 years ago. During a 12-day religious festival known as Akitu, the Babylonians crowned a new king or reaffirmed their loyalty to the reigning king. They also made promises to the gods to pay their debts and return any objects they had borrowed. If the Babylonians kept their promises their gods would bestow favour on them for the coming year. If not, they would fall out of the gods' favour. These promises could be considered the forerunners of our New Year's resolutions, although we don't have the added fear of worrying that we might incur the wrath of ancient gods if we renege on our promises!

Common resolutions in the 21st century include the inevitable gym membership and losing a few or more inches around the waistline. Dry January is also a popular - and relatively recent - phenomenon and seems a sensible thing to do for those who might feel that the bibulous excesses of the Christmas season need to be atoned for in the new year.

For those of us in education, for some, the new year is a time for sitting mock exams (students), marking mocks (teachers) and scrutinising aforementioned mocks (Heads of Departments, members of the Senior Leadership Teams). Despite the fear and misery that such exams may instil into those unfortunate students who have had to spend a portion of the holidays cramming information into their 'carbed-out' brains, the aftermath can be a very worthwhile experience, as they can learn what they did wrong and what they need to do to rectify mistakes before the actual exams.

So, as the third decade of the twenty first century begins, let's look forward to new beginnings and to (trying) to learn from past mistakes. Sláinte Mhath!



Simone Niblock

[www.dhsfg.org.uk](http://www.dhsfg.org.uk)

## NEW YEAR'S RESOLUTION – MUST VISIT SACHINS DURING NE1 RESTAURANT WEEK

If your New Year's Resolution in 2020 isn't to visit the newly refurbished Sachins Punjabi restaurant on Newcastle's Forth Banks, well what's wrong with you?

With a great choice of both healthy, tasty and indulgent authentic Punjabi dishes on the menu, there is no reason to not go, whether the New Year, New You diet has kicked in or not.

The ever-successful NE1 Restaurant Week is on between 19th and 25th January this year, and if money is tight, it's very affordable and cost-effective too with just £15 for two courses and a side dish.

Chef and owner Bob Arora prides himself in the deliciously creative and authentic food served up at Sachins, and, as they are now into their 37th year of trading, it would seem that their clients love what the team serve up too.

If you've over-indulged at Christmas, Punjabi Tandoori dishes are a great way to kick-start that healthy eating plan, whilst not feeling that you're in any way being deprived. Alternatively, if you want to treat yourself to one of the more indulgent dishes, then there is an array of delicious choices on their extended menu, for all to enjoy.

If you're a regular at Sachins, or have always wanted to go, but just never got around to it, then NE1 Restaurant Week is as good a time as ever to try, plus, it won't break the bank!

The restaurant is extremely popular, so to qualify for the NE1 offer, you must book a table in advance via their website [sachins.co.uk/bookings/](http://sachins.co.uk/bookings/) or by phone on 0191 261 9035.

Well, what are you waiting for?

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

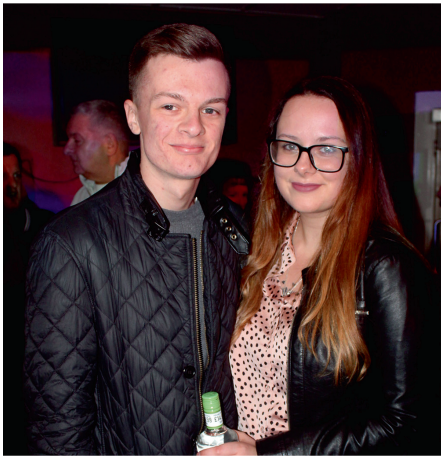






## 18TH BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

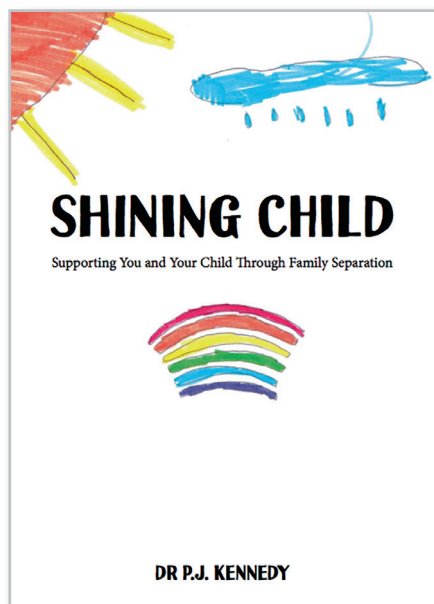
Brian Dickinson, owner of The Brookvale Group, recently hosted an 18th birthday party for his daughter Emily at Jesmond Cricket Club. Guests enjoyed a sumptuous buffet and danced the night away to a host of great music.





# 'SHINING CHILD' TO HELP NORTH EAST FAMILIES

A North East based consultant in Clinical and Forensic Psychology has written and released a book to support families experiencing separation and divorce, at the time of year many families find the hardest.



Post Christmas sees the biggest month of the year for the start of separation and family breakdown, so Dr P J Kennedy is keen for people to know about his book, which is written from a combination of his career knowledge and personal experience.

'Shining Child' has been written to help both the parents and children going through such times. It reaches out with advice and guidance, practical suggestions and daily prompts that grow out of the need of every child to love and be loved.

Dr P J Kennedy, who has also published a number of delightful children's books written and illustrated through the eyes of his daughter Lucia, said:

"As well as the professional knowledge I have accumulated through my own career, I wanted to incorporate what I have learned through my own experiences. I therefore offer my reflections with tenderness, compassion and love, as well as a healthy dose of practicality. The book will work well for anyone who works within the industry as well, such as family liaison, family solicitors and schools, where children need the support of significant others if home life is difficult."

In his working day, Dr P J Kennedy frequently performs assessments in cases in which children and families are involved in criminal or civil proceedings and where issues of personal injury, alternatives to custody, learning disability, reliability of defendant statements, risk assessment, childcare, child protection, parenting, fostering, adoption, residency and contact are significant. Clients include private law, Police, Solicitors, Courts, CAFCASS and other registered bodies. He has many published papers,

and presents at conferences.

As well as 'Shining Child', Dr P J Kennedy has released a series of children's books that are short stories with big lessons. They are all pulled together in 'Superstar Child - an anthology of short stories about a girl named Lucia'.

He concluded: "Christmas is a hard time for many children in a house where the adults don't get on. And separation is higher in January than any other month in the region. Hopefully 'Shining Child' will help some families navigate kindly and sensitively prioritising the child's needs, and Superstar Child is just a delicious book to share with children, all year round!"

Both books are available in paper back and kindle, from Amazon.



More information and how to contact Dr P J Kennedy should you wish to work with him or contact him is on [www.drpkennedy.com](http://www.drpkennedy.com)



# OUT & ABOUT - FRANKFURT

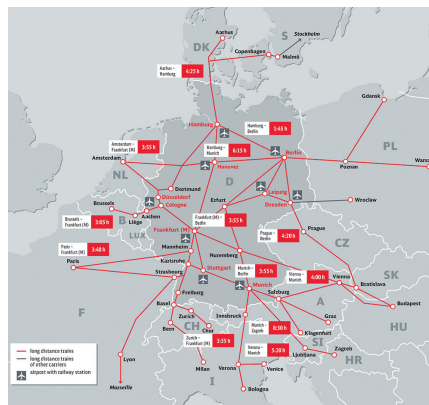


I recently took what was expected to be a post-Brexit trip to Germany on a rare excursion abroad for this column. By the date of travel, we were still in the EU.

Our party gathered at the Eurostar terminal at St. Pancras in London (next to King's Cross) and used the Deutsche Bahn ICE service from Brussels via Cologne to Frankfurt. Leaving London at 0857, we arrived at Frankfurt at 1516.

Frankfurt is the fifth largest city in Germany, with only 750,000 inhabitants, but is the major financial centre of the country. It has a twin city arrangement with Birmingham. Frankfurt has its own large Christmas Market in the old town, and the new old town which is an exciting using buildings which look like they are ancient, but have been built recently using traditional skills.

It grew as a result of medieval trade fairs, and the first currency exchange for traders was established in 1585 with uniform exchange rates for the various types of money traded at the fairs. A city state for years, its St. Paul's church was used for the first parliament of the new German state in 1848, and it is home to thirty museums in a burgeoning cultural quarter. Now, 90% of trades on the stock exchanges are done in the city. 14 of the 15 skyscrapers in the country are in Frankfurt, which is the HQ of many banks and the European Central Bank. On an evening guided tour around the city, we saw the large illuminated blue Euro



sign, studded with twelve gold stars to represent the founding members of the EU. We were not one of the first 12 countries, so they won't have to take one off if/when we leave!

We had a meal inside one of the restaurants in the Christmas Market area, including the apple wine which seems more popular than beer. We returned to our hotel, the new Hyatt Place, on the S Bahn (suburban railway) and a shuttle bus from the airport station, where we had first arrived. Great excitement there, for on December 15 there is a

new S-Bahn station opening adjacent to the hotel called Gateway Gardens which will make that business park one of the best connected in the country, and therefore in Europe. The new station will be the first in Germany to bear an English name. Incidentally, that date is also the day for timetable changes in Britain, on the second Sunday in December.

On the second day I wanted to see a bit more of the city, using the mix of underground trains, the U-Bahn, with nine lines, the S-Bahn, nine suburban lines, and the Strassenbahn or street trams with ten lines. The local buses were on strike. The picture shows a tram approaching the station at the Messe, where trade fairs are now held, showing the green carpet that many of the tram lines run on. Underground trains run in tunnels in the centre, but in the suburbs they run on reserved trackways or on the street. The city is justly proud of its public transport system which has been heavily invested in over the years. Owing to the cancellation of a high speed ICE train on the way back we sampled the rival Thalys service from Cologne to Brussels and passed over the UK Border in Brussels Midi station before boarding the new Eurostar train via the Channel Tunnel on the way home.

Alex Nelson stayed at the Hyatt Place hotel in Frankfurt and travelled courtesy of Deutsche Bahn.  
[www.nationalrail.com](http://www.nationalrail.com) [www.frankfurt-tourismus.de](http://www.frankfurt-tourismus.de) (select English language)



# HAVE A HAPPY, HEALTHY 2020

We're sure you've all vouched to cut down the sugar, put away the cheese and start 2020 a little healthier, but as soon as you get back to work and normality, it tends to go out the window. So that's why the Maldron Hotel Newcastle wants to give you a little helping hand.

Introducing the first of their January offers, the Happy Healthy 2020 day delegate meeting rate of £27pp, will switch up your typical carb-fuelled meeting buffet, to a healthy lunch, grazing station and unlimited tea, coffee and refreshments, to help you stay on track this year. The city centre location, which is just a five minute walk from Central Station, and modern meeting rooms to hold up to 80 delegates, make it the perfect place for your events and conferences.

Second of all, the Maldron Hotel Newcastle will be offering some amazing discounts on stays at the city-centre, Newgate Street retreat, with 15% off Room Only and Bed and Breakfast rates. So if you need a break after the festive season, make the most of this limited time offer.

Last but by no means least, Maldron will be launching their brand new food menu at their Grain & Grill restaurant, offering 3 courses for £15 and 2 courses for £10 during NE1's Restaurant Week (18th-25th January). So no matter what you're looking for this January, Maldron Hotel Newcastle gives you a reason to visit.



For more information head to [www.maldronhotelnewcastle.com](http://www.maldronhotelnewcastle.com) or contact Maldron Hotel Newcastle on 0191 650 9500.

*Offers subject to availability. T&C's apply.*

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## LITTLE ON PRICE AND BIG ON AMENITIES

By Michael Grahamslaw

The Village Hotel offers a high-quality, highly affordable alternative to city centre accommodation for those looking to explore Newcastle and beyond.

From its prime site on Cobalt Business Park the hotel offers deluxe accommodation and as its name "Village" may suggest, also offers plenty to do with an in-house Starbucks, 25 metre swimming pool, 24 hour gym, spa and a "Pub & Grill" sports bar.

Despite frequently using the hotel for business meetings, I had never actually stayed so I rocked up with my son Jack to set the story straight.

A lovely friendly vibe underpins the hotel and we were warmly welcome on arrival before checking out our room.

This was a supremely stylish space decked out in a funky colour palette of blue, orange and chrome. In addition to the room's premium bedding, free wifi and a flat screen TV, the marble-laden bathroom comprised a smart rain shower with one of the biggest shower heads we'd ever seen! Perfect then for a quick blast before changing into our evening clobber.

But what are two lads to do when left to their own devices on a bleak mid-week evening? Well, the

answer here is simple. The newly refurbished Pub & Grill welcomes residents and non-guests alike offering great value comfort food and a selection of the good stuff on task. Big screen sport is another top priority so we slumped down in front of the TV for an informal dinner watching a double header of Champions League football.

This is hotel fayre at its very best and we kicked off with the calamari and shrimp basket along with the BBQ chicken wings which were shared out between father and son.

For main course, there's a tasty mix of flatbread pizzas, club sandwiches, classic burgers and wholemeal wraps. There's even a health conscious "500 club" - a selection of nutritionally balanced dishes of 500 calories or less. Let's not forget that the Village Hotel boasts one of the largest gym membership followings in the area.

Following up, yours truly chose the pepperoni hot pizza, clearly freshly hand-rolled into a long rectangular shape and presented on a sharing plank. Sharing here was not an option though as young Jack was already wading into the streak frites with

real gusto! Now talk about a chip off the old block.

Totally replete, we swerved desserts though did linger for a while over an excellent bottle of Malbec whilst watching the post-match interviews.

The following morning, we rose early and headed for the hotel's state-of-the-art fitness centre. The Village Gym experience is endorsed by the likes of Sir Mo Farah and Joe Root so naturally this former swashbuckling number four batsman slotted in well!

The spacious suite features all the latest cardio and resistance equipment and even a spa area complete with swimming pool, sauna and whirlpool.

With a fair few calories in the credit column, we looked forward to a good cooked working breakfast, served in the Pub & Grill which had been transformed for breakfast time.

Heading for home, we both agreed that our debut stay at the Village Hotel had been long overdue. Following a recent refurbishment, this hotel is a real class act and offers much for the business and leisure traveller.

For more information, visit [www.village-hotels.co.uk/hotels/newcastle](http://www.village-hotels.co.uk/hotels/newcastle)



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## ELLINGHAM HALL'S GM IS NORTH EAST EMPLOYEE OF THE YEAR 2019

Ellingham Hall General Manager, Anthony Hunter, has been named North East Employee of the Year!

Both colleagues and clients of the exclusive Northumberland venue were quick to praise Anthony's quality of customer service, attention to detail and care when the entry was submitted.

Now celebrating 11 years in the role, Anthony was originally given the top honours in the Outstanding Service category.

He was then put forward for the overall title and the awards' judges unanimously agreed that Anthony should be named Employee of the Year 2019.

Anthony has successfully turned Ellingham Hall into a multi award-winning wedding destination. And for just over a year, he has led a team that has turned the Hall into a unique corporate events venue too.

It's all part of his vision to help the venue become a real beacon in the Northumberland community and in his time, the team has grown from three to a family of 40 devoted employees.

As the driving force behind the operation and growth of the business, it's his core beliefs in inspiring teamwork, attention to detail, customer service and accessibility which led him to get a unanimous result from the judges.

The testimonials from team members, clients and the owners showed how he's not a typical GM. Wendy Sproul, Head of Operations, said; "I know I speak for all departments when I say the service he



provides to couples is just as good as the service he gives to the team looking after us all like one big family - he will never let his title get in the way of supporting the team."

Dale Anderson, of D Line Trunking, said; "Anthony's approachability and his thoroughness on tasks is what makes him so easy to work with."

As well as the day to day running of the business, Anthony has also taken charge of redesigning the interiors and has also been key in working with architects on future building plans for 2022.

Anthony said he was humbled to have won the Outstanding Service category and stunned when he was given the overall award.

He said: "I was thrilled to be nominated in the "Outstanding Service" category at this year's awards, and even more pleased to win it! That in itself was completely unexpected, however I was bowled over to win the overall North East Employee of the Year award in what was such a strong field of candidates.

"I'm incredibly grateful to my team for submitting the nomination, as it's their hard work and dedication that makes our workplace and my role at Ellingham Hall so special. I also feel very fortunate to have won such a prestigious North East award, and the feedback from the judges on the night and peers since has been entirely humbling."

[www.ellingham-hall.co.uk](http://www.ellingham-hall.co.uk)



# ENJOY (NE) 2 COURSES THIS RESTAURANT WEEK

The city centre is not the only part of Newcastle where you can sample fine dining on a budget during Restaurant Week. For the fourth year in a row, Peace & Loaf will be running its very own NE2 Restaurant Week menu this January.

With the menu officially under-wraps by their tight-lipped chefs, you're not going to want to miss out if previous years are anything to go by! Grab 2 delicious courses for just £15 at lunch or £20 for an early evening dinner. The top chefs always create a fantastic selection of dishes especially for the NE2 menu including their popular favourites like MasterChef finalist Dave Coulson's famous raw steak and mushroom pie and some never-tried-before new dishes may also make an appearance.

Never tried Peace & Loaf before? Now is the perfect time to treat yourself, after the hustle and bustle of Christmas has passed, and with such a fantastically priced menu on offer. Plus, did you know that we recently had a complete re-furbishment in the restaurant, with the theme being taken back to its roots, of an old iron-works forge in the 1920's? The interior now features raw materials through the use of concrete and corrugated steel to make a punky aesthetic. These have been paired with metalwork, exposed beams, and brickwork. Steel-wired lighting, designed by Dave, is suspended from the ceiling over each table creating an intimate setting. Feature walls are layered in customised ink paint to accentuate the character of the original and new details.



NE2's unofficial 'restaurant week' runs between 19th to 25th January 2020 and pre-booking is highly recommended – you can do so via the website at [www.peaceandloaf.co.uk](http://www.peaceandloaf.co.uk) or by calling 0191 281 5 222.

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## NEW YEAR, NEW MENU

By Michael Grahamslaw

Marco Pierre White Newcastle “steaks” its claim to be one of the best restaurant’s in the city with its fantastic new menu.

Situated within Hotel Indigo on Fenkle Street, this stylish steakhouse bar & grill offers a ultra-modern dining experience in the heart of the city.

An old business crony and I visited during a flurry of pre-Christmas trade and the message here was clear. This a premier establishment perfect for end-of-year Christmas lunches or special occasions with friends and family.

When we arrived, the dining area was absolutely packed along with a chic bar area serving cocktails and afternoon tea. The restaurant boasts a real convivial atmosphere with sounds of laughter and glass-clinking pervading the air.

We kicked off with a lovely bottle of Argentinian Malbec, signposted on the menu as working best with bolder flavours.

The restaurant’s new menu boasts a stylish offering of starters, steaks, salads, main plates, fish mainboards and freshly ground burgers. Whilst this is unquestionably exquisite dining, portions are wholesome and nourishing and also more than affordable too.

We kicked off with a sumptuous pair of starters. My

friend chose the crispy calamari, delicately battered and served stylishly on a paper doily with a fresh lemon wedge and tartare sauce.

On a biting cold, bleak midwinter day, I opted for “The Governor’s French Onion Soup” – a nod to the eponymous Marco which was served with crispy croutons and Gruyere cheese. A large, monochrome image of the man himself broods over the back wall of the dining area and I’m sure he’d be most impressed of this rich and aromatic dish which possessed a wondrous depth of flavour.

All steaks at MPW Newcastle are 28 day aged from Royal Warrant appointed butcher, Campbell Brothers. Diners get the option to choose their own choice of cut which they can partner with an array of toppings or from a range of signature fillets all served with triple cooked chips.

My friend chose the former, pairing a sumptuous 8oz sirloin streak “surf & turf” style with some grilled garlic prawns. Meanwhile I opted for the latter, a signature fillet of beef au poivre served with a fricassee of woodland mushrooms, cream peppercorn sauce and buttered leaf spinach

From the first cut of steak, this was a deeply

satisfying dining experience with the meat, sauce and wine melting majestically in together in the mouth.

In addition to these centrepiece steaks, the new menu offers several other notable dishes. Catching the eye was the “steakhouse special” roast rump of lamb a la Dijonaise and the decidedly-hearty “Mr Lamb’s Shepherd’s Pie”.

A host of famous names can also be found in the menu’s burger section, for instance the “Banksy B.L.T” with cured bacon, “The Alex James” cheeseburger and “The John Lennon” burger with Colonel Mustard mayonnaise.

My friend rounded off the meal quite simply with the fresh strawberries & vanilla pannacotta whilst I walloped the Mr Coulson’s sticky toffee pudding with butterscotch cream.

The team at Marco Pierre White Newcastle have really excelled themselves by devising a menu brimming with choice and showcasing real quality and creativity.

If you’re yet to set yourself a resolution this new year, pay this fabulous restaurant a visit!

For more information, visit [www.mpwrestaurants.co.uk/our-brands/steakhouse-bar-and-grill/newcastle/](http://www.mpwrestaurants.co.uk/our-brands/steakhouse-bar-and-grill/newcastle/)





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# Fashion Tips 2020

*Winter is well and truly here, and with it comes the layering, the chunky knits and the woollen or padded jackets. Warmth is the name of the game but does that mean that fashion and style have to go out of the window when it comes to looking sharp at work or play?*

Here at Northern Insight we don't think so, so we approached a North East based guru of style for her opinion. Sarah Heron, owner of Jewellery Sparkles, gives her top tips here on maximising the winter wardrobe style by adding key accessory pieces.

"Winter brings with it a new wardrobe, and often the finer, lighter jewellery of the summer can get lost within the layers or the thickness of seasonal clothing.

"A different approach is needed to compliment and break up heavier fabrics and darker colours. Here is my guide to successful winter jewellery:

## Go Gold

Gold always works well at this time of year. Both traditional yellow and the more modern rose gold add a warmth to outfits and also stand out against blacks, navies, and reds, all popular winter hues. For those with cooler skin tones then silver would be the metal of choice.

## Go Chunky

Chunkier necklaces flatter higher and roll neck lines, drawing attention away from the bust area. Mid chest or low neck height is perfect as it creates a slimming effect.

## Go Long

When it comes to earrings long, dangling, eye catching drops are perfect - they elongate the neck, which when wearing polo necks, high collars and solid jumpers or jackets is really flattering. The brighter and shinier the better, especially if coordinating with a hat.

## Cuff It

Long sleeves and coats are perfectly complimented by solid cuff bracelets. They look great either worn on the top of a sleeve or peeking out adding a sparkle or shine to your wrists. Drawing attention to the slimmest part of our bodies can be achieved with an arm party of stacking bangles and bracelets - always in three's, five's or even seven's!

## Ring The Changes

If you wear gloves, then tone down the rings so you can wear them inside the glove to show when you take them off. Anything with stones will catch and snag from the inside. Alternatively you can really ramp it up and get a ring in a size or two larger with a statement stone, and wear over your gloves for a real Breakfast at Tiffany's wow factor.

## Men Too

Men also look exceptionally stylish with winter accents of jewellery with their jumpers, suits and shirts. A glimmer of chain adds a new dimension or be really daring with an over the top dog tag style chain. Chunky solid rings also work well with cable knit jumpers and heavier fabrics.

*Jewellery Sparkles is a direct sales company, specialising in Park Lane products.*

*Park Lane is the world's leading direct sales, fashion jewellery company trading worldwide in over 14 countries. The company is family owned, founded in 1955 and is completely debt free.*

*Jewellery Sparkles is a UK franchise of Park Lane and wholly owned by Sarah Heron, based here in the North East. The jewellery is sold through social media, online at [www.jewellerysparklesltd.co.uk](http://www.jewellerysparklesltd.co.uk) or at events, pop ups and parties.*



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## THE BIG ONE COMES TO KINGSTON PARK STADIUM

Kingston Park Stadium will host 'The Big One' on Saturday March 28, with Newcastle Falcons aiming for a 10,000 sell-out for their Greene King IPA Championship game against Ealing Trailfinders.

The 5.30pm kick-off will be a huge family occasion with local rugby clubs at its core – the Falcons are set to announce details of a special fanzone and charity partner soon.

Explaining the decision not to take the game to St James' Park, executive director Mick Hogan said: "We have enjoyed two fabulous occasions there over the past two years, but given the fact we are in the Championship this season we felt it was more suitable to make the Big One a major rugby occasion at Kingston Park Stadium.

"We have ambitious plans to put into place a fanzone with a much wider entertainment offering, and with Ealing expected by many pundits to be one of the main title contenders this season, it should be a great rugby occasion in its own right.

"We have a major junior rugby festival taking place the same day which will see great representation from clubs throughout the North East, Cumbria and beyond, and with a major marketing push we believe a 10,000 sell-out is a realistic target."

Hogan added: "The decision to play this season's Big One at Kingston Park Stadium by no means signals an end to our aspirations of returning to a larger venue like St James' Park.

"In future seasons we are definitely keen to play somewhere of that magnitude if the sporting and commercial proposition is where it needs to be, but for the time being we are urging our



supporters and the wider rugby community to make The Big One at Kingston Park a major event in its own right."

Falcons director of rugby Dean Richards said: "We

all know what a fantastic atmosphere is produced at a packed-out Kingston Park, and with the support of the local rugby community plus all the extras going on here The Big One is shaping up to be a great occasion."

**Newcastle Falcons season ticket members are advised that this game is already included in their 2019-20 package. Tickets are on general sale. To book, visit [www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk](http://www.newcastlefalcons.co.uk) or call 0871 226 6060.**



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## WEDDINGS AT JESMOND DENE HOUSE!

Our beautiful, grand yet cosy 19th Century House is nestled away in the idyllic surrounds of Jesmond Dene which boasts the beauty of waterfalls, an old water mill and quaint bridges perfect for photo opportunities. We feel a million miles away from Newcastle city centre, as though we are set on a county estate, yet we are only a short five-minute drive.

Hosting weddings up to 110 guests, choose the stunning wood panelled Great Hall or marry in our Secret Garden, complete with outdoor bar, BBQ area and firepit overlooking the leafy Dene. We have something to suit all types of celebrations, relaxed or formal, all year round.

Head Chef Danny Parker, finalist on BBC2 MasterChef the Professionals and BBC Great British Menu has redesigned our menus using ingredient led dishes and appreciates that food is one of the most important, memorable parts of your day. We have a range of wedding menus from traditional three course banquets, to afternoon tea or a BBQ feast served in the Secret Garden.

With 40 individually designed Bedrooms, rest in one of our cosy rooms after dancing the night away, then wake to the best breakfast in town.

We are an independently owned boutique hotel, which means you don't have to follow any rules, we are flexible and happy to plan your day, your way. We LOVE all things weddings and can't wait to discuss your dream wedding with you.





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# HOW TO BRIGHTEN YOUR SMILE IN 2020

Looking to kick off 2020 with a whiter smile? Gulshan Dhanoya, associate dentist at Honour Health in Jesmond, talks to Northern Insight about the benefits of teeth whitening.



Gulshan was shortlisted as a finalist for her teeth whitening work in the Aesthetic Dentistry Awards 2018, and was shortlisted for the Best Young Dentist title in the Private Dentistry Awards 2019.

## What are the benefits of visiting a dentist for teeth whitening?

"A whiter, healthier-looking smile is a great confidence boost, especially as a smile is the first thing people tend to notice when they meet someone new.

Smoking, drinking tea, coffee and red wine can stain your teeth, but visiting the dentist for teeth whitening is a very effective way of removing

staining and brightening your smile in just a few weeks – or even in just a few hours.

Anyone who carries out teeth whitening is legally required to be a dental professional. If they're not, then it's illegal for them to provide teeth whitening.

At Honour Health, we examine the health of your teeth and gums before carrying out teeth whitening. This treatment will only change the colour of your natural teeth and will not work on veneers, fillings or composite bonding."

## What options are available?

"We offer two options at Honour Health. One option is home teeth whitening. We firstly take impressions so that we can make bespoke trays to fit over your teeth. At your next appointment, we check the fit of these trays and we show you how to apply a small amount of gel to them. Apply the gel to the trays before you go to bed and wear them overnight for two or three weeks to gradually whiten your teeth while you sleep.

"The second option is in-surgery teeth whitening, which is popular with patients who are short of time and want a one-off treatment with immediate results. It's a particularly good option for patients with sensitive teeth and takes place during one hour-long appointment at the clinic. A whitening gel

is placed on the surface of the teeth, and a light is shone on the teeth to activate the whitening process.

"The effects of teeth whitening can last for up to three years, although this depends on how often you eat and drink products that stain your teeth, such as tea, coffee, red wine and curry. Smoking will also stain your teeth."



Gulshan Dhanoya

Interested in teeth whitening? Book a free consultation with Gulshan Dhanoya at Honour Health via [www.honourhealth.co.uk](http://www.honourhealth.co.uk) call 0191 281 3913, email [jesmond@honourhealth.co.uk](mailto:jesmond@honourhealth.co.uk) or visit Honour Health at 90 Osborne Road, Jesmond, Newcastle upon Tyne. NE2 2AP

Honour Health also has clinics in Ponteland (call 01661 821 412) and Stanley (call 01207 232 725). Take a look at all three clinics at [www.honourhealth.co.uk](http://www.honourhealth.co.uk)

## NEW YEAR, NEW YOU...LITERALLY

You know how it goes, the new year rolls in and everyone rushes to the gym, ditches the gin and starts meditating. And while we can't disagree that it's a good start, I think we can all agree that it never lasts.

But what if we told you we could make you look younger, healthier and simply glowing with one non-invasive treatment that lasts longer than your gym membership?

Dermaplaning is an exfoliating treatment that gently scrapes the surface of your skin with a surgical scalpel to remove dead skin and peach fuzz. This ultimately gives the result of glowing, smooth, brighter looking skin and can actually prevent acne and help your skin care products to penetrate deeper in to your skin.

Whilst the concept may sound daunting – a scalpel removing skin from your face – it's actually not painful at all, and doesn't require any downtime. What a winner!

At Novellus Aesthetics, located in Jesmond, our inhouse beauty therapist, Lucy, who runs the Novellus Beauty side of things, is fully trained for this procedure, so if you've had a little too much indulgence over the Christmas period, and your skin is in need of some saving, maybe this could be your saving grace.



For more information contact Novellus Aesthetics today on 07973 204276 or visit [www.novellusaesthetics.co.uk](http://www.novellusaesthetics.co.uk)



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# DO YOU HAVE A CLEAR 2020 VISION FOR YOUR HEALTH & FITNESS THIS YEAR?

It's finally time to make those dreams and wishes come true but also look into the future by starting to embrace consistent healthy habits which will promote longevity, in other words, a clear vision of your health now and into the future.

Anyone can talk a good game, but if you are serious about losing weight and living a healthier lifestyle you need clear objectives, an action plan and of course, self discipline.

The obesity crisis has affected us for years and with the government making little impact, we now need to take much more responsibility ourselves.

Here, in my opinion, are the top 10 areas to target in order to keep you on track and make this year the most positive year of your life:

**Research how much sugar you are consuming per day** - I believe sugar is the number one cause of obesity in the UK, which is why I call it white death. Our recommended daily sugar allowance is seven teaspoons, that's 28 grams per day. I would say the majority of you will be over this, check your intake and change it.

**Seek Help** - Start the year as you mean to go on, seek help to put yourself on the right path from day one. At DF Fitness we cover every part of health and wellbeing and have over 20 years of continued success.

**Change your Shopping List** - 80% of weightloss is down to your food, therefore it starts with your shopping list. If the right foods are at hand in your house, eating consistently healthy becomes much easier. Ditch the processed and refined sugar rich food and look to replace them with natural fresh alternatives.

**Preparation** - Being prepared by cooking batches of food for the coming days or having a joint of meat ready in the fridge to carve, can be hugely positive. This will save you time and you are also less likely to reach for something unhealthy.



David Fairlamb

**Exercise in a group** - Research shows training in a group helps both physically and mentally. The camaraderie and support within the group will help you keep your focus and strive towards hitting targets. Others in the group can inspire you to push harder during the session increasing your self confidence and leave you in a more positive frame of mind.

**Be accountable** - Having someone there to account for your food and exercise is hugely incentivizing. We check the Body Composition of all clients in all our small group sessions every two weeks. Short and long term accountability keeps you fully focused on your targets.

**Smaller plates** - Buy smaller plates, its simple, you will eat less and over a period of time your waistline will obviously benefit as you are

consuming less calories.

**Food Diary** - Research shows those who keep a food diary lose up to three times as much weight than those who don't. You can also write down how you feel after each meal, some foods will suit you better than others.

**Have two evening meals** - If you tend to snack late in the evening, try to have half your evening meal at the usual time and finish the other instead of your unhealthy snack later.

**Drink water** - 80% of the time you think you are hungry, you are in fact thirsty. There is also a correlation between drinking water and weight loss. Look to consistently drink 2-3 litres a day, this will keep you feeling full and is the secret to good health, more energy and great skin.

## DAVID'S SUMMING UP

*Make 2020 the year you regained your shape and focused on your health for the future.*





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# COMMENT WITH... Barry Speker

barry.speker@sintons.co.uk



“  
**...How to  
tame a  
fox in  
Minecraft...**  
”



That was our first Winter election since 1923. The Book of Ecclesiastes tells us “Vanity of Vanities, There is nothing new under the sun”. It turned out that there were indeed some never before events, such as Tory MPs being elected in Blyth Valley, Sedgefield, Workington, Doncaster, Bishop Auckland and many other places in the so-called red wall.

What was not new was the intensive inquest into the election result, labour's worst defeat since 1935, and the refusal of the leader to accept responsibility. There was the clearest evidence of traditional voters refusing to entrust JC and his acolytes with the keys of number 10; but Jeremy Corbyn and John McDonnell remained ‘proud of the manifesto’ and said the result was all down to Brexit, media bias, stupid voters and an establishment conspiracy, and that the ‘Corbyn Plan is still the right recipe for the country’.

Fortunately our democratic system enables the electorate to have their say and even break the voting habits of a lifetime.

Looking back on 2019 it was illuminating to see what were the highlights of Google searches:

1. What is Area 51?
2. What is the backstop?
3. What is D-Day?
4. What is Finn's Law?
5. What is a super over?

The top searches about celebrities were:

1. Caitlyn Jenner
2. James Charles
3. Prince Andrew
4. Tommy Fury
5. Boris Johnson

Some other popular searches were:

- How to eat pineapple
- How to tame a fox in Minecraft
- How to floss dance
- How to pronounce Psalm (incidentally, for the ill-informed, this is the name of the fourth child of Kim Kardashian and Kanye West).

What does all this tell us about society? Best not to think about it. Age might have something to do with it and our education system.

I was persuaded to be one of the turns at the Sintons Christmas lunch at St James Park. In the event I was the only ‘act’, so they had to make do

with my Wild Rover and House of the Rising Sun as well as a hurriedly composed Ode. Of course my agent has been bombarded with bookings for gigs around the circuit.

One benefit of the Winter election was that Christmas intervened and the political pundits were squeezed off the screens to make way for Christmas specials, old movies, partying and celebration (and the Queen's Christmas message Jeremy). The new year should be an opportunity for more hope and less uncertainty and I am not only talking of Newcastle United.

Sterling is on the rise, there is a ‘Boris Bounce’, companies are willing to invest and many people have cancelled plans to leave the country. Boris must now ‘Get Brexit Done’, negotiate with new aficionados in Brussels, as well as with the US, China and the world, and also demonstrate that it is the Tories who are for the many and not the few.

Will there be a less hostile atmosphere in Parliament with a new Speaker? We do still have the joy of the elections of new leaders of Labour and the Liberal (not so) Democrats as well as the Sturgeon campaign for a Scottish referendum.

There may be some assistances for us to deal with those extra pounds added by our Christmas excesses. Loughborough University researchers are suggesting extra labels on foodstuffs in addition to the traffic lights, lists of ingredients, countries of origin, additives and colouring. The new labels should tell us how much exercise a person would need in order to burn off the calories in a product. For example it would take four hours to walk off the calories in a pizza or 22 minutes to run off a modest chocolate bar.

With more people sitting on the sofa ordering their fast food to be brought to their door by JUST EAT, Deliveroo or Uber, the prospects of unread labels encouraging healthy eating are ‘slim’. Maybe get Greta to write a book about it? Thinking back, that Christmas dinner might need me to take on the equivalent of the Great North Run.

I was delighted to be invited to speak at the Teesside Exclusive Luncheon Club at Wynyard Hall. I was asked to talk on some highlights of my 50 year career in the law. Thank you Linda and Mike. Splendid lunch and company. I thoroughly recommend booking one of the lunches at Jesmond Dene House or Wynyard Hall, or better still to join the club. Don't worry - I have already spoken at both.

Happy New Year to you all!





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